

Windknots

A Monthly Publication of the Texas Flyfishers

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Seeing Them

By Ralph G. Adams, Jr.

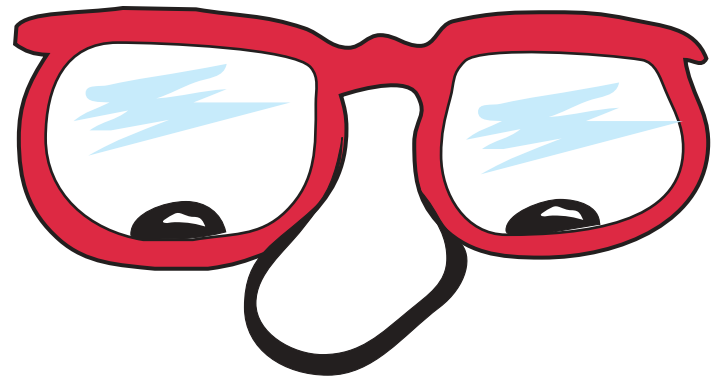
For the most part, the underwater world of the fish is an utter mystery. Yet as anglers we connect to fish from across the threshold of our very different worlds. And these encounters strike a chord. We collect these visions of gamefish and their fine-tuned examples of creation. It fuels the imaginative and curious disposition of those types of people who enjoy spending scads of time secluded in their search for gamefish willing to take a well-presented fly. Such memories of fish live in the angler's mind, a treasure trove of dramatic sequencing telescoped and catalogued across time and space.

I was in Connecticut walking along the grates of the metal trestle bridge thirty feet above the river in the dark before dawn. I stopped to look over the railing. The black river was sliding downstream into the Long Island Sound nearby. The pilings formed a symmetrical wedge of rippling water.

A light was fixed under the

bridge and shone upon the pilings and into the water. Within that narrow illuminated slot was a column of striped bass holding in the current like gray trout. They finned with an efficient, compact precision and ate the less-accomplished swimming creatures brought in the flow. Each of the stripers kept his position in the feeding lane and it looked like this could go on for a while. My gear was back at the house, a short walk, but none of the angles worked. The bridge was too high to land a fish and the back-cast risked snagging the 5:32 a.m. express train to Grand Central Station. I could have managed a shot from the shoreline if I could have hauled two hundred feet and hooked the end for a drag-free drift. So I just stood there for a while and watched and startled some of the bleary-eyed commuters walking past on their way to the train station.

Despite New England's heritage of rough water craft including the Boston Whaler and the classic wooden McKenzie Bass



Boat, the fisherman there have been swept up in the flats skiff movement. One such boat launched from a marina upriver. It had a high platform above the engine and was armed with a push-pole set in chocks on the gunwale. The gurgling sound of the engine rose through the stillness of the river basin and the no-wake zone, and I observed the fish dissolve one after the next as the gentleman motored past unaware of his proximity to these thick fish. The sight of the stripers reassembling in their column below the yellow cast of light was too perfect and I said nothing to give them away.

Texas has its own compelling reasons to fish at night. Watching trout chase flies through a penumbra of light near a wooden dock is an absolutely pleasing brand of fishing. One evening we

were prospecting the pier lights and noticed that the large sailboat that docked in the slip was gone. The water was lit an eerie green. We eased close to inspect and found a phalanx of snook stationed motionless like rocks. They were unafraid of our presence so we backed the boat and waited several minutes and began casting shiny Clousers into the glowing circle and caught some of these distinctive remnants of the old Texas coast.

The sweetest of fishing may be the charged moment when a fish is seen approaching and then taking the fly. Paddling across Shoalwater Bay one crisp day last Fall, I spotted a redfish in thigh-deep water. We were headed in opposite directions and he was not four feet from the boat when

Continued on Page 3

President's Corner

by Jerry "Buggywhip" Loring, President, Texas Flyfishers



During the past three months, donations and contributions have been a topic of some discussion among the Texas Flyfishers. To be specific, these discussions have been about your Texas Flyfishers donating money to various groups, organizations, or causes. The Executive Committee, before approving such monetary donations, must determine if this action is consistent our own causes and interests as prescribed in our charter.

