

WindKnots

Monthly Publication of the Texas FlyFishers

Volume 41, Issue 1, March, 2022

Let's Go Fishing!

As I write this, the weather wizards are reminding us that it's still winter outside and, not to put the coats away in the back of the closet. However, unlike the earlier cold spells, the icy temperatures forecast 4 to 5 days before are beginning to increase to the lower to mid 40's. That tells me that spring time won't be far behind. This means we'll have flowers blooming, grass that needs to be mowed and, fish to be caught.

The Club's Outing Co-Chairmen, John Eldred (FW) and Taylor Guest (SW) have been busy put together a solid list of locations, both fresh and saltwater, for the membership. The locations were selected not by chance but, because of previous experience. For the freshwater anglers, we have an overnight outing to Harmon Creek, March 11-13 for white bass. Results of a recent scouting trip showed the fish were up the creek and, hungry. If you're interested in joining this outing, check the club's webpage for trip particulars and contact information.

The saltier anglers have a day trip scheduled for March 19 to Bastrop Bayou. While details are still flexible, Bastrop Bayou, with its mostly mud bottom, is a good spot for winter trout fishing. For those of you that are new to saltwater fishing, a mud bottom heats up quicker than a sand bottom and draws the fish out of the deeper water. This is an area known to produce some solid stringers of specks. *Continued on Page 2*

March Monthly Meeting

The scheduled speaker for the March 29, 2022 meeting is Scott Osborne with Avalon Fishing to tell the membership all about the angling opportunities in Cuba.

The meeting time is 7:00pm at our new meeting spot, **Trini Mendenhall Community Center, 1414 Wirt Road, Houston, Texas 77055.**

For Additional information, visit the club's webs site at texasflyfishers.org

Also, in this issue...

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Outings – Saltwater

Taylor Guest

Auction

Howard Finley

Reel Recovery

Dave Steffek

Fly Tying Festival

Ron Mayfield

Chris Sumers

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Chris Sumers

Webmaster

Monthly Meeting, March 29, 2022

This month's featured speaker is Scott Osborne with Avalon Fishing to tell the membership all about the angling opportunities in Cuba.

The club's new location for the monthly meetings is at the **Trini Mendenhall-Community Center, 1414 Wirt Road, Houston, Texas 77055** Set up, social hour and fly tying starts at 6:00 pm and the meeting kicks off about 7:00 pm. **Notice:** Local Covid protocols may be in effect so, come prepared, just in case.

Note to members: If you know someone who is interested in learning more about fly fishing and, you are just interested in socializing with a group of likeminded fly fishers, come to the March 29th meeting. There is no charge for admission and visitors are always welcome.

Let's Go Fishing! *Continued from Page 1*

April not only brings us Easter but, also one of the best month's for fishing. April 2 has the saltwater anglers headed to the Bolivar Marshes for redfish and speckled trout. Club President Don "Puck" Puckett will be leading this outing so, if you are interested in going on this trip, the information, along with contact information, is posted on the club's website.

April 23, the Texas FlyFishers will hold the club's premier freshwater and family oriented event, the John Scarborough Sunfish Spectacular at Damon 7 Lakes. Damon 7 Lakes is a great location for experienced and novice fly anglers alike. Along with some excellent fishing opportunities, lunch will be served and, at the end of the day, the presentation of the perpetual Sunfish Spectacular trophy to the champion. For times and additional details on the Sunfish, a detailed outline of the day's events, times, directions, proven fly patterns and other information, visit the website of, look for the E-Vite in your computer's Inbox.

These are just a few of the outings our club has scheduled for the year and, as the old saying goes "you snooze, you lose". So, don't be left out, visit the club's website, find an outing that suits your fancy and sign up for a fun day of fishing...or, better yet, visit with John and/or Taylor and volunteer to lead an outing. It'll be a great time.

Education

Marcos Enriquez, the club's education director, is busy working on a schedule of classes for Spring 2022. Also, our casting instructors, Jim Richards and Ron Mayfield, are putting the finishing touches on a series of casting classes for beginners to advanced students. These classes will be posted on the club's website as soon as dates and times are confirmed.



From the President's Desk

The State of the Texas Flyfishers, January, 2022

We saw a fall in our membership in the last few years due to the mandates in place. In 2021 with the relaxing of meeting outdoors we were able to go fishing, but gathering in groups was still discouraged, so we spread out and went fishing in much smaller groups.

So far, the guidelines have shifted, allowing us to get out, and enjoy nature. With that in mind, we plan to get on the water much more this year. Keep an eye on the website for details.

