

Go Fish!

All About Fly Fishing

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Preface
*The Psychology
Of Fly Fishing*

It's just you and the environment.

Isn't this the most primitive stage of them all? Man against nature in a battle measured by verifiable results. We see this in hunting, in sail boating, and other maritime sports, in mountain climbing, even in extreme sports like snowboarding and rock climbing.

Nature is the most primal arena there is. Hence, there is a certain appeal to nature that makes us want to challenge it. After all, how we fare against nature will tell us so much about how far we have come as mortals. It is a reaffirmation of our sense of self and a celebration of our humanity. It is an exhilarating feeling, a thrill that is hard to match.

And set in the backdrop of this ancient struggle is the addictive passion called fly fishing.

(Note, if you will, that I referred to fly fishing as a passion. To call it a sport would be too limiting. To call it a mere hobby would be too shallow a title for this activity.)

With fly fishing, it's you against your environment, and that environment can be one formidable foe. It controls the calmness or roughness of the waters, the velocity and the direction of the wind, and even the factors that determine the congregation of the salmon, trout, pike, bass, or carp.

Indeed, the environment you will be competing against is a tough nut to crack, but just ups the ante, doesn't it?

Imagine if you were able to topple all the odds against you. Wouldn't that provide a more satisfying sense of accomplishment? Wouldn't that tell you

that you have what it takes to defeat the seemingly insurmountable challenges? Wouldn't that reaffirm who you really are?

And wouldn't that be a great cause for celebration?

Fly fishing, in this regard, can be considered a microcosm of life. If we are able to be competitive in this field, we should be able to be just as competitive in all aspects of life. It's a matter of logic. It's a matter of nature.

This is perhaps why many people have developed an addiction with fly fishing. Though these ideas may not be readily apparent to most of them, it can most certainly be the calling of their subconscious minds. The fish can represent their personal holy grail, that which they have longed for all their lives.

And if they can catch the fish... they can most certainly attain their personal goals.

I have asked a number of people why they are very much impassioned with fly fishing, hoping to delve deeper into the psychology of this angling pastime that is growing more and more popular by the day. They, surprisingly, provided different answers for the same question.

Dougs, who has been a regular companion of mine for two years now every Sunday in Maine, when we spend the afternoon trying to figure out the best bait to catch the biggest prize, has this to say:

"Whenever we are here, fishing and all, I do forget my worries. You do know that I underwent anger management a couple of years ago, and fishing, not just fly fishing, was one of the activities suggested by my counselor. So that's how I started. And surprise, surprise! You haven't seen me wring your necks the past few years, right?"

Indeed, the usually calm waters have soothing effects for the soul. It helps you relax and reinvigorate your mind, body, and spirit. Fly fishing is not an exhaustive activity at all.

But it does require some patience.

You'll be spending more time preparing and waiting than actually angling in a fish or two, after all. This isn't a pastime for a person who has attention deficit disorder.

Perhaps it's the time in between noteworthy moments that makes fly fishing relaxing. Let's face it, we won't be doing anything most of the time. Hence, we are given the chance to be with ourselves, and to be just ourselves. No pretensions at all... just us and all that time. It's a great opportunity for some introspection and some reflections on the things that were, the things that are, and the things in store for us in the future.

And this is perhaps the reason why Doug finds fly fishing a perfect therapy for his cognitive distortions.

On the other hand, another constant companion of mine, Marx, has been fly fishing longer than all of us combined. He claims that his grandfather introduced him to this pastime, and since then, his life has centered on angling.

"You do know my wife, right? Yeah, the current one. Good thing she's very understanding. Would you believe that the reason for my past divorces (he's had two) is fishing? Well, that's an exaggeration, of course... but there is a semblance of truth to it, though. I'd rather be with you guys every Sunday than talk about whatever marital problems I'm having with my wife."

Marx's affair with fly fishing at the expense of his marriage is not, and should not, be promoted. We're just discussing it right now to illustrate how much of a passion fly fishing has become for many people.

When I asked him why he is so enamored with this pastime, this is what Marx had to say.

"There's something about fishing that keeps me coming back for more. Man, I can't wait until I reach retirement age! Then, I could go fishing everyday! Sundays don't seem enough anymore. I guess, what I'm trying to say is that I enjoy fishing because of all the parts that make the whole. From choosing the right bait, to choosing the right spots, to choosing the right angle for the rod, to actually wrestling with the fish once it bites. And the feel of a fish in your hands, when it's squirming and eventually surrendering to its conqueror... man! That's priceless!"

And this is perhaps the sentiment shared by most game fishers the world over. The thrill of the hunt!

But it's not just the hunt itself that many find thrilling. All the aspects of the hunt can provide so much excitement. Choosing bait, for example, may seem like an easy and dull task, but this is hardly the case.

Everything about fly fishing is a science, you see. The seemingly simple tasks require a lot of study, as success in fly fishing necessitates success in all the components it entails. You just don't choose the most colorful bait. You choose bait based on the fish you want to catch and the prevailing weather conditions.

