

## Q&amp;A

# Q&A WITH Kirk Werner

*The artist behind a series of fly fishing books for children talks about the future.*

**K**IRK WERNER'S FIRST TWO books for children—*Olive the Little Woolly Bugger* and *Olive and the Big Stream*—were first published in 2007. Since then, a third volume, *Olive Goes for a Wild Ride*, has appeared, and the series has become quite popular. Featuring as a main character a Woolly Bugger named Olive, the books use fly fishing as a vehicle to tell stories, teach some basics about fly fishing. Werner works as a freelance graphic artist from his home near Seattle, Washington, and he is also the voice behind the blog, *The Unaccomplished Angler*, which he readily admits is “purely for fun.”

**1. When, where, and how did you start fly fishing?**

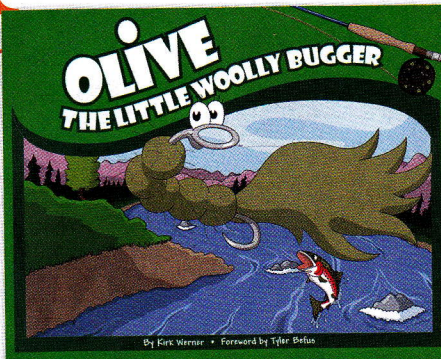
When I was a kid, my dad had a buddy, Lloyd Lewis, who was an über-passionate fly fisherman. My dad wasn't much of an angler, fly or otherwise, but Lloyd saw to it that my brother and I were properly introduced to fly fishing. I was around 11 years old. For the next few years, we were active in the Boy Scouts, and there were always opportunities to wet a line in the many lakes we encountered while hiking around the Pacific Northwest. As the teenage years set in, however, I lost my way. After many years of promising myself that I would someday get back into fly fishing, I finally made good on that promise. Once I did, it was all over.

**2. How did the idea for Olive come about?**

Having illustrated a few children's books for other authors, I always thought it would be neat to write my own book and illustrate it. The harder I tried to come up with an idea for a story, the more it evaded me, so I abandoned the thought. A couple years later, while mowing the lawn, the idea for Olive hit me with such clarity that it was startling—almost as if an epiphany. I can't say it was effortless, but the words came easily.

**3. What was your initial goal for the project?**

After I had the story more or less finalized, my first goal was to find a publisher



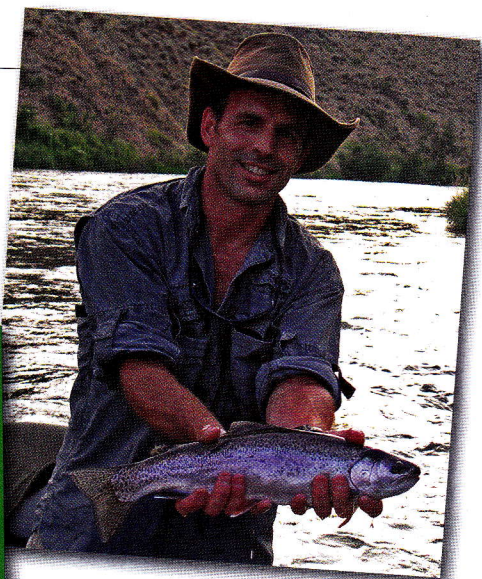
willing to take me on. I was fortunate to have done some unrelated work for a very small publisher who agreed to publish the first two books (*Olive the Little Woolly Bugger* and *Olive and the Big Stream*). The next goal was to promote the books and try to get as many people as I could to buy them. With an advertising budget of exactly nothing, I sent emails to friends far and wide and anyone associated with the fly fishing industry. I spent an immense amount of time on this, and the publisher sold through the entire inventory of books in the first nine months.

By this time I also had the third book, *Olive Goes for a Wild Ride*, ready to go. I was ecstatic until I was told that there wasn't enough money to reprint the first two books, let alone print the third. So my next goal was to find a bigger publisher, which I did after a few months of begging and pleading and being rejected by several editors.

**4. How has the project grown since the first book came out?**

From time to time, I'll hear from folks who tell me how much their kids love Olive. This has made me realize that there's great potential to branch out beyond the books and try to establish the Olive brand within the fly fishing industry. Getting kids on the water is a common goal for many companies and organizations—after all, kids are the future of everything (not just fly fishing).

As a brand, Olive can help promote fly fishing and conservation, sell products, and further kids' excitement to get outside and have fun. A couple years ago I partnered



with Montana Fly Company to produce fly boxes and nippers branded with Olive artwork. A similar deal is currently in the works with Allen Fly Fishing to produce an Olive-branded fly rod-and-reel outfit, which should be available before Christmas. Last year, I also released an Olive the Woolly Bugger app for the iPad, which is available on iTunes/The App Store.

**5. Ultimately, what would you like to see happen in the future, both for Olive and for your audience?**

Besides introducing kids to fly fishing basics, the books teach a bit about conservation-minded angling. This is an important part of Olive's mission, and I would love to see Olive become a household name. But in order for that to happen, it's going to take a lot more than selling a few books—Olive needs a larger platform in order to reach a much larger audience.

To that end, my goal for the last two years has been to get Olive to Hollywood. I realize that's a lofty goal, but I've managed to find ways to reach out to a few well-known names in the film industry who are also fly anglers. I've not yet hooked that “big fish,” but I will continue to plug away until all possibilities have been exhausted. In the meantime, I've been working with a screenwriter on a script for an animated feature film starring Olive the Woolly Bugger. It's going to be an amazingly fun story with mass appeal (beyond just the fly fishing set), so I hope we can find a producer who agrees. If you know anyone, send them my way!

To learn more about Olive and her future projects, visit [olivethewoollybugger.com](http://olivethewoollybugger.com). You should also check out Werner's often humorous blog at [unaccomplishedangler.com](http://unaccomplishedangler.com).