In 2021 our leadership shifted.

- John Eldred continued his role of Freshwater Outing Chair, relinquishing his role of VP and branching the Outing Chair into FW and SW once again.
- Taylor Guest stepped up to the SaltWater Outings Chair
- Chris Summers stepped up into the role of VP once again.



In November, before Thanksgiving, we had a successful Auction, led by Howard Finley, and his team.

Goals for 2022:

1. Fish more
2. Get more families to fish with us.
3. Recruit more members

Continue to support:

1. Reel Recovery
2. Project Healing Waters
3. Texas Parks and Wildlife
4. Trout in the Classroom

And more

1. Get new talent to step forward for leadership roles.
2. Increase our presence in our community
3. Increase participation in the Texas Council of FFI

We are looking forward to this New Year and hope to see you and our many new friends on the water.

Don C. Puckett, President

Outreach

Reel Recovery:

Reel Recovery has a full slate of Texas retreats scheduled for the Spring of 2022. The slots for these retreats fill up quickly so, visit their website, <https://reelrecovery.org/>, for additional information, available space, upcoming dates or, volunteer opportunities.





Calendar:

The following is an overview of activities currently scheduled by the Club for Spring - 2022. Dates, times and activities are subject to change. Please refer to the Club's website for updates and more detailed information, <https://texasflyfishers.org>

Club Activities Calendar for March through May 2022

March:

March 11-13, 2022: (FW) White Bass at Harmon Creek Campground and Marina on Lake Livingston. Fishing for white bass as they run up Harmon Creek out of Lake Livingston on their spring spawn.

<https://texasflyfishers.org/2021/10/24/march-11-13th-2022-harmon-creek-campground-and-marina/>

March 19, 2022: (SW) to Bastrop Bayou. Bastrop Bayou, with its mostly mud bottom, is a good spot for winter trout fishing. If you are interested in leading this outing, contact Taylor Guest.

March 29, 2022: March Monthly Meeting-Fly Fishing in Cuba. Scott Osborne, with Avalon Fishing, will enlighten us about traveling to and fishing the pristine Caribbean waters of Cuba.

March 29, 2022: F3T (Fly Fishing Film Tour) at Karbach Brewery. Tickets available through Gordy & Sons, <https://gordyandsons.com/2022-fly-fishing-film-tour-ticket55647/>

April:

April 2, 2022: (SW) Bolivar Marshes April 2 sees the saltwater anglers headed Stingaree Marina and then to the Bolivar Marshes for redfish and speckled trout.

<https://texasflyfishers.org/2022/02/08/spring-bolivar-marsh-saltwater-day-trip-2022-04-02/>

April 23, 2022: (FW) The John Scarborough Sunfish Spectacular at Damon 7 Lakes. Join us for the chance to capture the Annual John Scarborough Sunfish Spectacular Trophy and, enjoy a decent feed while doing it.

<https://texasflyfishers.org/2022/02/08/john-scarborough-sunfish-spectacular-2022-04-23-0700-date-locked/>

April 26, 2022: April Monthly Meeting: This month's scheduled speaker is angler Jennifer Matsu. More details to come.

April 30, 2022: (SW) Lost Lake / Lost River Marsh- Details are still being worked out. If you are interested in leading this outing, please contact Saltwater Outings Chair Taylor Guest.

May:

May 7, 2022: (SW) Drum Bay / Swan Lake - Details are still being worked out. If you are interested in leading this outing, please contact Saltwater Outings Chair Taylor Guest at

May 7, 2022: World Championship Bass on the Fly, Lake Fork Marina, Alba, Texas
<https://texasflyfishers.org/2022/03/07/world-championship-bass-on-the-fly-may-7-lake-fork-marina/>

May 20 - 23, 2022: (FW) The Annual South Llano River Trip, Junction, Texas. Always a popular outing, float and paddle the South Llano River, at Junction, Texas, targeting Guadalupe Bass, Rio Grande Perch, and feisty sunfish.

<https://texasflyfishers.org/2022/03/06/south-llano-river-float-trip-2022/>

May 31, 2022: May Monthly Meeting - May's scheduled speaker is Mike Green and he will be giving details about fly fishing in New Zealand.



