

The Taut Line

May 2009

Volume 22, Issue 7

The Taut Line Newsletter is a publication of the North Coast Fly Fishers, Inc. (NCF) who is solely responsible for its content. The Taut Line is published ten times yearly from September thru June, under the direction of the Director of Communications, NCF. All inquiries should be directed to:

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The North Coast Fly Fishers, Inc is a Charter Club of the Federation of Fly Fishers (FFF). Its purpose is to promote fly-fishing as the most enjoyable and sporting method of fishing. We are committed to provide education in the best practices and techniques of the sport, including fly tying, fly casting and resource conservation. Our members are committed to maintaining a current membership in the FFF.

New Format

You will note that the format of Taut Line has changed. With the move to a fully on-line newsletter we are setting the format so that it is easier to read in a scroll down manner. This also makes it easier to prepare. The simpler format also makes it easier for all of our members to contribute material for the newsletter. Thanks to Herb Ramerman for his article in this issue. It's a good example.

The typical content of the newsletter will be the club president's remarks, announcements about upcoming meetings and events, news and articles of general interest to fly fishers, special items about FFF and the Ohio Council, and odds and ends that members contribute. We will no longer include the favorite fly recipe and drawings. Provision is being made to post all favorite fly drawings on the NCF web site. This should include the ability to search the patterns by style, date and tier. We may include a link in the newsletter to the most recent favorite fly.

Next Meeting

Monthly Membership Meeting

Wednesday, May 6, 2009

Lake Metroparks - Penitentiary Glen

8966 Kirtland - Chardon Rd., Kirtland, Ohio

6:30 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.

Speaker: Eric Austin

Topic: Tying Classic Flies

6:30 – 8:00 Beginner Fly Tying & Favorite Fly Tying
8:00 – 10:00 Speaker

Note: We are returning to Penitentiary Glen

May Speaker

Our May speaker will be Eric Austin from Delaware Ohio. How he got to tying Classic Flies from starting out as a musician in a traveling rock band could be an interesting subject in and of itself. However, Eric will be showing us some classic wet fly ties in the English and American styles, no-hackle winging and a full dress salmon fly. These are styles for neophytes to learn and intermediate and accomplished tiers to review. These are techniques we all like to keep in our repertoire and review periodically.

Eric has a web site (www.traditionalflies.com) that contains flies, tying techniques and tricks and also links to other classic fly tying sites. He has also contributed to www.flyangleronline.com. At this site, you scroll to the bottom of the home page and there are a number of topics in small print. Eric's contributions are in "just old flies", double click on it and you will be presented with a 'lot' of information!

Hope to see you on May 6; should be a great program!

Favorite Fly Tier - May

Tom Warmington will be our Favorite Fly Tier on May 6, 2009.

Materials will be supplied. Just remember to bring your fly tying vise and tools, and tie along with Tom as he leads the May Favorite Fly session.

The Mad River, Ohio's Trout Stream

As our April speaker, Buckley Juhasz from Beaver Creek, Ohio gave us a thoughtful tour of the Mad River and its tributaries. He pointed out a number of good access points, fishing holes, and how to approach them under a variety of conditions. His extensive experience in the area was evident as he shared with us insights on where to stay and find a great meal. One could sense that a number of our members will be making trips to the Mad, and using the insights Buckley has given us into this often overlooked Ohio trout stream. Following are pictures of Buckley and a couple of our raffle winners.



NCCF Activity / Education Survey

Our club has a pretty active program, most of which we squeeze into our monthly meetings on the first Wednesday of the month. And, over the years we have tried a number of other activities. Some worked and others did not. Periodically it's useful to check to see if there are other things club members would like to do or to learn more about. That's the purpose of this survey. It is in 2 parts: Potential Club Activities and Potential Education Topics. Look over the ideas, make a copy of this survey section, and circle those that are of interest to you. If you have other ideas that interest you, note them on your copy. One idea that has been suggested was a members only blog associated with our web site. Turn in your response at the registration desk at the next club meeting, or send it to Lenny Jagoda or Dick Erickson. This will help guide your board in developing new activities and topics for speaker and educational programs.

POTENTIAL CLUB ACTIVITIES:

Extra Monthly Meeting for Fly Fishing Crafts (Sept, Oct, Nov, Feb, Mar, Apr, May)
-- Fly Tying, Rod building, Net building, Lanyards, Other (Specify)
--Include Instruction?

