

Mending Lines

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October 2010

Don's Den

By: Don Privett

**October
21st**
Regular
Monthly meeting
St. Joe Athletic Club

**November
2nd**
Board Meeting
St. Joe Athletic Club

18th
Regular
Monthly Meeting

**December
7th**
Planning Board
Meeting

16th
No regular Meeting

It's October and for me it's the best time of the year. We can put away the 4,5, and 6x tippet, and those ten foot leaders and make some six foot long stopping at 3x and tie on a big streamer, none of those size 20's for this time of the year. When you get to the lake or stream you may find that you're the only one on the water with fishing on their mind. It seems that for a whole lot of people the first weekend in September is the time to put away the fishing gear until spring. Most of the speed boats and jet skies are gone, the temperatures have cooled off, and the fish are back in the shallows foraging on minnows and whatever else they can find to fatten up on before the ice comes back. Some of my favorite patterns for this time of year are Thunder Creeks, the Moto Minnow, and big Woolly Buggers. This is the time of the year that you can take the biggest fish of the year, you just need to get out there.

October 21st our speaker will be Jeff Conrad from Indiana Fly Fishing Guides. He will be doing a program on Smallmouth Bass, one of the best fighting fish in fresh water. I hope to see you there

Don



How Has Fly Fishing Changed

By John Berry

From the FFF Club Wire

I was fishing with a client the other day, when he asked me an intriguing question. How has fly fishing changed since you started? I immediately started going through some of the changes in my head and quickly realized that there had been substantial change. Most of it was positive. I began fly fishing three decades ago and I must admit that I spend most of my time trying to manage change.

The most obvious change to me is that there are a lot more of us. There are more people fly fishing now than when I first started. Back then there were precious few fly fishers. Most of the anglers that you saw were bait fishing. Now it seems like there is parity in the numbers of fly fishers versus bait or lure anglers. A lot of the increase is due to technological advances in fly fishing gear. The advances in fly fishing gear have had a profound effect on the sport by making it easier to do and to make the anglers more comfortable. Another cause is the popularity of the movie, *A River Runs Through It*. I think that you could boost the popularity of *Tiddlywinks* if you made a movie about it featuring Brad Pitt.

Fly rods have undergone significant change. When I first started fly fishing, my first fly rod was made of fiber glass. It was heavy and had a very soft action. I remember casting a graphite rod for the first time. It was a Sage and it cast like a dream. It was lighter and had a much stiffer action than my fiberglass. I was so impressed that I went out and bought one (my daughter still fishes with it). The rods then were mostly eight footers. The rods now are much longer. Most are nine feet and several are ten feet. The actions are stiffer and they weigh less.

Fly lines have undergone some fundamental change. Years ago they were either level (no taper) or they were double taper with a distinct taper on each end. The level lines were inexpensive but cast poorly. The double tapers were popular because you could use one end until you wore it out and then turn it around and use the other side. Now the most popular lines are weight forward which have a distinct taper and are heavier on the tapered end. The other end is smaller and lighter. This allows the line to be cast further. There are also a variety of specialty lines that did not exist then. We now have sink tips, which have a front sinking section and a floating rear section, this allows us to fish deep and still cast the line easily. We also have bass bug lines designed to cast wind resistant bass flies and nymph lines designed to cast double fly rigs, weight and strike indicators. There are more.

The fly reels used when I first started were basically unchanged since the nineteenth century. They used a simple spring and pawl drag. The big change since then is that most fly reels sold today feature a disc drag system similar to that used in automobile brakes. Reels with disc drags weigh a bit more than spring and pawl drags. The current trend is toward larger arbors which allow you to reel in line more quickly. Larger arbors weigh more than smaller arbors. So, while rods are getting lighter, reels are getting heavier.

One change that we don't think about often has been the improvement in leaders and tippets. Back in the day we made our own leaders. We would take several sections of different sized tippet material and carefully join them with blood knots to produce a tapered shape. The knots had a tendency to grab algae or any trash in the water. We now buy knotless tapered leaders that perform flawlessly. Tippets have gotten much stronger over the years. When I began fishing 4X was four pound test. Now 4X is six or even seven pound test. Then there is fluorocarbon. This stuff is stronger, more abrasion resistant and has a specific gravity greater than water (it is heavier than water and it sinks).

The change in waders has possibly been the greatest change of all. When I began, I used a borrowed pair of rubberized cotton boot foot waders. They were clumsy, bulky and clammy. The first pair that I bought were neoprene. They were the hot new thing at the time and great during the cold months when their insulating properties were appreciated. They were stocking foots with separate boots that were much more comfortable and provided significant ankle support. However when the summer came, they were stifling. The new style breathable waders are the perfect waders for our area. They are lighter in weight and breathe making them much cooler in summer. In the winter we wear a pair of fleece pants and we are quite comfortable.