Patterns of Nature

By Ron Mayfield

It was about 9:00 am when I reached the spot where swirls from large tails showed the position of feeding fish as they ambushed their prey. A few smaller fish even jumped out of the water. The current flowed around a grass-lined bend and created a slightly deeper pocket that was just deep enough to hold the feeding fish. A steady flow of prey was carried by the current along a stretch about 30 yards where the fish were feeding. A hazy sky filtered the sun and indicated the possibility of rain later in the day, which would keep the temperature cooler and hopefully the fish feeding longer. The wind blew just enough to form small ripples on the water, helping hide my presence from the feeding fish - but not too fast to disrupt casting accuracy. The abundance of food, the feeding fish and weather conditions were all just about perfect. This was going to be a good morning of fishing.

I watched for several minutes to see what the fish were feeding on. Then, to 'match the hatch', I put on my favorite finger mullet imitation, a dark green Rattle Mullet, and over the course of the morning, proceeded to hook 12 Southern Flounder (*Paralichthys lethostigma*) and land 8.

Fly fishing inevitably leads to a lifetime of learning, if you are serious about the sport. The most successful fly fishers I know systematically study the ecosystems they fish. They read books, watch videos, talk to experts and most importantly, spend time observing the ecosystems. Knowledge of an ecosystem develops a person into a naturalist – someone who becomes a student and then an expert in the natural history of the ecosystem. With this knowledge and enough time on the water, patterns become evident. All fish, all animals in fact, require certain conditions to survive: protection from predators, a clean and healthy environment, and access to food that doesn't require a great deal of energy to catch. All are prerequisites for an ecosystem to support a healthy population of fish. This is where patterns become evident.

The beginning of this story could be the description of fishing on any of the thousands of cold and warm water streams across North America. But it isn't. It's a description of fishing a small bayou on the Texas coast that drains a large marshy area. As I kayaked through this area, I was looking for those patterns I had learned for this ecosystem. Specifically, I was looking for:

1. Protection from predators – water that was deep enough for the fish to be safe,
2. An area that had no pollution or trash,
3. A current draining the marsh that would carry baitfish to the flounder so the flounder would not have to chase their prey. Flounder are ambush predators; they lay on the bottom and wait for baitfish to swim nearby.

As I came upon the bend in the bayou, I found all of the prerequisites for holding fish. But this was not by chance. I had researched the area using online aerial maps to locate a bayou that had multiple bends in hopes of finding a deeper pocket that would hold fish. I also looked for an area away from any of the industrial complexes that dot the Texas coast. Lastly, I timed my trip for a one tide day when there was an outgoing tide all morning. The tides along the Texas coast are not regular like on the east and west coasts. Texas and much of the Gulf of Mexico have irregular tides. Two tides day occur most of a lunar cycle, but for a few days before or after a full and new moon, there are one tide days called diurnal tides. The two tide days have little water movement in that the tide may vary only 6 inches to a foot. But during the diurnal tides, the tide may vary as much 2 to 2 ½ feet. This difference in tidal movement can be significant for the predatory fish as large numbers of baitfish such as finger mullet (striped mullet - *Mugil cephalus*) and silversides (striped anchovy, *Anchoa hepsetus*) are pulled out of the marshes by the faster currents - right to the waiting flounder. If fishing during the night, I prefer to fish the full moon diurnal tides because the fish have enough light to feed at night.

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if I'm fishing during the day, the new moon diurnal tide seems better because the fish haven't fed as much during the dark nights and will, hopefully, be much hungrier during the day.

My third cast resulted in a hit. My fifth cast resulted in a hook up. Then frustration – flounder can be very tricky.

Each family of fish have physical characteristics that require different technics to hook and land them. Hooking and landing a rainbow trout is very different from hooking and landing a tarpon which is very different from hooking and landing a flounder. Knowing the physical characteristics of the fish will lead to an understanding of their behavior which will, hopefully, lead to a better probability of hooking and landing the target species.

I think flounder are one of the most amazing fish species. They start life like most other fish with an eye on each side of their heads. But as they mature, one eye migrates to the other side of their head resulting in two eyes on one side. Then the side that has no eyes turns white and becomes the bottom side. The side with two eyes becomes the top side which is dark and has the ability to change colors to match the bottom of the bay. This amazing metamorphosis allows a flounder to lay on the bottom and camouflage itself. It then lies in wait for a baitfish to swim nearby. It strikes very quickly and grabs its prey.

Then comes the frustrating part.

Flounder have hard, bony jaws lined with short, sharp teeth. They use these hard, bony jaws to crush and hold their prey before swallowing. The process may take a few seconds as the flounder crushes its prey, then moves it around so it can swallow it head first. If a fly fisher tries to set the hook right at the initial hit, the result is usually pulling the fly out of the flounder's mouth. If you are conditioned to set the hook at the first strike, then waiting 2-3 seconds to set the hook can be quite challenging. If the fly you are using doesn't feel right, the flounder will many times spit out the fly during those 2-3 seconds, resulting in a hook set of nothing. If all goes correctly and you get a good hook set, then the frustration is still not over.

