



The Tippet

September 2001

President's Message

Welcome back everyone,

Where in the world did the summer go? I remember when I was in grade school the summers seemed to last an eternity. This year it appears that I fell asleep shortly after gorging myself on one of Bill's amazing Dutch oven creations at the St. Joe and woke up to see the students returning and wheat disappearing from the Palouse. I must have been asleep because there is no way the early steelheading was as good this year as I remember. It must have been a dream, or was it.

The St. Joe pigout/fishout was a wonderful time once again. Though we experienced quite a drop in total food consumption due to the absence of Dustin, leaving me the only heavy hitter with none to compete with. The food quality was as good as ever, it just seems a little strange to be camping out eating things like shrimp, tenderloin, ice cream etc. Oh and the fishing was pretty darn good too, though I received some strange looks from fellow anglers, you would think they never saw someone fishing for cutthroats with a 15' 10 wt.

This month's meeting will be show and tell time with a little lying thrown in I'm sure. Bring your pictures, broken rods, etc. We will also possibly be visited by Greg Haller from the Nez Perce tribe depending on his availability. The meeting may also serve a good opportunity to buy certain folks a few stiff drinks and ask them some steelheading questions.

Speaking of steelhead, I hope everyone

is getting primed and ready for this year's run. If things fall into place it ought to be an amazing year. I hope to return from B.C. the end of October to here some great stories. Yes it is true, I won't be around for the month of October to beat Dave Yonge to his favorite runs, that will have to be left to someone else.

Look forward to seeing everyone at the meeting, don't forget pictures and the slide projector will be available if needed.

Your Prez,

John D. Toker

Casting About

Okay, so you are thinking (or fantasizing) about buying a new reel, and the flyfishing magazines and catalogs are loudly touting the newest thing: the Large Arbor reel. What's a large arbor reel? Well, the arbor is the center post of the reel. With the standard reel, one turn equals one spool revolution. The amount of line picked up depends on the amount of line out, i.e., how full the reel is. If you are close to the arbor--near the backing--the reel picks up a small amount of line with each turn, so you have to wind like crazy to reel in a fish charging toward you. If only the last few feet of line are out, the reel retrieves at a faster clip.

Saltwater fishers eager to land the big, fast running tuna and bonefish caused reel makers to come up with large diameter, strong drag systems. The reel diameter was increased to hold the same amount of backing and line, but also to make retrieving line faster. Could this concept be adapted to freshwater fishing? But, of course. Freshwater anglers, though, did not need the same amount of backing for streams and rivers as their saltwater counterparts (Really, now, how often do you get to your backing?), and they did not want the weight of those big reels. (*Editor's note: steelheader's excluded!*)

The Loop reel company responded by coming up with the first large diameter reel with a large center post, or arbor. Many others followed, and now there is a wide range of offerings. The manufacturers took the basic reel and increased the size of the diameter and center post. (See illustration based on Orvis Battenkill 5/6W large arbor vs. standard reel.) This reduced the amount of backing space available, so some makers increased the width to make up for some of the loss. Then to decrease the weight, holes were drilled in the spools and frames to lighten the load.

The greatest advantage of the large arbor reel is the speed of retrieve. Generally, you can retrieve 3 to 4 times more line with one crank. Other advantages are faster pick-up and more consistent drag pressure as well as faster strip out of line. Also, the line is stored in larger coils on the reel, so there is less line curling as more line comes off the reel and you get close to the backing.

(Continued on next page)

Clearwater Fly Casters 2001 Officers

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www.clearwaterflycasters.com

CFC membership dues are \$20/year for individuals, \$25/year for families, \$10/year for students, \$50/sustaining and \$300/lifetime.

Meetings on 2nd Wednesday, Sept - May, at Lakey's Grill, 300 S Grand, Pullman, WA

Wet Fly time at 6:00pm, dinner at 6:30pm and program at 8:00pm



Casting About (cont.)