As written in our by-laws, the primary purpose is to promote the sport of flyfishing. In the

course of this endeavor, TFF is also to provide a forum for the exchange of information between flyfishers, to provide instructional classes for flyfishing, and to promote the sport of flyfishing in a manner that helps preserve our fisheries.

Read quickly, these goals may seem general in nature and painted with a broad brush. But please note that some form of the word "flyfish" is used time and time again. Flyfishing is the keystone of our goals and principles and should be considered a focal point. Keeping that focal point in mind, now consider the direction and decisions the Executive Board must take and make in approving donations and conducting business.

In round numbers, our annual budget is \$20,000.00. Like any business, TFF has expense items, such as meetings, Windknots, our web site, outings, door prizes, educational classes, special events, dona-

tions, and miscellaneous expenses. Most remain consistent from year to year and can be readily planned and reckoned for because they result from the scope of our activities. However, some, like donations, are arbitrary.

This is where and when the Executive board needs and wants your input, comments, opinions, and testimony. Again, referring to paragraphs one and two, above, any action approved by the Executive Board must be consistent and blend with our own causes and interests. We are bound by that directive. Also, consider our budget constraints. Ten percent of the annual budget would be a heavy amount budgeted for donations. That equates to \$2,000.00 annually. The most ever donated in a one-year cycle was \$1,500.00.

Currently, TFF has pledged a conservation donation to be named by Judy Lehmborg, and

a donation for the Coastal Conservation Association, which may be underwritten by the success of the Redfish Rodeo. Additionally, a donation is under consideration for books and tuition for a wildlife education major. If you have concluded these are not heady donations, you are correct. Still, money is money, five hundred dollars here and there adds up for any organization.

Let us hear from you if you have any input. Don't let the possibility of rejection keep you from communicating your thoughts. Remember that it takes time (a year or so) to fit money into our budget or to get a program started and going. Our goals are consistent; promoting flyfishing, providing a forum for the exchange of information between flyfishers, and representing TFF as a voice in our sport. It all fits together. 🐟

Jerry "Buggywhip" Loring

INFORMAL THURSDAY NIGHT TYING SESSIONS

The Thursday night informal fly tying sessions will not begin until in September due to low turnout during the summer vacation period. If anyone has a specific question on how to tie a particular pattern, or how to handle certain materials, please feel free to contact Frank Schlicht at 281-392-5296. He will be happy to try to answer your questions, or direct you to someone who can help you. Notice of resumption of these sessions will appear in the next newsletter. In the meantime, may your dry fly drift drag-free.



Seeing Them

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I saw him and froze in a replay of hundreds of other similar, though futile attempts. The kayak carried past and I slid overboard and turned standing in the water. I cast to where I guessed he had been; a low probability shot, no doubt, but then he appeared coming toward me. I picked up and flopped the fly in front of him. It smacked the surface and his fins swung forward and he froze. The fish and I watched the fly, both of us transfixed by the drama born of our unique perspectives. A tiny adjustment as the brown slider brushed the tip of his nose and he eased up and sipped the vanishing fly and then burst across the flat.

As a budding angler of ten years old, I would ride my bike to a low bridge near home. It was

an unassuming concrete structure over a small stream running by a quiet country road. I would crouch on the piling above the water and look into the stream and drop a hook hidden in chunks of earthworm. Tiny bluegills always swam out to investigate. One day, I dropped the hook and watched the small fish crowd around the bait. They suddenly fled and a long slender form reached out to the worm gob and pulled it below the bridge. Within minutes I beached an eel. This was a first for me, and grabbing him was near impossible given his coating of slime. He writhed and twisted until a passing garbage truck stopped and the driver helped me release him.