In the same light, you don't just choose the catchiest rod that you can find. You choose a rod based on what you aim to catch and on how well such a rod will respond to your grip, with all the other factors considered, like your height, your strength, and even your dexterity level.

Success in fly fishing is a culmination of many things. And this is where the fun can be found: in the variety of stages that lead to the ultimate game.

But the most telling confession I have heard came from another buddy of mine, Joey. Joey is the late bloomer in the group. He just started with fly fishing over a year ago, and hasn't missed any of our Sunday sessions since then.

When I asked him why he is so engrossed with this pastime, his answer was surprisingly short but succinct.

"I just like it."

And that's how passions are, right? Sometimes, there's no exact reason why we are so enchanted with them. All we know is that they have become an important part of our lives, hence we devote our time and commitment to them. We cherish them, treasure them, and revel in the many enjoyable and satisfying moments they bring us.

Fly fishing is a passion for the ages.

It has been with us since the time of the Greeks, and from all indications, it shows no sign of slowing down. It's becoming more and more popular over the years. It has developed its own code of conduct. It has developed many branches of disciplines.

But one thing remains constant.

It still gives us many moments of fun and excitement.

Indeed, the psychology of fly fishing can be traced to a man versus nature construct, to therapeutic benefits, to a scientific enjoyment, and even to a need for competition. But sometimes, psychology need not be too complicated.

Sometimes, it's just as simple as loving it.

Thank you Joey, for reminding that to us.

Chapter One
Go Fish
An Introduction
To Fly Fishing

It is not difficult to explain the resurgent popularity of fly fishing these days. There are so many aspects to the craft that have hooked, no pun intended, most anglers, regardless of age and sex, throughout the world.

But what is fly fishing? What makes it different from other kinds of angling classifications?

By its very name alone, it is easy to surmise that fly fishing, is, quite basically, catching fish by means of flies. Flies, as used in this definition, are artificial or imitation, and they always seem to make the fish more excited and the craft more exciting.

Fishing has always been a great hobby in ages past, and the fact that it is enjoying a renaissance of sorts is testament to how addictive this recreational activity can be. And of its many varieties, fly fishing has taken an intensified prominence as of late.

Fly fishing has always been a delightful paradox for many.

How could something so enjoyable be so complex?

Currently, the angling world is raving about the addictive nature of fly fishing. Many have fallen to the enchanting charms of the sport. Clubs the world over have been established so that its members can exchange stories and techniques about this passion.

What is it about fly fishing that gets people all excited and gleeful? Some claim that it is a hobby, and like other pursuits of interests, it has an inexplicable power to satisfy our hearts. Others contend that it is more than just a hobby but rather, it is a sport that should be recognized and respected.

There are some sectors however that correctly declare fly fishing as an art. Fly fishing requires a lot of mental firmness. You have to be knowledgeable enough to pick the right rod, the right line, the right bait for the right fish. And you have to do these at the right time, at the right season, and with the right temperature.

Learning the intricacies of fly fishing may take a considerable amount of time, yet, it has been a lingering obsession for many folks throughout the years. This is a testament to the beauty of the hobby, or the sport, or the art, whichever way you might want to look at it.

Fly fishing is an ancient angling method. All that you'll need to experience its splendors are a rod, a fish line, a reel, and bait. Of course, you'll have to invest a lot of time, as fly fishing will surely prove compelling.

Fly fishing garnered its name because the method uses flies as bait. These flies can either be organic or artificial. Fly fishing is also a method best suited in catching salmonids (trout and salmons.) But through the years, it has extended its ensnaring prowess to other species as well, such as pike, bass, and carp.

But it's the serene and comforting feeling of fly fishing that makes it a very enchanting activity. Nothing beats experiencing the peaceful waters on a lazy day, with rod, line, and tackle at hand, preparing some lures and trying to capture some fish.

Fly Fishing in History

The first reference of fly fishing dates back to Ancient Greece when the popular Aelian (A.D. 170 to A.D. 130,) a religious leader in Praeneste and an excellent student of the rhetoric arts, who wrote about the Hippourous (a fly that imitates the color of a wasp and the sounds of a bee) being used as a bait for fishing.

It seems that people of ancient times do know how to catch their fish! Using only their keen observation, they have learned by themselves that flies can be used as bait. Instead of using the fly as such, however, they created an

imitation so that they wouldn't have to kill any creature that was ineffective for fishing.

The fact that there are indeed many kinds of fish that are attracted to flies, as stated in Greek history, proved that fly fishing has always been destined to transform common fishing into a highly sophisticated and refined art.

Scotland introduced the modern day fly fishing and was later polished in England. When it came to America, the people had no idea how it worked, but the “pioneers” had a way to discover the method using a rod, reel, line, and fly bait.

Take note that the biggest consideration in handling a fishing rod is the weight. Hence, many people embraced the carbon fiber rod as their instrument of choice and this led to its wider distribution.

As for the fly line, two types were manufactured after World War II – the monofilament and the braided. The monofilament was not at all popular because it can easily spring and cut through knots. The braided nylon, on the other hand, gained instant popularity because of its versatility and strength.