The last major change that I have seen has been in fishing ethics. Thirty years ago we kept everything we caught. A stringer was a regular part of our fishing gear. As I grew with the sport, I came to realize that the fish were too valuable to kill. I would rather release them so that I can return and catch them again. As our rivers get more crowded and fishing pressure increases, this is the only viable strategy to provide a quality fishing experience. I am not the only person with this opinion. Arkansas Game and Fish Commission creel studies prove that there are more anglers per mile fishing in Catch and Release waters than other sections. Years ago, I also fished over spawning trout. I caught some great fish but I came to realize that it was more important for the trout to naturally procreate than to provide me with a little recreation. Others have come to agree with me and the major spawning grounds are now closed during the spawn.

I have seen a lot of change in the last few years and it has been for the better. I have better gear that is much easier to cast, it keeps me more comfortable and I regularly catch quality fish that are the equal of good trout anywhere. Sometimes change is good!

Do Flies Always Work?

By Pat Damico

From the FFF Club Wire

When taking out clients, I often ask them about previous experience with guided trips. This information is very helpful and varies across the whole spectrum from very good, to poor. Recently, the answers were from clients telling me about two guided trips. In both cases they wanted to catch redfish on a fly. They started fishing with flies, but soon switched after being unsuccessful. One trip was in South Carolina, the other on Florida's west coast. Instead, they ended up fishing with shrimp and whitebait, and caught some fish. Why the switch? Is the reason there are times when fish will refuse flies and take only live bait? Yes, I'm sure there are instances when this is true. Could there be any other reasons why flies will fail? After getting more information, the reasons began to fall into a familiar pattern.

Most fly fisherman I know enjoy the challenge that fishing with the long rod presents. When they begin fly fishing they must also accept the journey that is necessary as they pursue success. What is success? Success to many fly fisherman I know is not measured in how many fish are caught, but by how they are caught. One nice fish on the fly could make the whole day a worthwhile event. Stalking the fish, making a perfect presentation with a fly that you have tied, seeing the take, setting the hook and finally bringing the fish to hand where it can be admired, and often released, all make for a successful outing. There are even times that fly fishing can outperform other fishing techniques. Catching freshwater trout in the middle of a mayfly hatch when the pattern is duplicated and well presented is one example. When snook are feeding at night on small baitfish, a fly that matches the hatch is very productive. The fly itself, many times, is a small part of the equation. When someone asks what fly pattern are you using, should he also ask how you are using it? Have you ever fished near someone, using identical equipment, who either out fished you or you beat them by a large margin? Let's look at some reasons why flies may not be productive. We will begin with the guide.

If someone calls a guide and says they want to fly fish, very few guides will not take them as clients. It can be a decision based solely on economics. The guide may prefer to fish live bait or scented plastic spinning lures primarily, but without telling you this agrees to take you out. He may have a fly rod, or you bring your own equipment. This is your first saltwater fly fishing experience and you are understandably very excited. You've watched Lefty, Flip and others on Saturday morning make that perfect cast which resulted in instant success. You expect to do the same. The guide shows up with a tower boat and a livewell full of scales sardines, and a bunch of spinning rods with corks on the leader. How do you fly cast from a boat with a large tower in the middle, and what is the live bait doing there? My first saltwater "fly fishing trip," about twenty years ago started similarly, with a well respected guide. I had several phone conversations with the guide before our trip telling him I wanted to catch fish with a fly rod. One fly rod rigged with a freshwater muddler minnow sat in the rod holder all day while we threw spinning outfits with live shrimp. We did catch fish, but it was not what I wanted to do. He did say, "Right now, this is the best way to catch fish." Why, if he believed that, didn't he tell me on the phone, or refer me to a fly fishing guide?

In another instance, the guide takes you out and after a couple fishless stops with you casting your fly rod, he suggests that maybe we should switch to spinning gear for awhile. Let's say your casting skills were adequate, but the fish were holding close to the bottom in several feet of water, and a sinking fly on a clear sinking tip line would have worked. The guide's inexperience was of no help here. Or, the fish were tailing in shallow water and his boat did not have a shallow enough draft to allow a stealthy, closer approach. He didn't have a poling platform, or pole, which is needed under these circumstances, or you could have left the boat and approached the shallows by walking in the ankle deep water to get to the fish. A friend of mine who is a very busy live bait guide told me he never saw a tailing redfish. I frequently fish the same areas he does and we see them all the time. We usually wave to one another as he speeds by on his way to a "hole" where he anchors his boat and chums with stunned live greenbacks before beginning to fish his clients with baited hooks. I told him he never slows down long enough to watch the shallows for signs of tailers.

Under the above circumstances the guide may announce, "I fished a spot near here a few days ago, and we caught a bunch with shrimp." You go to the spot, anchor the boat, and instantly hook up with a live shrimp. We have some excellent fly patterns that duplicate shrimp. Why not use one of them? After catching several fish, you don't touch your fly rod for the rest of the trip. Was the fly pattern the reason for failure, or were your casting skills so poor that you couldn't get the fly close to where the fish were? Did you make sloppy presentations that frightened fish in shallow water, were you unable to cast in the wind, did you false cast over the fish and spook them, or a myriad of other reasons relating to your lack of casting skill? When fellow guides, that are also excellent fly fisherman, discuss recent trips with me, their success will always relate to how well their client could cast. They have some poor days when fish are scarce, but on some of their best days when fish are located, the casting skill of the client will determine how the day went.