So, if you are thinking about a large arbor reel, there are a few things to keep in mind: The key factor is the diameter of the reel, not the arbor size. The general rule is that the larger the diameter, the faster the retrieve. BUT, if a large arbor reel does not have either a large diameter or wider spool, there is no advantage except for weight reduction. A standard-size reel with a large arbor does nothing for you except reduce the backing capacity, and maybe that of the line. Also, if a spool is more than 1 1/8" wide, it is difficult to wind line onto the spool evenly during a fast retrieval (like with a fish on the line). The line will pile up on one side, and then fall down onto the empty side of the spool in loose coils. As more line is retrieved, it tightens under the loosely wound coils. When the fish takes off again, the line stops or jerks and the fish may break off.

Large arbor reels are like any better mousetrap. They cost considerably more, but are a good innovation-- something to seriously consider buying if a new reel is in your future. Do, however, test several before buying one. Your favorite fly shop will let you do that, and help you decide if one is for you.

(by Rosemary Weise of the Northwest Women Flyfishers for the FFF ClubWire Email NewsWire)

Fly Fishing Quiz

1. A tailing loop is caused by a
 - A) Convex path of the rod tip
 - B) Concave path of the rod tip
 - C) Straight line path of the rod tip
 - D) None of the above
2. The primary purpose of the double haul is to
 - A) Increase distance
 - B) Reduce slack line
 - C) Make a delicate presentation
 - D) Increase line speed
3. The original greenheart spey rods were sometimes 18 to 20 feet long. Typical spey rods used today are _____ feet long
 - A) 5 to 8
 - B) 8 to 11
 - C) 11 to 14
 - D) 14 to 17

(Continued on the next page)

Steelhead on the Net

Fish counts, streamflows and river reports are important pieces of homework for those seeking to catch a steelhead on the Clearwater, Snake and Grand Ronde Rivers. While knowing these things won't guarantee you a fish, they will help you spend less time chasing phantom fish and casting to empty pools.

Your first stop on the Internet should be to check fish reports at Twin River Anglers webpage (<http://www.traflyfish.com/rivers/idaho/clear.htm>). Joe Norton maintains several years worth of reports for many of our region's steelhead streams. For weekly fishing reports with weekly updates see the drop down menu: current report. Streamflows (available for Spalding, Peck, Orofino and the South Fork at Stites) are also available from this page. Heading over to TWA's Washington river reports will also allow you to check lots of other rivers like the Snake and the Grande Ronde. Well worth the time to check. But remember Cousin Joe's adage, 'if you wait to see it here, you're probably too late!'

Another important component is the strength of the returning run. Checking fish counts will give you a fairly good idea of where, when and how many steelhead have made it past the gauntlet of dams on the Columbia and Snake. For fish counts see check out the Fish Passage Center at (<http://www.fpc.org/>). Select the Adult data link http://www.fpc.org/CurrentDaily/7day-ytd_adults.htm and scroll down to Lower Granite Dam stats (the last of eight the fish must negotiate). Here you'll find the steelhead counts, separated into both hatchery and wild counts. From this page you can also check dam(n) flows and spills (<http://www.fpc.org/CurrentDaily/flowspil.txt>), or lack thereof, for Dworshak and Hells Canyon Dams. Though less useful, temperature at the dams can be found at (<http://www.fpc.org/tempgraphs/tempsubmit.htm>). You can also download the information in a weekly report (<http://www.fpc.org/weekrprt/wr2001/2001wr.html>) in pdf (portable document format) that requires Adobe Acrobat's free reader. Included in the weekly report are often interesting tidbits such as reservoir operations, hatchery releases and juvenile transport information.

Announcements

Northwest Fly Casting Exposition. September 29th, 2001. Port Orchard, WA.

Information on the Northwest Fly Casting Exposition, September 29, 2001 at Trophy Lake Golf and Casting, near Port Orchard, WA is available on the WSCFFF web site at:

<http://www.fedflyfishers.org/wcfff/index.html> or
<http://www.fedflyfishers.org/wcfff/fly-fishing-expo.htm>

Upcoming Events

September 12, 2001 6:00 pm. Clearwater Fly Casters meeting at Lakey's Grill in Pullman

September 19, 2001 CFC Board/Conservation meeting, 5:30 pm at Rico's in Pullman

September 29, 2001 Northwest Fly Casting Exposition. Port Orchard, WA

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Snake River Steelhead Biology - Steve Pettit

Quickly, there are two groups of summer steelhead that return to the Snake system and its tributaries in Idaho, Washington and Oregon. Notice, I said summer steelhead. There are NO winter run fish in the Columbia Basin above Hood River. All Snake River steelhead are summer run fish.