In 1949, the first nylon fly appeared. To this date, fly fishers use fly lines of greater flexibility due to the continuous development of certain methods dealing with gravity and buoyancy.

The reel experienced many changes since the 1970's, but its incarnations have been mere refinements of the tool that was invented centuries ago.

Saltwater and Freshwater Fly Fishing

Freshwater fly fishing is an angling method done in freshwaters like rivers, streams, and lakes. There are more known freshwater fisheries than saltwater, although saltwater fly fishing is popular today.

Many reservoirs especially around the American continent hold freshwater trout and salmon like the Chatfield reservoir in the Denver metro area, the

Salt Creek in Portage, Indiana, the San Juan in New Mexico, and the Frying Pan in Colorado.

Saltwater fly fishing, on the other hand, has expanded its popularity in recent years. In saltwater coasts, a fly fisherman has to use a heavier line because the water has a high buoyancy level. This is the reason why many fly fishers believe that saltwater fly fishing is indeed more challenging than freshwater fly fishing.

Some species of fish such as the bluefish, redfish, bonefish, tarpon, and striped bass are popular in saltwater fly fishing.

Wet and Dry Fly Fishing

Wet fly fishing consists of an angling technique wherein a fly fisherman uses a sinking fly to lure a fish. The bait is submerged in the water and the angler will be able to distinguish if the target has caught the hook through the pressure that reverberates in the fly line and the rod.

Dry fishing involves a different technique. Here, the angler uses a floating fly as bait. The fish jumps out of the water to take the fly instead of remaining unseen by the fly fisherman. The angler should make sure that he has a tight grip on the rod as game fish are stronger when they're out of the water.

Fly Fishing as a Sport

Fly fishing has been popular around the world. Despite various competitions among other angling options such as bass fishing, it still manages to carve a niche of its own. Fly fishing not only provides countless hours of fun for its enthusiasts, but it also promotes awareness of our cold-water fisheries.

Fly fishing competitions are held regularly all over the world where time and location are specified to the lined competitors. Corresponding scores are usually awarded following this formula:

$$\frac{\textit{Weight and species of the fish}}{\textit{Strength of the fishing line}}$$

This means that catching a heavier fish on a thinner line nets a higher score!

In tag-and-release competitions, the formula below is followed:

$$\frac{\textit{Number of fish caught}}{\textit{Strength of the fishing line}}$$

The weight and species of the fish has an equivalent number based on the fly fishing rules and regulations of the competition.

The rules and regulations of fly fishing have been consistently modified to suit the game in the modern times. These will be discussed in latter chapters.

Chapter Two

Tools Of The Trade

What You Need To Know Before You Start Fly Fishing

Like any angling method, fly fishing makes use of a rod, a reel, and a line. These three gears are the most basic equipment that should be prepared before one starts fly fishing. What makes fly fishing such an accessible pastime is that these tools can collectively be bought for under \$100. There is no truth to the misconception that fly fishing is a hobby for the rich. It is neither a luxury nor a privilege, but rather, is a recreational activity for each and every person.

Granted, some of them are a little pricey, given their proven name and outstanding quality, one can still make good use of the more budget-friendly varieties. In fact, the latter group is more advisable for the fly fishing novice who wishes to learn the basics of the craft.

In this chapter, we're going to take a look at each of these tools and discuss preliminary matters that a fly fisherman should know before he tries to lure the game fish.

Please pay attention to the appropriate gear type for the situations given. Also, allow yourself to practice the basic steps that shall be discussed in these pages. They are meant to sharpen your skills before getting your feet wet, in a manner of speaking.

A. Equipment

1. Fly Rod



- ❖ **Definition:** a special fishing rod constructed for fly fishing. This rod is generally longer and thinner than any other fishing rods. What is its use? Obviously, you can never cast a fly line without the use of the rod.
- ❖ **Length:** length varies from 6 feet to 14 feet, but the most common is between 7 to 9 feet. Shorter rods are better for short casts (usually in an environment where many trees are present,) while longer rods are for long casts (usually in a body of water in between a plain land.)
- ❖ **Weight:** The weight is necessary in choosing a fly rod, especially in considering the type of fish you target to catch. In determining the rod weight, fly fishermen use the numbering method – instead of using grams, a number system that ranges from 1 to 14 is used.

Table 1
Weight number of a fly rod and the fish type suitable for it

Weight number	Fish Type
1-4	Small trout and other small fish
5-6	Medium-sized trout and small bass
7-8	Average-sized Salmon, steelhead, big trout, big bass
9-14	Big salmon, tarpon, and larger saltwater species

- ❖ **Design:** its design is a requirement for a good bending action because its flexibility determines how well a fly line is cast.
- ❖ **Action:** The “action” is a subtle but important characteristic of a fly rod. It determines the kind of stroke a certain rod will accomplish.
 - ✓ **Slow Action Rod** – good for short casts, casting small flies for small fish species in streams.
 - ✓ **Medium Action Rod** – the most versatile kind because it works well for most fishing conditions and most fish species.
 - ✓ **Fast Action Rod** – good for longer casts, windy conditions, larger fish, and casting large flies.