Dinner / Lunch get-together for conversation and fellowship

Monthly (Apr to Nov) Outing at various local fishing holes
--No special arrangements; just a chance to get together to fish

NCCF Arranged Trips to distant fishing locations
-- Out-of-State
-- Out-of-Country

POTENTIAL EDUCATION TOPICS:

Rod Building

Net Building

Leader Construction

-- Proportions, Tapering for Steelhead, Bass, Crappie, Bluegill, Trout

Tying Techniques

-- Wings

-- Biots

-- Dubbing

-- Hackling

-- Parachute Posts

-- Spinning Hair

-- Weaving

-- Proportions

-- Other (Specify)

Popper Construction

Line Casting

-- Double Haul, Accuracy, Wind & Flow Adjustments

Tackle Maintenance

Nominating Committee

The nominating committee (Dick Erickson, Holly Freedman, and Mike Colo) has prepared a slate of directors which was presented to the NCFE board on April 8, and will be presented for election by club members at the May 6th meeting. Additional nominations from the floor may be made at that time. The new board of directors will then elect officers at the May 13th board meeting for announcement at the club picnic in June. The nominees for NCFE directors for 2009-2010 are:

Debbie Berkebile

Tim Rohmer

Paul Blanch

Don Van Buren

Mike Colo

George Vosmik

Dick Erickson

Tom Warmington

Jim Gavacs

Joe Wantz

Herb Imondi

Laszlo Zala

Lenny Jagoda

Odds & Ends

New Director: Debbie Berkebile was elected to the NCFB board of directors at the April 8th meeting. Debbie will be taking over as editor of the Taut Line.

The Federation of Fly Fishers has changed its address in Livingston, MT. Mail should now be sent to: Federation of Fly Fishers, PO Box 1688, Livingston, MT 59047. UPS & Fed X Shipments should be sent to: Federation of Fly Fishers, 5237 US Hwy 89 S, Livingston, MT 59047.

FFF is working toward being able to send out the Flyfisher Magazine to members electronically. By sending the Flyfisher this way the FFF will be saving rising printing and postage costs that can then go towards other important programs. There is no need to send an e-mail to the FFF office if you want to continue receiving the magazine by hard copy. *If You Want To Receive The Flyfisher by E-mail.* send your e-mail to fffoffice@fedflyfishers.org. Please put the following in Subject Field of your e-mail: Flyfisher. Advise FFF member number if you have it on hand – not required. Give your full name, city & state, and e-mail address you would like the magazine sent to.

The FFF Conclave 2009 pre-registration will open April 2009. Lodging information can be found on this web page <http://www.federationconclave.org/Default.aspx?tabid=4868>. This year's Conclave will be held in Loveland, Colorado, and the dates are July 28th – August 1st. Please join other FFF members in the fun and fellowship.

The Federation of Fly Fishers has launched a national Pledge drive to promote Anglers' Legacy, a program from the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (RBFF). The promotion will encourage anglers to share their love of boating and fishing and introduce newcomers to the sport. "We are thrilled that the Federation of Fly Fishers will be encouraging anglers to share the legacy of the sport with newcomers," said RBFF President and CEO Frank Peterson. "Through their councils, affiliate clubs and events nationwide, the Federation will spread the Anglers' Legacy message throughout the fly fishing community. This will bring us closer to our goal of 85,000 new Ambassadors this year and help us increase participation in boating and fishing." The Federation of Fly Fishers will offer a half-price membership (\$15) with every Pledge, to all new Ambassadors (who are not currently FFF members) and also the newcomers they take fishing. Take the pledge today at:

<http://www.takemefishing.org/community/anglers-legacy/take-the-pledge/promo/FEDFLY08>

A Surprising Catch

By Herb Ramerman, NCFB

We've been trying to avoid part of the cold Cleveland winters for about ten years now – spending 2 or 3 weeks on Longboat Key, a narrow strip of sand in the Gulf of Mexico near Sarasota, Florida. One of my favorite things to do is spend a few hours, as often as possible, wading the grass flats of Sarasota Bay. Even if the Sea Trout, Ladyfish or Pompano don't cooperate, the sheer beauty of the area plus the sight of a variety of sea birds, crabs, shells, dolphins and manatees make each outing very enjoyable.

This year the weather was cooler than normal, with water temperatures in the low 60's, which usually slows the bite and definitely necessitates the use of waders for *this* senior citizen. The first week saw

very few fish caught and ended with a very chill cold front moving through. Temps were down in the 30's at night.