Summer steelhead destined for the Snake River system have been divided into two groups. The earlier arriving stocks are classified as A-Run steelhead. A-Run fish are those steelhead that cross Bonneville Dam between the months of June and late-August. These smaller fish, generally spend only 1-year in the ocean, and return as 4 to 6lb adults. Some A-group fish spend a second year at sea, and return as 8 to 10lb fish. But generally, 85% of the stock return as 1-salt adults.

A-Run steelhead in the Snake River populate the Tucannon and Grande Ronde Rivers as well as the Imnaha in Oregon. The

transplanted race (hatchery) of upper Snake River steelhead that are raised in Idaho hatcheries, have been planted in the Salmon River for the past 30 years. These steelhead are remnants of the wild fish that used to spawn in tributaries above the Hells Canyon complex of dams (Idaho Power Company). All of the above streams are predominated by these smaller, 1-salt steelhead.

A-Run fish begin arriving above the upper Snake River dam (Lower Granite) in early July, and peak during mid to late September. They over winter in their respective tributaries (as well as the mainstem Snake River in many cases) and generally spawn in April and May, depending on the elevation of the spawning stream.

All Snake River steelhead normally spend 2 years as juveniles in fresh water, prior to migrating to the ocean.

The other group of Snake River steelhead are classified as B-Run fish. They

come across Bonneville Dam later in the summer. Historically, managers called all fish crossing Bonneville after August 25th as B-group steelhead. Currently, steelhead management has improved somewhat, and the separation is now being based on scale analysis and fish length. This new technique has become necessary since 30 years of hatchery production had changed the timing of steelhead groups, so many stocks now overlap the historical timing cut off. The new method to separate A and B steelhead stocks is considerably more accurate than the old, date method provided for. As a result, Snake River steelhead escapement predictions and harvest management (Zone-6 tribal fishery) have improved.

B-Run steelhead returning to the Snake River are predominately heading for the Clearwater River drainage. Peak return numbers cross Lower Granite Dam in mid-October. These later returning fish are generally 2-salt and 3-salt adults. They average 12-14lb fish for 2-ocean, and 18-

22lbs for 3-ocean steelhead. Some B-Run steelhead return to the Salmon River's South and Middle Fork Rivers, but the majority of both wild and hatchery B-run fish are going to upper Clearwater tributaries (Lochsa and Selway) and Dworshak National Fish Hatchery near Orofino. Spawning normally takes place in late April and into early June, again depending on stream elevation.

So there you have it. A quick-and-dirty review of Snake River steelhead runs.

Steve Pettit has been a anadromous fish biologist for the IDFG department for 30 years and used to be right in the middle of steelhead research and management. For the past 20 years he's been assigned to mainstem fish passage issues on the Snake and Columbia Rivers. A while back Steve wrote this short response to a question on Snake River steelhead biology, life history and stock separations. Steve can be reached at spettit@idfg.state.id.us



Bob Harwood on McGinis Lake
Don Shearer photograph

4. The reach cast is helpful in presenting a drag free drift of the fly. When executing a reach cast, it is important to
- A) Eliminate slack line
 - B) Increase your casting stroke
 - C) Slip line
 - D) Increase line speed

Answers: 1. (B); 2. (D); 3. (D); 4. (C)

(by Liz Watson of the Northwest Women Flyfishers)

Beats Me - Bill Alspach

Hook: Tiemco 7999, sizes 2-4-6
Tag: fine silver tinsel
Tail: Golden pheasant crest
Body: Rear 2/3. Fluorescent red floss, ribbed with fine silver tinsel. Front 1/3, black chenille palmered with grizzly (3 turns)
Wing: white calf tail (sparse)
Hackle: black collar, behind wing



10/1/92 Bill Alspach

As some of you know, the "Beats Me" is one of my favorite patterns. It has been very effective for me on overcast days and early morning and evening hours. The slower it is fished, the better it produces. This is one fly I fish, or recommend, with confidence.

(Notes and pattern by Bill Alspach are from the club archives - the fly was tied and photographed by Jim Palmersheim)

Clearwater Fly Casters
Tim Cavileer - Newsletter Editor
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Get your Tippet online at www.clearwaterflycasters.com