2. Fly Reel



- ❖ **Definition:** light fishing reel with simple mechanics designed to hold the fly line. You can see it attached below the handle on a fly rod.
- ❖ **Types:** A single action reel is a type of fly reel wherein a single turn of the handle will cause a single turn of the spool, thereby letting you turn the reel the way you prefer. On the other hand, in a multiplier reel, a single turn of the handle can cause multiple turns of the reel spool which then makes it faster and easier to retrieve a line.

3. Fly Line

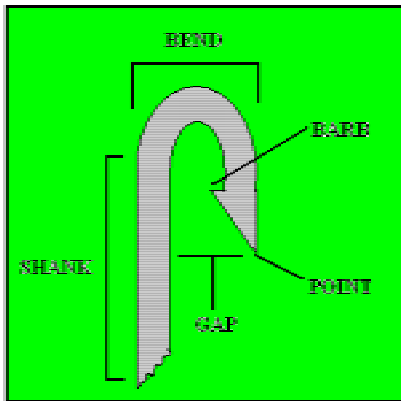


- ❖ **Definition:** a line for fly-fishing, which is originally made from silk but is currently made of a plastic coating - this coating gives the fly line its weight which is very necessary in casting.
- ❖ **Length & Diameter:** the fly line usually does not exceed 105 feet in length and has a diameter of 1.5 millimeters to 2 millimeters.
- ❖ **Types:** The *weight forward* is a type of fly line with most of its weight in the first thirty feet of line, and the *double taper* or DT refers to a fly line that is reduced in diameter on both ends. When one end of a DT fly line wears out, you can take it off the reel, turn it around and use the other end.
- ❖ **Weight:** Just like in measuring the fly rod, the weight of the fly line is also represented by the number system, which ranges from 1 to 12, instead of using grams.

Table 2
Weight number of a Fly Line and its Description and Use

Weight number	Description and Use
1-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extremely limited rods are on this weight.• Used for short casting on calm flat water with no real wind.
5-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most versatile rod weight.• Used for moderate wind and can handle heavier fish in fast water.
8-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Heavy lines used for big water and forceful wind conditions.
10-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Heavy lines used in saltwater fishing.

4. Hook



Many claim that a hook is the most important part of your fly fishing gear for the sole reason that it is ultimately what will catch the fish. This is where the fly is tied. The feather and fluff will conceal the sharp curve of the metal, and once the fish bites the lure, the pointy edge will dig into the fish's mouth and it will be ready for tackling.

5. Fly Bait

❖ **Definition:** A traditional fish food item. Fly bait is an artificial imitation of a live insect that a fish type preys on. Many flies will cost around \$1 to \$5 per piece, depending on the availability of the species type. Some fly fishers will take much time tying it to their line only to lose it in the end, so at this point, artificial bait is preferred. These can be very light and made of hair, feathers, and thread.

❖ **Types of artificial fly bait:**

Flies that sink	Flies that float
Streamers (long and skinny)	Poppers (made of cork)
Wet flies	Dry flies

❖ **Most common natural fly fishing bait:**

- ✓ Mayflies
- ✓ Stoneflies
- ✓ Caddisflies
- ✓ Damsels and dragonflies
- ✓ True flies
- ✓ Dobsonflies and Alderflies

The different kinds of fly bait will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, together with an entomological study of the natural flies from which they are based.

B. Setting Up The Rod

Refer to *Tables 1 and 2* for the appropriate rod and line for your fly fishing activity.

For a beginner, a seven to eight-foot rod for numbers 5 to 7 fly line weight – the most versatile weight, is recommended. The reel for this can be a single action reel.

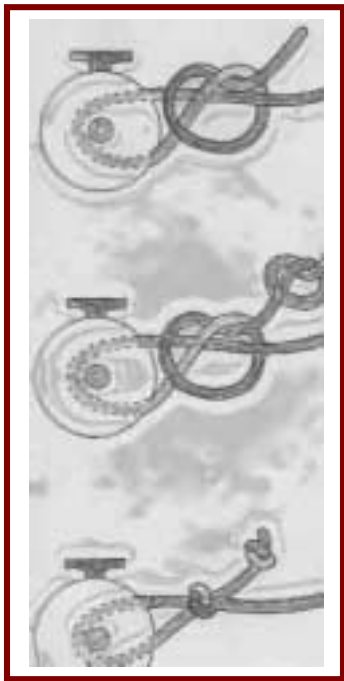
This is the most commonly endorsed set-up. However, please bear in mind that this can still vary depending on water conditions and turbulence.

C. Knots

Knots are necessary in joining fly lines, tippets, and leaders. Modern fly lines can be manufactured knotless, but these can break off even with the slightest pull. This is why many believe that it is still better to use knots than to buy the knotless ones.

Here are the more popular knot types used in fly fishing.

1. Arbor Knot



An arbor is the center part of the fly reel where the fly line and the backing is spun. An arbor knot is essential so that the backing can be tied to the arbor, assuring that the fly line won't be lost once it reaches its end. Here are some basic steps in tying an arbor knot.