Now it had been 3 days since my last outing. The day dawned with temps in the 40's. Although I didn't expect much success, I was anxious to give it a try, but decided to wait until 1:30 pm to give the newly found sunshine a chance to warm the water a bit. For some reason I decided to try my heavier 9 wt. rod and large arbor reel -- with plenty of backing. Fly choice, a pink and white Clouser.

The wind was still blowing briskly from the north so I kept it at my back while prospecting each pothole. A small Sea Trout and a few Pinfish (a pretty little fish the size of a Bluegill) were landed before having a strike that seemed a bit more promising. The fish stayed in the pothole a moment before realizing it was hooked. Then the real fun began. I could only watch as the backing disappeared on the first run, and hope it had been tied on securely. The mystery fish stopped just in time, and now it was my turn to work it back. The fish returned grudgingly to the area it had been hooked before it made a second equally long run. What could this be? I'd never encountered anything like this in these waters. I worked it back one more time, and now side pressure kept it more under control. Finally got a glimpse of a fin as it fought back and forth, right to left about 20 feet away. It looked like I might finally win this 15 minute battle. I had no net so it was fortunate the fish was thoroughly spent when I reached out and grabbed the leader. Could it be? This looks like a fish I'd caught while fishing with George Vosmik on Marathon Key some years ago. If it is, it's a long way from home.

My camera was inside my chest waders at belt level. With the rod tucked under my arm while walking the fish like a dog on a leash with one hand, I fumbled to get it out and open without dropping it into the thigh-deep water. What a scene!

Fortunately, the hook was firmly set. But the fish swam left to right and front to back as I pointed the camera in its general direction and managed to snap 7 shots -- enough to identify my 24" Prize. Photo session over, it now looked revived. So the fly was quickly removed and I watched it swim slowly away.

I soon had rod in hand again, and it wasn't long till two Sea Trout of 19" and 20" were also landed. These Trout had been decimated by the Red Tide four years earlier, and these were the first of this size I'd caught since then. Suddenly a bank of clouds covered the sun and the bite came to an abrupt end.

Wow! What an unexpected great day!

Now to get this catch verified we went off to the local bait shop and happened to meet a renowned area guide of 25 years. After viewing the pics he said yes, this surely was . . . a Bonefish. And, he'd only seen 3 others caught in these waters in all those years. A surprising catch indeed!

P.S. Even got this fish story written up in the local *Pelican Press*. My moment of Florida fame! It made for some fun times with all our friends back at the Sandpiper Inn.

Cold Creek Adventure

After having participated every year in the annual Division of Wildlife lottery for a permit to fish Cold Creek at the Castalia Fish Hatchery, Jim Gavacs finally won a permit. He and Dick Erickson enjoyed a beautiful Friday, April 17 learning about the hatchery and catching the limit of fish.

Cold Creek is fed by the Blue Hole, and got its name because no fish could live in the stream. The year around 50 degree water from the Blue Hole was so oxygen poor and nitrogen rich that any fish placed in the water would die. However, by aerating the water, a good trout environment was achieved. Water from the Blue Hole is now aerated and feeds both the hatchery and Cold Creek. Rainbow trout are raised in the hatchery in spring and summer for stocking throughout northern Ohio, including the section of Cold Creek that runs through the hatchery. In the summer part of the hatchery is cleared of rainbows and steelhead are raised for stocking Lake Erie tributaries.

The section of the Cold Creek in the hatchery meanders between well mowed and maintained banks. There is no wading allowed. Most of the stream is just a couple feet deep, but there are some deep holes and minor obstructions. The volume of water from the Blue Hole is sufficient to maintain a good current. The water is so crystal clear that the fish are very visible, and it is most instructional to observe their reaction to the flies that are offered. Most of the fish are rainbows, but there is an occasional brown. Only one permit is granted each day. All fish caught must be kept and each person may catch 5 fish.

Jim and Dick went unsure of what they would find, and expecting 12 to 14 inch fish (i.e., with small coolers). Instead, they caught fish that were generally 20 plus inches. They fished streamers, nymphs and dries, and caught fish on each. After checking in, a brief tour of the hatchery and rigging up, they began fishing about 8:30 AM. It didn't take long for Dick to get the first fish, one of the largest of the day. Before noon each had his limit. Then the struggle of getting the big fish in the small coolers! Needless to say, it was a very enjoyable adventure. Both will be regular participants in future permit lotteries.