Flounder's mouths are turned 90 degrees to one side. This means if you set the hook then raise your rod tip straight up, many times you will pull the hook out of the side of the flounder's mouth. I've found it best to strip set the fly to get the hook through the bony jaw, then pull back with the rod low to one side. This avoids pulling the hook out of the side of the flounder's mouth. But if a large fish is hooked and it starts to run in the wrong direction, we are taught to flip the rod to the other side to turn the hooked fish. As you flip the rod and it goes vertical, many times the hook will again pull free.

These are all the reasons I hooked 12 flounder but only landed 8. My conditioning from years of hooking and catching other species resulting in my losing two-thirds of the flounder I hooked. Frustrating.

Then comes the fun of landing a flounder. I've seen people completely baffled when they hook then try to land their first flounder. You can't lip a flounder – too many teeth. If you try to put your finger through the gills you will quickly find that flounders have shallow mouths and your finger might find several teeth. You can't put your hand under their belly and lift them because there is no belly. You can grab a flounder right behind the gills and squeeze it hard enough to hold it – but this only works for small flounder. About the only sure way to land a good size flounder is with a net, but I don't like to land fish with nets as it damages the mucus protecting the fish's skin. But with flounder, especially large flounder, it's about the best way to not lose a fish. Then like with any toothy fish species, pliers or forceps are needed to remove the hook.

I missed four fish before I reconditioned myself to do everything correctly and land a flounder. The third fish I missed was the biggest of the day. When it started to run, I flipped my rod from one side to the other and the hook came free. So, to put it all together, hooking and landing a flounder requires:

Use a fly pattern that feels like a baitfish. It must have enough thickness and mass so when the flounder grabs it, it will fool the flounder so it won't spit it out.

1. Wait 2-3 seconds after the initial hit before setting the hook.
2. Use a strong stripe set to get the hook through the flounder's bony jaw.
3. Pull back with the rod low to one side and don't raise the rod tip.
4. Land large flounder with a net.
5. Use pliers or forceps to remove the hook.

If you do everything correctly and are inclined to keep a flounder for the oven, your reward will be one of the best tasting fish in the ocean. Flounder have light, flaky-white meat with a mild flavor and no fishy taste. Stuffed baked flounder is very high on my wife's list of favorite dishes.

But success all starts with understanding your ecosystem and knowing your target species. Do the research, study, observe and learn so you can identify the patterns of nature that will not only result in a fun day of fishing, but also a deep appreciation of the wonders of nature. The best fly fishers I know are amazing naturalists.

And yes, flounder do jump out of the water when chasing baitfish. It's quite a sight to see a flat fish go aerial.

Good fishing.

Ron Mayfield

FFI Casting Instructor

Director of Fly Tying – FFI Texas Council

Umpqua Fly Designer



In Case You Missed It:

The Return of the Dr. Ed Rizzolo Fly Tying Festival

Saturday, February 12th, 2022, saw the return of the Annual Dr. Ed Rizzolo Fly Tying Festival, post Covid version, at the Trini Mendenhall Community Center in Houston, Texas. The spirits were high and the tyers were enthusiastic. While the turnout was less than in the pre-pandemic years, there were tyers who traveled from as away from Dallas, San Antonio and, the Rio Grande Valley. The same was true with the audience, ignoring the inclement weather and coming in from Devine, San Antonio, Austin, El Campo and Pflugerville.

On the main floor, our tyers kept the audience entertained, showing off their skills tying a variety of flies from Joe Nicklo's Size 20 nymphs to Scott Fossom's articulated Game Changer to Tim Stokley's tarpon flies, destined for Costa Rica.

In the classroom sessions, the audiences were well entertained and informed by Don Puckett, Texas FlyFishers club President, with his *5 Minute Foam Patterns* for bass, sunfish, trout and most any other freshwater target and, Dr. Reynaldo Ramirez, who introduced the festival to his krimp pattern

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(Krab/Shrimp), The Macko Fly, a deadly pattern for redfish and most other shallow water species. In between those two, the Featured Tyer, Jerry Coviello, the Chairman of the Fly Fishers International Fly Tying Board of Governors, brought everyone up to date with improvements and additions to the Fly Tying Group website and then, demonstrated some of his favorite and most productive trout patterns, along with the intricacies of tying them.