- a. Pass the fly line around the arbor.
- b.

- c. Tie an overhand knot on the immediate part of the fly line past the arbor, then tie another overhand knot on one end of the fly line.
- d. Pull both ends of the fly line until the arbor knot is tied tight. You can cut off the excess if you wish.

2. Double Surgeon's Knot

The end of the fly line where the hook is attached is called a leader. A double surgeon's knot is an excellent way to create a loop to connect the leader to a hook.

Here is a step-by-step guide to help you tie the perfect double surgeon's knot.



- a. Double the line over to form a loop and bind them together with a single overhand knot.
- b. Bring the loop through the overhand knot hole.



- c. Pull both ends to bring together the new knot.
- d. Make sure that the tangle is securely tight.

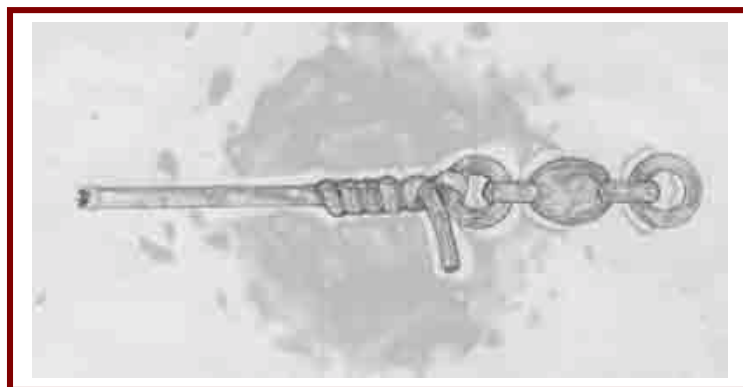
3. Clinch Knot



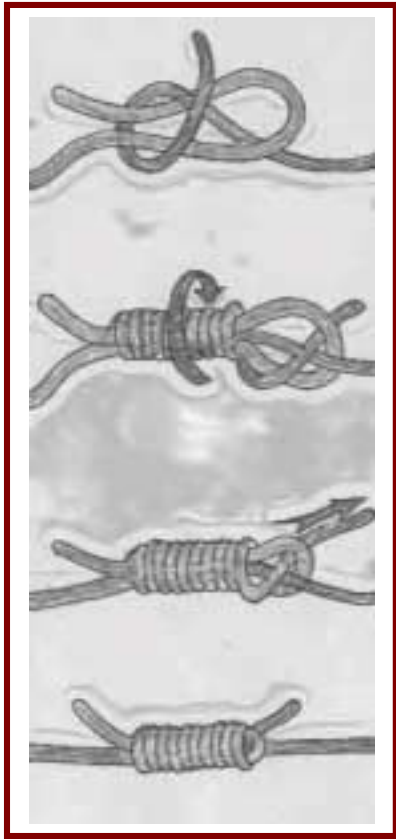
Much like the double surgeon's knot, the clinch knot is one of the more popular tying methods used to attach the hook to the fly line. It's firm and will hardly slip, ensuring that a catch won't be able to escape.

- a. Insert one end of the fly line through the eye of the hook.
- b. Holding the same end, make five turns around the immediate portion of the fly line.
- c. Insert the same end into the first loop that was created in step b.
- d. Insert the same end into the larger loop that was created from the fifth loop to the eye of the hook.

- e. Pull to tighten and bring into shape. It should look like the picture you see below.



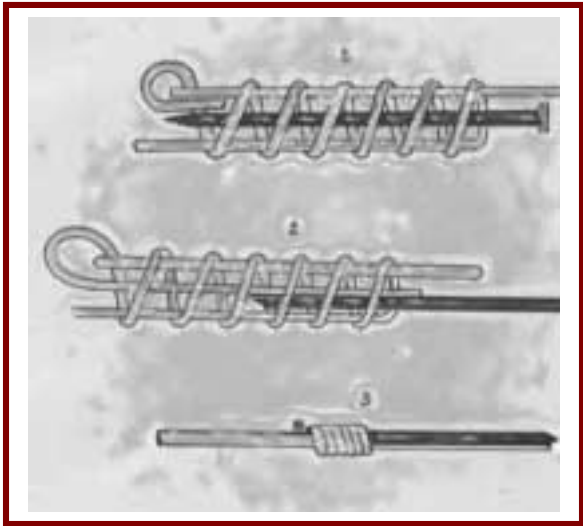
D. Albright Knot



The Albright knot serves two purposes. First, it is yet another excellent tying method in joining the fly line with the hook. Another is that it is likewise a great method in joining two lines of unequal sizes.

- a. Shape both fly lines into two separate hooks.
- b. Hook them together, and have one loop five times around the body of the other.
- c. Insert the end of the untouched line into the bend of the looping line.
- d. Pull both ends together to tighten the knot.

E. Nail Knot



A nail knot is named as such because it uses a real nail as a tool for its creation. It is often used to tie the fly line to the backing, though some fly fishermen have also utilized this knot type to tie the fly line to the hook. Regardless of its function, a nail knot will surely make a sturdy bind to conjoin two different ends.