Timing is Everything – Simple Keys to Winter Fishing

By Jon Ray - Taken from the St Joseph River Valley Fly Fishers Club Newsletter

I think we have all heard the expression “should have been here yesterday”. As a steelhead fisherman that loves catching these magnificent migratory rainbows and spends over 140 days a year chasing them, I have come to realize that there are days when your timing is everything and there are going to be days we don’t talk about as much. Now the big question is; how do we learn how to time our fishing trips and where do we go to maximize our time spent fishing? Winter steelhead fishing is all about timing and this is probably even more important than during other times of the year. Knowing when to hit the water and what water you need to be fishing is very crucial to your success.

Understanding what water types to focus your fishing time on during the winter months is probably the hardest part of winter steelhead fishing. One of the biggest factors working against you is the lack of actual time you have to fish during the winter. During the colder months there seems to be a smaller “bite time” because there is actually less day light and that is compounded by the fact that it is just plain cold outside! Trying to use the warmest part of the day to your advantage is a good strategy to start with. This will allow you to take advantage of any warming trends occurring over the course of a day which should increase steelhead activity levels. Next we have to figure what water type to look for, instead of breaking down the river into pools, rifles, and seams let’s talk about two different river types instead: a big river versus a small river.

Examples of big river systems would be the St. Joe, Muskegon and Manistee Rivers. Examples of smaller rivers are the Bear Creek, Little Manistee, and Pere Marquette Rivers. When I refer to a river as being “big or small”, I am not just referring to the length of the stream, but more importantly the width and volume of water contained within each of the river systems making them unique. Big rivers like the Muskegon and Manistee Rivers have huge runs of steelhead totaling well into the thousands and some reports suggest ten thousand fish per season. Small rivers for the most part do not see those large numbers of fish every year. So if you are sitting on a small stream hunting for that elusive chrome beast, we can say for arguments sake that hooking and landing a steelhead in the tight quarters of a small stream is more special than landing one on the bigger rivers? If you can buy that argument then knowing when to hit your small streams and how to use that timing to your advantage will help you find more steelhead during the winter. Paying attention to certain key factors will help the angler determine whether they should fish a big or small river.

Water Volume - During the months of December, January, and February, water volume in our rivers is low and stays pretty steady for the most part. During this time of year we are still several weeks from a big thaw, but each year we see warming trends which start to melt our snow base giving us a flush of water. With the ground frozen solid as a rock and the swamps iced over, the rain and /or melting snow has only one place to go, straight into our rivers! This trigger of water will do a couple of things for a winter steelhead angler; first it will usually flood our smaller streams making them unsafe to wade for a couple days. Second, smaller streams will rise fast and our bigger rivers will rise slowly. Our large rivers are controlled most in part by big hydroelectric dams. These dams act as buffers and control the amount of water that is released during these times. Big rivers tend to rise more slowly over a couple of days time and will tend to hold their level longer before falling back to more typical winter flows. However, smaller rivers tend to follow a different pattern regarding increasing flows. Just as fast as the small streams came up with the increase of water volume, they will quickly descend. It is during this time

when the river has peaked and begins receding that you NEED TO FISH!!! This time frame, this “got to go fishing period”, will usually only last a couple of days. Once the river has dropped back to its normal flow your opportunity for that “good bite” will be over and you will be missing one of those special times.

This was the story for northern Michigan this past year in late December. We had almost three feet of standing snow throughout the region and then a 24-hour weather system came through dumping a warm rain into the mix. All the local rivers rose quickly as a couple inches of rain fell in our area. The next day all the rivers were unsafe to fish because of the rising water, but the anticipation began to set in. Two days later as conditions started improving, the steelhead itch started to crawl all over my skin so I grabbed my rod, a few big ugly flies, and hit a small local river that nobody talks about. You know the kind of river that does not have an online fishing report and where usually you can't even shut your truck door without letting the steelhead know you're coming. Over the next few days I had a blast on that small stream with safer water conditions and fresh aggressive steelhead eager to take my mid-size leeches!

Now this same weather pattern that brought such good fishing to my small stream also brought the big rivers fresh pushes of chrome, but the fishing was not as good, why? First, on a big river with increasing water levels it gives your steelhead about a million more spots to sit. In a big river showing our fly to moving fish is harder with increasing water as the pinch points to cut off moving fish are bigger! The moving fish in the small river had no choice but to pay attention to the leeches, nymphs, and big eggs whereas the big river fish most likely never saw these offerings. Once the water levels on the smaller stream leveled back to more normal flows the fishing slowed down, however, just the opposite happened on the bigger rivers! The steelhead settled into their comfortable runs, seams, and pockets, and again started to hunt for food. One interesting note was the time differences between the “good bite” on each river was about 7-10 days. Knowing when to be on which river and at what times provided us the best chance during the winter for steelhead success.