The big hit of the day was the return of the Iron Fly Competition. The Iron Fly Competition is a timed event in which the contestants are given 12 materials and 5 minutes in which to design their entry...Oh yeah, and before the tying takes place, the contestants are given a mystery material that much be included in their entry.

The tyers then have 15 minutes to tie their entry which, hopefully, qualifies them for the Championship Round. Then, it happens all over again, with a fresh set of materials. After two rounds of tying, this year's Iron Fly Champion was Kevin Hutchison, Hill Country guide and tyer extraordinaire. Congratulations to all the contestants.

So, now that we have this year's event behind us, the time has come to begin work on next year's, 30th Anniversary Dr. Ed Rizzolo Fly Tying Festival, scheduled for Saturday, February 11, 2023 so, mark your calendars. Update will be posted on the Texas FlyFishers website, www.texasflyfishers.org, as they develop so, we can make the 2023 Festival bigger and better than before. *Editor*



Fly of the Month

Orange Mop Fly

Submitted and tied by Don Puckett

Discussion:

1. Is it a fly?
2. Is it not a fly?
3. Is it “cheating?”
4. Does it work?
5. Are there other ways to tie it?

My answers:

1. Yes
2. No
3. No
4. Yes
5. Of course.

Materials:

- 1/80 oz jig hook
- Orange thread 6/0
- Orange mop material
- Orange marabou
- Alcohol based Head cement



Tying Instructions

Step 1:

Place hook in vice.



Step 2:

Wrap thread base



Continued

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Step 3:

Snip mop material as close as possible to base of fabric



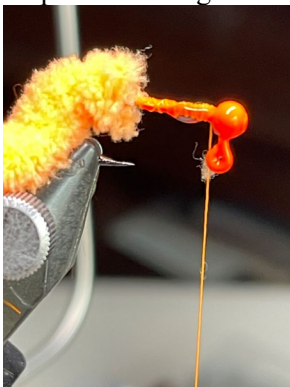
Step 4:

Slide mop material onto hook.



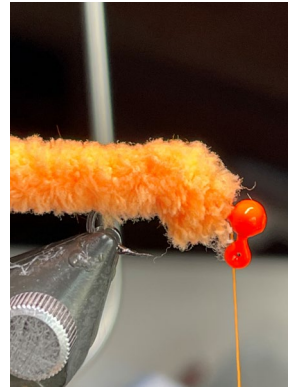
Step 5:

Add some head cement to the threads, allowing the mop material to grab it.



Step 6:

Tie off mop material to fly and half hitch it.



Step 7:

This is not my favorite type of marabou feather. It has a hard stem in the center and the fibers at the point are useless. For this fly however it is perfect.



Continued

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Step 8:

Grab the fibers between your fingers and cut. Try to align the tips as best you can.



Step 8a:

If you don't get enough the first pass, grab some more.



Step 9:

Hold onto them, in an attempt to align the tips.



Step 10:

Make a dubbing loop and put the marabou fibers into it.



Step 11:

Spread them out, fairly evenly, if you can.



Step 12:

Start twisting the dubbing loop, brushing out the fibers as needed.



Continued

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Step 13:

Palmer the dubbing loop all the way to the head of the fly. Make sure not to trap feather fibers and brush out as needed.



Step 14:

Add head cement and let it dry.



Step 14:

Tie everything down and put a whip finish on. Or at least three half hitches.





General Information

For additional information, check out the Texas FlyFishers website at <https://texasflyfishers.org/> or, the Texas FlyFishers Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/TexasFlyfishers/>

Texas FlyFishers Membership Application

Please Check One: New Application Renewal

To join the Texas FlyFishers or, renew your membership, please complete this form and mail it with your check to the address below or, bring it with you to one of our monthly meetings. All memberships expire August 31st of each year and, renewals are due by September 1st.

The Texas FlyFishers monthly meetings are also available to members who are unable to attend in person via Zoom app. Log On information will be posted on the club website and members will receive an e-mailed notice with log on information each month. The meetings are held on the last Tuesday of every month (except December) beginning at 6:30 pm, unless otherwise noted.

Annual Dues (check one): Individual at \$30.00/year; Family at \$50.00/year; Student at \$15.00/year

Make check payable to Texas FlyFishers.

Dues can also be paid via PayPal link on the Club's website, <https://texasflyfishers.org/paypal-link-test/>

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: () _____ - _____ Work / Cell Phone: () _____ - _____

E-Mail: _____ Are You a FFI Member: _____

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