If you are having some casting problems, and you are amenable to some helpful suggestions, can the guide analyze your cast and be of assistance? If your skills are so poor, how do you feel about spending most of your trip learning how to properly cast? The deck of a flats boat is not the place to learn to cast a fly rod. I have had clients who after a few minutes of instruction were able to improve their casting sufficiently to have a good day with the fly. Others were either so inexperienced, or couldn't admit that the problem was theirs, but rather some other reason, like the action of the rod, the brand of the rod, the rod's length, or weight, or something else.

What can we do to insure that a fly fishing trip will have the best chance for success? Research the guide thoroughly? Study their website, have some candid conversations, or written communication with him, or her. Get some references. Be sure to explain your experience level. If you need to prepare yourself, sign up for a saltwater casting clinic, or get lessons from someone who is skilled in the areas you need help. The Federation of Fly Fishers has a casting certification program that is rigorous and will help narrow your choices of where to begin.

I began fly fishing at the age of ten. I enjoy the sport now more than ever. Many people have contributed to my continual learning experience in both fresh and saltwater. Saltwater fly fishing will definitely provide you with the most excitement available in our great sport. Take advantage of it by doing your homework.

Bee Visible By Tom Deschaine



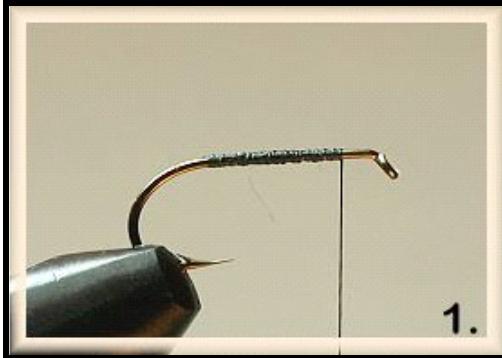
Materials:

Hook: Mustad #94840 or #94833 Sizes: 10-18.

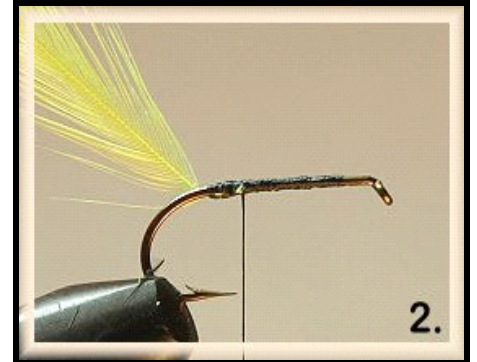
Thread: Black, 6/0

Body: Yellow and Black Hackle Fibers.

Hackle: White Hackle Fibers.



Step #1. Tie in a good thread base. This is especially important with this fly. Since our entire body is composed of hackle; we don't want it slipping around.



Step #2. Starting at the rear of the hook tie in a yellow hackle fiber

Step #3. Next, tie in and wrap a black hackle. Repeat the sequence one more time (one yellow hackle and one black hackle).



Step #4. Now that the body is complete. Tie in the white face hackle

Step #5. Wrap the face hackle, tie it off. Whip finish the head, clip the thread and add head cement.



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Calendar Of Events**October****21st**

Regular

Monthly meeting

St. Joe Athletic Club

November**2nd**

Board Meeting

St. Joe Athletic Club

18th

Regular

Monthly Meeting

December**7th**

Planning Board

Meeting

16th**No regular Meeting****Lake Michigan Salmon-Steelhead Report as of 10-12-10****Reports are that the rivers all have spawning Salmon-Steelhead in them.**

**Big Manistee
Bear Creek
Pere Marquette
The White River**

The St. Joe river and Muskegon have very small amounts of fish.**Become A Contributor**

I'd like to thank all the people who have helped my transition into the newsletter editor. Rick Hinton for all his ideas and our fishing reports. Rex Lengacher for his great articles, and resources he's given me, and for proof-reading the newsletter as a whole. It has made publishing this newsletter so much easier. At the same time I would like to invite any and all of you to send me an article or fly pattern for a future issue. It doesn't have to be anything fancy or poetic as I will edit, embellish, and further denigrate it to fit the space to be filled.

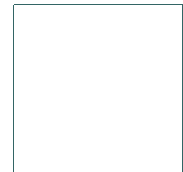
We also need your pictures. Any pictures you might have of interest to our club members make this publication more interesting and fun to read. Show us what you caught or where you fished, or just something you saw on the stream or lake. Send pictures or articles to me at carlamarie612@yahoo.com, or give them to any board member. All pictures and articles submitted to the Mending Lines become the property of Three Rivers Fly Fishers LLC.

3RFF Classifieds

Used Minn Kota Trolling Motor Power Drive 40 Pound Thrust \$200 or best offer Contact Gary Sanders 260-251-1637

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