Big Chill - So now you have the steelhead itch and the itch is so bad it can't possibly be scratched because the temperature outside is well into the single digits and the night time lows are below zero. As you sit at home or work and watch the weather forecast you see a break coming in a few days. All the fishing reports that you scroll through on a regular basis have not been updated and even the out of work fishing guides are not crazy enough to fish in this weather. As the day with highs forecasted somewhere in the thirties approaches you find yourself asking, where do I go to find a fish or two? Considering the big river versus smallriver dilemma I would recommend you hit the big river in this case.

Long lasting extreme temperatures have a greater effect on small rivers than big rivers; large volumes of water can absorb very cold temperatures without freezing. One cannot fish for steelhead with fly gear if the fish are hiding underneath the ice.

As was the case again this year during the first couple weeks of January. If we look at what happened on the Pere Marquette, Manistee and Muskegon rivers we can consider the ice forming conditions in greater detail. With extremely cold weather for almost a week straight, the Pere Marquette had a chance to form a very thick layer of shelf ice. Whereas the big rivers such as the Manistee and

Muskegon had very little shelf ice, especially closer to the dams. So as air temps climbed for a couple days we needed to find open water to fish. The water below Tippy Dam and Croton Dam on the Manistee and Muskegon Rivers provided us with open water to fling our flies in while searching for holding winter steelhead. Because our dams in Michigan use bottom or middle draw gates in their turbine construction, the warmer water from the bottom of the reservoirs is being discharged from the hydroelectric dams into our rivers allowing the water to remain ice free closest to the dams. Now don't laugh, this is not hot spring water, but even a half of a degree in temperature can make a difference between having ice covered and open water in the winter! While fishing below Tippy Dam we had steelhead and trout come to big black stones, eggs, and streamers. By having an understanding of how different volumes of water behave under extreme temperature conditions allowed us to focus our fishing energy on the appropriate river system.

Spring Thaw - Our small rivers, the same rivers that have been covered by ice and snow, will warm up first and fast as the first signs of spring start to show up. As the day light hours increase try getting out on fresh water that might have once been frozen over, but is now running clean of ice. River sections that have been previously frozen over for an extended period of time will begin to yield you aggressive and willing steelhead that are hungry for a properly presented meal. As water temps rise steelhead will start to wake from their winter slumber. These mighty migratory rainbows will take advantage of the river as it too starts to wake from a long cold winter and head upstream to their historic spawning grounds. Small rivers are always the first to show off early black stones along with Alevins popping from the gravel after last fall's salmon run. By understanding and taking advantage of a small river's characteristics to heat up fast, this will put you in the best position to find aggressive steelhead. The opposite scenario may play out on a bigger river that is better insulated from both warm and cold temperature changes and will probably take longer to show signs of the anticipated spring time life.

Lucky Anglers - If we sit back and think about all the opportunities we have here in Michigan, with so many different rivers holding steelhead that are open to fishing during the winter, it feels like our biggest problem this time of year is just getting out of our driveway that is buried in snow and then choosing which river to fish! Having so many opportunities gives us an advantage as anglers. Picking a river based on its size that will match the day's most current conditions is an important strategy for the winter steelhead fisherman. The next time you are planning a fishing trip try using a couple of the indicators that we discussed and that Mother Nature typically shows us. Paying attention to variables such as temperature, flow, and then by considering the volume or size of the river you wish to fish should help to point you in the right direction regarding where to fish to maximize your winter steelhead success.

2008-2009 NCCF

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Schedule of Upcoming Events

May 6, 2009	Members Meeting	Penitentiary Glen 6:30 – 10:00 p.m.
May 13, 2009	Board of Directors Meeting	Penitentiary Glen 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
June 3, 2009	Members Picnic	Chagrin River Park 6:30 – 9:00 p.m.
June 10, 2009	Board of Directors Meeting	Penitentiary Glen 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
September 2, 2009	Members Meeting	Penitentiary Glen 6:30 – 10:00 p.m.
September 9, 2009	Board of Directors Meeting	Penitentiary Glen 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
October 7, 2009	Members Meeting	Penitentiary Glen 6:30 – 10:00 p.m.
October 14, 2009	Board of Directors Meeting	Penitentiary Glen 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.