A few years later my father took me on a trip for northern pike in the Lake Champlain region of New York State. We fished with a guide along the Canadian border using spinning tackle on a series

of secluded lakes. The technique was simple. Cast the weedless V-shaped spinner bait well into the weeds and reel it back as fast as possible. So we cast from the edge of lily pads and on one cast the lure darted through the edge of green a dozen feet from the rod tip. I prepared to pick up for another cast when the shoveled snout of a pike sprung from behind. The fish tackled the lure and in one continuous motion dove below the boat and snapped the rod tip. We did manage to land the fish and it was the largest of my career up to that point, measuring three solid feet of sharp teeth and green and caramel-dotted camouflage.

And then there is the Gulf of Mexico. We were drifting ten miles off Destin, Florida under the warm sun of late Spring. The water was cobalt blue. The Bertram rolled with the passing waves and lines of jack crevalle were seen hurling themselves

below the boat in streaks of yellow and green and blue. Some of them tagged the live mullet we had suspended in their path using deep water bait casting rods and impossible lead weights. We were thankful for the fighting belts and caught jacks up to twenty pounds. After landing several, the first-mate, a sharpie for selling red snapper back at the dock, discouraged us from catching any more and ordered the rigs back to the bottom for snapper. I was dropping the rig as he said this and I looked over and smiled and said, "Yes, sir." And while nodding consent, I pressed my thumb against the cylinder and stopped the rig half-way down where the jacks would find it. Peering into the azure depths I saw the shifting shafts of light, the silver flash, and the torrid blaze of fish on the hunt. 🐟

UPCOMING CLUB MEETINGS

August 26, 2003. Carey Marcus, who represents Sage rods, will tell us about fly rod design and characteristics. Carey is a very entertaining speaker. You won't want to miss this meeting.

September 30, 2003. Guide Scott Sommerlatte will give a presentation on fishing the Texas flats. Scott is an accomplished photographer and writer whose work appears in a number of fishing publications. He's also a heck of a guide. You can't come away from one of his presentations without learning a lot.

October 28, 2003. Guide Ethan Wells will give a presentation on Florida snook and redfish. Ethan splits his time between the Texas and Florida sides of the Gulf of Mexico. Be sure not to miss this one.

Our meetings are held the last Tuesday of each month except December at the Holiday Inn on I-10 between Antoine and Silber. There's conversation and often a fly-tying demonstration beginning at 7:00 p.m. The meetings begin at 7:30.



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San Jose Island Outing

On July 26, nine hardy, heat-tolerant individuals (Joe Burton, Yang Burton, Joe Cooper, Bruce Heiberg, Rick Rawls, Dick Kauth, Cris Summers, Ralph Adams and Ed Hogan) packed up their kayaks and headed to San Jose Island with the help of Captain Sally's kayak transport service. Our first stop was "Fence Lake" where Sally said the fish were

trapped because of the low water and a sand bar blocked the entrance. Needless to say this would require some portaging but it could be like "shooting fish in a barrel." Why do you think it was called "Fence Lake"? Yes, it had a fence running through it. Well, the water was low, so low some decided to fish the outside of the island. The ones that did



venture further into the lake reported some sightings and caught some fish. One report was 11 fish of various species but mostly some rat reds and ladyfish. Now, this was the report but no one confessed to witnessing Bruce Heiberg achieving this feat.

After lunch and with the sun high overhead the next stop was about two miles south. I can't remember the name of the location but I do remember it was close to one of Perry Bass's homes (we oilfield men know

who he is). We spent the next three hours there and Ralph Adams and Chris Summers were able to hook up. Both had a story. Ralph said he met his red face-to-face as he came around a corner of cord grass and Chris said his red came out of a weed bed to attack the fly.

After all was said and done, most people were not "skunked." Afterwards, we all met at Charlotte Plumber's to review the events of the day and enjoy a good meal.