- a. Hold the nail in a parallel position to the backing or the hook, whichever you decide to join with the fly line.
- b. Wrap the end of the fly line at least five times around the backing or the hook and the adjacent nail.
- c. Insert the end of the fly line into the loops that have been created.
- d. Remove nail.
- e. Slowly pull the end of the fly line and the hook or the backing.

D. Setting Up The Bait

In setting up your bait, it is important that you first decide on what kind of bait you will use in your fly fishing activity.

Tying live bait requires sufficient knowledge of the process. Many fly fishers who try to make fly fishing a more challenging work get themselves committed to tying flies for bait. Because of their fascination on the art, many will resort to spending more money and effort on this than on fly fishing itself.

On the other hand, the demand for the use of artificial flies is more popularly embraced. Flies under this category are usually made from materials like fur, feathers, plastic, and yarn. All these materials are tied onto a hook to create an imitation of an adult insect, a nymph, an egg, or anything that would be attractive to a particular fish.

E. Fishing

Just like any other kinds of sport, the fly fishing method strives for perfection. They say “practice makes perfect.” This is indeed true. It is in practice that one can perfect the skill.

Casting your fly line is never easy, more so is fly fishing itself; therefore, I advice a “correct practice” for this. Carefully follow the process by the book first and then try to master it next.

After getting yourself familiar with the method, it is wise to follow your own instinct instead of being a bookworm. You may have better ideas to make fishing an easier but more enjoyable activity.

Practice in a grassy open space. Probably a field or a plain ground would be best. Avoid cemented areas like a parking lot when you practice with your actual fly line because hitting on cement will ruin your line. It would be best to use a colored string or yarn as a line instead of a real one in practice so that you will be able to see its trajectory.

Appraise your progress to see if you are ready to handle actual fly fishing. If you are, then here are some basic fly fishing techniques you can employ:

a. Preparations

- Prepare your fly rod, reel, line, and bait. A fly box, hook sharpener, shoes with felt soles for slippery rocks, and first aid kit would also come in handy.
- For the line set-up, pull 20 feet (more or less, depending on your preference) of line out of your reel and lay it on the ground.
- Work on your preferred grip. The easiest way is to grasp the rod with your hand, your thumb placed on top of the rod grip to exert enough force. Refer to the figure below:



b. Casting

For a beginner, mastering how to cast your fly line will take much time and effort, but it is all worth it, so the special key to a good cast is skill and patience, patience, and even more patience.

There are many different kinds of casting, but what I have written below are the three standard steps to fly cast.

STEP 1. Hold the line with your left hand (if your grip is on the right, or can be vice versa) and keep it tight throughout the casting sequence.

STEP 2. Using a brisk motion, pull the rod back 45 degrees from your top center and hold it stiff to a stop. To make it easier to understand, imitate a 2:00 clock position (the numbers one to five faces your back and seven to eleven faces your front). This act will shoot your line to your back.

STEP 3. When the line straightens out at your back, push the rod again 45 degrees to a 10:00 clock angle.

- Be sure that the line does not touch the ground to avoid the problem of ruining it instantly.
- If the process is done correctly, the line will fall straight to your front, as how it should be done in step 2.

3. Catching

To catch a fish, you need bait. Presenting your bait or “fly” to your fish is not as easy as you think.

Since artificial flies are the lures of choice these days, fly fishermen need to make them swim, float and crawl in the water. If you use an imitation of a mayfly, for example, this must behave like a mayfly – and YOU make it appear so real that even the wittiest fish would believe that it’s alive.

Fish in a stream are accustomed to seeing every possible food item to eat. They can detect food such as insects in an instant! With your fly drifting along with the rest of these targets, there is a bigger possibility that it will be noticed by a trout. So you must be careful that your fly will not move in an unusual or unnatural way – known as “drag” – because this might fend them off.

Mastery of the fly rod is essential for this purpose.

To determine the motion of a drag, simply compare your fly with the moving objects beside it. If the movement of things does not move like your

fly, then drag is present and all you have to do is harmonize the movement of your fly with its surroundings.

There are many ways of eliminating a drag like changing your fishing position, or casting some zigzag line in the water, or adding a longer tippet between your leader and fly, or simply letting the water rest first before fishing again.

F. Hooking And Reeling

Hook plus reel equals a catch, but it's not as easy as it sounds. This is as much of an art form as it is a science.

The difference between catching and failing to catch your prospect depends on the behavior of the fish, the movement of the fly, and the condition of the water.

So which is which?

Below are the most common predicaments encountered by a fly fisherman. Let us enumerate them and discuss the ways around each situation.

1. *You see a trout open its mouth to your floating fly bait and you get too excited.*

What is the common response to this? Many would lift their rod tip and pull the fly too early and right out of the fish's mouth, making them miss the catch. The most essential virtue in fly fishing, and in angling in general, is patience. Relax. Let the fish strike first then if your fly disappears, strike back.

2. *You use a sinking fly as your bait, but you cannot detect if the fish has already bit your hook.*

Try to put your rod tip just beneath the surface so you can feel the pressure of the bite in your hook even more.