NORTH PARK – *Colorado's Secret*

Bev Edwards

I started climbing into Colorado's high country right after the war in the late 1940's, to tag along with my dad as he taught me how to fly fish. I carried his fine old bamboo rods, which now hang retired in my trophy case. We had the country all to ourselves. We asked permission to fish from ranchers, and the trout were big and plentiful. We often just sat on a big boulder in the stream and fed grass hoppers to hungry trout below. There were no other fly fishermen. Few folks had cars to get there. We climbed up into Rocky Mountain National Park along the trail up Longs Peak. We fished in Peacock Pond alone and caught big trout on the bamboo rod with crude gut leaders. They gobbled our flies. July of 2003, I hiked a couple of miles up the Big Thompson River in Rocky Mountain National Park to find solitude

and green back cutthroat trout on my five-weight 7' 6" graphite high tech rod. Instead, I counted over one hundred other hikers, a few with fly rods. I counted 26 hikers standing at a remote log bridge over the river. One fellow did catch an eight-inch brookie, and I got three rises on my #12 Adams dry fly that evening back down in the valley, but none caught. The trout were small and spooky.

We headed over the high road in the park the next morning, stopping to look at Rocky Mountain big horned sheep, elk, mule deer, coyotes next to our car, marmots, and lots of ground squirrels. They were accustomed to the traffic jams. We looped north into the big empty lonely valley known as North Park, home of the North Platte River. We left the crowds behind as we pulled into my favorite high country town of Walden, Colorado, hard on the Wyoming border. The North Platte flows north more than 50



miles before it crosses into Wyoming, draining snow melt and rain from high mountain ranges to the east and west in the Routt National Forest, Medicine Bow Mountains, Mount Zerkel Wilderness and maybe some from Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests. The valley of the North Platte is North Park, and it is sage brush cattle country. The river is broad and shallow. It is easy to wade knee deep, and it is so wide that a back cast seldom catches in a willow branch. Feeder streams include the Michigan River, the Illinois River, Roaring Fork River, Raspberry Creek, Canadian River, Grizzly Creek and the Encampment River as it crosses into Wyoming, heading through the town of Saratoga. There are many miles of Colorado State Wildlife Refuges with access to the North Platte and its tributaries. The state of Colorado has leased fly fishing access on many of the big cattle ranches. The only thing that I always find missing there are crowds of people. Sometimes I fish alone all day.

I brought out my seven-weight 8' 6" Fenwick graphite rod for the long casts required over big open water. The river

was a bit high this summer with spring rains and a higher than normal snow pack. Martha and I left the end of a gravel access road about five miles south of the Wyoming border and followed a faint trail over boulders, as we climbed one mile into North Gate Canyon. This is an eight-mile stretch of public access on the North Platte as it flows into Wyoming. It is a rough climb, but the reward is big rainbow and brown trout. The guide book describes the rapids as Class VII. I would not run the rapids, but the oxygen from the rapids stirred up some big trout. I took a fifteen-inch rainbow in rough water, after a five-minute fight. Three casts later I lost one about the same size, using a big #8 olive nymph. What a great day.

We stayed in a big log house just east of Walden, Colorado on Highway 14. It is the Dakota House Bed and Breakfast. You will like the hospitality and big country breakfast cooked by Susie. Reach them at 970-723-3268. We swapped stories that night with Dennis out back in the barn, and decided to go over Cameron Pass to the east the next morning. We dropped down through Roosevelt

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NORTH PARK

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National Forest and the Neota Wilderness into the canyon of the Cache La Poudre River. This is a clear wild stream that runs near Highway 14, heading towards Fort Collins. A mother black bear and her two cubs ran across the road behind us, but they were too fast to get a picture. We were constantly looking for moose in the willows along the river where they hang out. Colorado has stocked

Emerald Lake rainbows in one of the big lakes along the river. The fishing was tough, and I do not have any trophies to brag about here.

The next morning we headed northwest out of Walden, high up in the Mount Zerkel Wilderness to Big Creek Lakes in Routt National Forest. Big Creek flows northeast out of the lakes through willow-choked meadows. We parked a few miles downstream from the lakes and hiked a short ways through the willows to a large

hidden beaver bond. My five-weight 7' 6" rod was better for the tight casting through the willows in this small mountain stream. A twelve-foot tapered leader to a 4X tippet was tied to a bushy #12 Adams dry fly and again, it paid off. Many twelve-inch brook trout took the fly in the evening light. They were brightly colored. I landed a nice rainbow also. I caught and released the fish until I got tired of it.