3. It seems like the fish know you hunt today, whenever you go near them they simply bolt out!

Keep away from the water if possible. Trout and most other fish have a wide field view from the front to both sides of their bodies, but even if you position yourself at their back, they usually sense you and feel the threat so they swim away. Try to fish in shores than in water itself this time. This does not happen always anyway.

4. A hooked fish is fighting with the line drastically and you are afraid that you might kill it.

A hooked fish is fighting for its life so you have to immediately control the line with your rod hand's middle finger against the grip and keep it tight. If there is any loose line on the water, let the fish pull it out or crank it onto the reel as soon as you can. Reel in enough line so you can reach out to the fish when you have it under control.

Chapter Three

Entomology 101

Studying Flies Can Be The Key To Fly Fishing Success

As we've discussed in passing in the previous chapters, most fly fishermen these days have taken a liking in preparing their own lures. These lures, though artificial, are still based on the natural food of their desired catch: insects. Or more specifically, flies.

Since artificial bait is meant to simulate natural insects, a study of the latter is in order. After all, we cannot imitate what we do not know by heart, right?

Additionally, entomology, or the study of insects, is also important for some fly fishermen who still prefer the use of live bait. Though dwindling in numbers, given the flourishing popularity of manmade lures, these anglers would rather hunt their own bait to add some spice to the fly fishing experience.

In fly fishing, the bait is your partner. It would serve you well if you'd know these little critters by heart.

There are thousands of insects that can be used for fly fishing. 83% of the world's biological sphere is comprised of these invertebrates. Different fish feed on different insects during different seasons.

Hence, having a working knowledge of them would vastly improve a fly fisher's chances of catching more valuable prizes. Knowing the cycle of their feeding, as well as their food preference, would greatly increase our chances of catching the most prized game fish.

Here are the best fly fishing insects that have been proven to lure the worthiest catches:

I. Mayflies



Mayflies of the order *Ephemeroptera* are the most important insect for many fly anglers. What makes a mayfly the best for trout fishing is that it reproduces at all times – NO HATCHING SEASON per se. The nymph of a mayfly has the right size that is ripe for the trout and its adult has a unique charisma that makes the trout seem gluttonous in feeding.

- ✓ An adult mayfly is easy to recognize because of its loop wings and tails from its back.
- ✓ A nymph has no neck, but has a segmented body with three identifying tails. It has two crouching forelegs (maybe this is why it is referred to as “the body builder” of the modern insect.) If you look just close enough, you’ll see its gills on the back.
- Mayflies are terrestrial insects but usually remain near water. Terrestrial insects, as the name implies it, are land, tree, or plant dwellers - insects that breathe air.
- To imitate a mayfly for artificial bait is the most challenging task and the most studied area in fly tying for fly fishermen since trout cannot be easily fooled by certain hatches.

- The most commonly encountered family is *Baetidae* and *Heptageniidae* because both families have species that hatch throughout the year.

II. Stoneflies



Stoneflies of the order *Plecoptera* are usually found in North America. They are slow-moving flies which are often found under debris and stones in streams. Obviously, this is where its name came from.

- Stoneflies can be both terrestrial and aquatic insects – actually, they engage in a different kind of life cycle that involves both land and water. Stoneflies lay their eggs in water and these eggs later become nymphs. Stonefly nymphs, then, remain in the water not longer than three long years, then goes up to land to become an adult.
- Stonefly nymphs are often mistaken as mayfly nymphs because both have a great similarity of one another's appearance except for one distinguishing mark – their tails.
 - ✓ A stonefly nymph has two tails which are called *cerca* (a mayfly nymph has three tails.) It has body segmentation and a pair of antennae that is widely separated.
 - ✓ An adult stonefly also has a pair of antennae and two tails. It has wings that fold flat on its back.

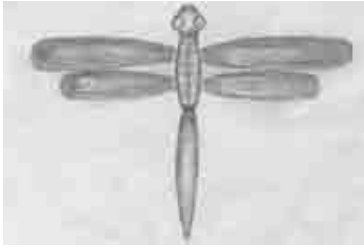
III. Caddis



Caddisflies are the most common and the largest group of aquatic insects under the order *Trichoptera* and are usually found among most streams and rivers. Because they are widely available, they are the favorite food of trout and other fish.

- If most flies go through two stages of life cycle – the nymph stage and the adult stage, the caddisflies go through three - the nymph stage, the pupa stage, and adulthood. The flies under the said different stages can be easily identified because in each stage their appearance changes greatly.
 - ✓ The caddis nymph can be distinguished effortlessly because of its worm-like façade.
 - ✓ The adult caddis looks comparably similar to a stonefly because of the two separate antennae, but can be identified by looking at its wings. While a stonefly adult's wings lie flat on its back, a caddis' wings form a shape which I think partly looks like a hump.
- Most caddis larvae construct transportable cases like saddle cases, and silken purses from silk and other materials, and they are known for this amazing talent!
- Caddis' diet usually depends on animal and plant matter.