We headed down the mountain back to Walden for some

chicken fried steak, before the River Rock Café closed for the evening. Across the street you can buy flies and get some good advice at High County Sports at 970-723-4648. Good books on the North Park are *Colorado Fishing, Hunting and Outdoor Guide* by Tim Kelley, Hart Publications, and *Fly Fishing the North Platte River* by Rod Walinchus, Pruett Publishing. Just don't tell all of your friends about it, because I like fishing alone, high in the Colorado Rockies. 🐟

Outings Schedule

Not all the events are confirmed, so use the schedule for your long-range planning only. A club member will host each outing. The host is responsible for signing up participants, coordinating destination, times, and at least one meal. You must be signed up with the host to get updates as final plans come together.

Some events already have hosts assigned and some don't. If the event says "Contact TBA," you can volunteer to host. Just let Jerry Loring, Bruce Heiberg or Clarke Thornton know.

August 23, 2003 Redfish Rodeo. Contact Jerry Loring for Details. jerrytms@flash.net or 713-464-8687 (evenings)

September 7, 2003 Medina River. Contact TBA.

September 20, 2003 Nueces River. Contact TBA.

September 27-28, 2003 Padre Island Surfing Jackfest guided by Billy Sandifer. Contact Tom Lyons for sign-up, details, and cost information. tflyons@aol.com

October 11, 2003 Copano Bay. Contact TBA.

October 24-26, 2003 Please note revised date. Arkansas (3-day trip). Contact Troy Miller for sign-up and details. Troy.Miller@bakeroil-tools.com

November 15, 2003 San Marcos River, Contact information TBA.

December 5, 2003 Awards Banquet.

December 13, 2003 Frozen Point, Anahuac. Contact information TBA.

January 10, 2004 Guadalupe River Float and Freeze. Tentative.

April 2004 Devils River. Walk-in, kayak or canoe. Contact Tom Lyons for details. tflyons@aol.com



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FISHING FACTOIDS

From the International Game
Fish Association's May/June 2003
International Angler newsletter

- Percent of revenue generated by the new recreational federal fishing permit that will go to fishery improvement: 0%
- Estimated amount of longlines set each 24 hours: 100,000 miles
- Estimated number of longline hooks set annually: 2 billion
- Number of longliners operating in the Pacific: 18,000
- Number of U.S. recreational fishing trips taken per year: 53 million
- Annual expenditures by U.S. recreational billfish anglers: \$2.13 billion
- Percent of annual white marlin mortality caused by U.S. sportfishers: 0.02%
- Amount of sea life discarded as U.S. commercial bycatch in year 2000: 2.3 billion pounds
- Average time it takes for Louisiana to lose one football-field-size area of wetlands: 15 minutes
- Major cause of wetlands loss: Erosion due to development
- Location of Rip Collins's all-tackle 40 lb. 4 oz. brown trout mount: Buried with Rip Collins

WINDKNOTS INFO

The Texas Flyfishers
monthly newsletter
needs your help.
Otherwise, we'll run out
of material to print.

Please send your photos,
artwork and
graphic materials to
publisher Greg Rhodes at
gregr@pegasusdesign.com
Send articles to editor
Corey Rich, email:
corey.rich@aya.yale.edu
or
fax at 713-864-1292.

All articles, photographs
and newsworthy events
are appreciated.
Information and articles
should be submitted
before the 10th of
each month.

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will be posted immedi-
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the web page at:

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Attention new and current members! To join or renew please complete this form and mail it with your check to the address above. New members should prorate their dues to July because everyone renews during that month, or bring this form with you to any of our monthly meetings. Meetings start at 7:00 PM the last Tuesday of every month (except December) at the Holiday Inn, located on the Katy Freeway between Antoine and Silber. Guests are welcome with a complimentary pass to come learn of our numerous outings, instructional classes and social gatherings.

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 ANY QUESTIONS? PLEASE CALL THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY, RON BAUER 281-359-7077.

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 Membership in the FFF is encouraged and benefits the club, but is not required.
 Membership applications are available through the FFF website at: <http://www.fedflyfishers.org>