IV. Damselflies And Dragonflies



Damsels and dragonflies are both under the order *Odonata*, a family of insects that don't have a pupal stage. They undergo an incomplete metamorphosis which gives these insects an ability to develop their wings outside their bodies.

- Damselflies and dragonflies share a very big similarity in their physical attributes, which is why they are often confused with one another. Only a keen eye can distinguish one from the other.
 - ✓ An adult damsel fly folds its wings on its back while the dragonfly rests both its wings on its sides.
- Both damselflies and dragonflies survive by eating other invertebrate creatures. This means that they are predators in nature.

V. True Flies



True flies under the order *Diptera*, live everywhere – in the soil, in ponds, and in streams. These flies are known for having customized hind wings.

- Here are some common types of true flies:

- ✓ Midges or *Chironomidae* are small, winged insects, related to the specie of mosquitoes. The only difference is they don't bite like a mosquito.
- ✓ Midges larvae look like small worms attached underneath stones and rocks, and an adult looks like a mosquito with no blood-sucking stinger.
- ✓ Black fly larvae and adults are a major food source for terrestrial predators. Though we have their kind so much, we cannot stop their continuous proliferation. Just be careful in dealing with them... keep in mind that most of them are disease carriers.

VI. Dobsonflies And Alderflies



Alderflies and dobsonflies are insects under the order *Megaloptera*. They undergo complete metamorphosis (from pupal stage to having their wings developed inside their body once they reach adulthood) and are best known for their long spines and tracheal gills.

The flies we have discussed in this chapter are those that have been recorded as the most effective live baits in fly fishing. In the immediately succeeding pages, we're going to discuss the prolific kinds of artificial bait.

Chapter Four
*Feather
and Fluff*
**The Different Kinds
Of Artificial Bait**

Much as how basketball is all about the ball and cycling is all about the bicycle, fly fishing is distinguished from other angling methods because of the use of the basis for its name: flies.

Truly, the objective of fly fishing is to imitate a lure based on the natural diet of the desired catch. These artificial lures are classified into two:

1. Dry flies – or those which remain dry and stay afloat; and
2. Wet flies – or those which absorb water and sink.

There are many kinds of artificial fly baits, and they can be broken down in accordance with the fish that the angler wishes to lure. These manmade flies try to mimic the insects that the particular fish feed on.

This has given the fly fisherman the rather queer title of fly dresser. It is quite appropriate, however, as it is not unusual to find a hobbyist trying to decorate an artificial fly with colorful feathers and fluff, with hopes that it will catch the attention of the fish.

In this chapter, we are going to discuss the three most popular game fish and the suitable artificial flies that best guarantee a wonderful fly fishing experience.

Trout



A trout is a voracious carnivore that eats everything in sight. No insect, aquatic or terrestrial, is ever safe with this fish. A trout will even feed on smaller fish, for as long as they fit its relatively large mouth.

Best Lures:

Dry Flies

Dry flies imitate adult insects from the kinds that we have discussed in the previous chapter. Given a trout's ravenous appetite, dry flies are perfect baits for its perennially hungry mouth.



Nymphs and Wet Flies

A trout feeds beneath the water most of the time. For the wily angler, this means that wet flies, or sinkers, will assure a longer game time that is not dependent on any particular hour of the day.



Emergers

Insects are most vulnerable when they have just emerged from their nymph stage into adulthood. This is the time when the trout will prey on these hapless flies. By mimicking those ill-fated invertebrates, the angler will have a good chance of tricking the trout into biting the lure.



Streamers

These are lures that are designed to sink quickly so that they may attract an aggressive trout hungry for its meal. Streamers are among the most popular artificial fly baits. In this category belong the woolly buggers and the sculpins.



Salmon



Salmon are fascinating fish and seasonal catches. They are anadromous, meaning, they migrate from fresh water to salt water during certain periods. Once they're in their natural habitat, they could be quite

difficult to catch as they will not eat and will resort to stored body fats instead.

Best Lures:

It is almost impossible to catch a salmon in freshwater, so the best bet is to wait for them to migrate to the ocean to spawn. During this period, salmons are ultra aggressive and they will immediately jump on the first sign of food they see. Sinkers and floaters are both effective, but many anglers have testified that dry flies are more efficient and thrilling, as the salmon would literally fly out of the water to snap at the lure. The Atlantic and Pacific oceans are the best places to fish for salmons during spawning season.



Bass



Notoriously known as the most difficult game fish in the world because of the spirited fight it puts up once caught, the bass is an angler's most passionate prize.

Best Lures:

Poppers

Poppers are meant to imitate frogs and other large and noisy creatures. The strategy is for the lure to make a lot of commotion and attract the attention of the usually curious and aggressive bass.



Divers

Divers mimic the actions of a creature which is trying to run away, hence making the charade more believable for the bass, which will be lured to chase and catch the bait.



Crayfish

Crayfish meat is a bass' favorite meal. When imitated by a fly fisherman, this artificial bait takes the form of a sinker, or a wet fly, so that it will perfectly simulate a live lure, since crayfish are bottom dwellers.



Pike Flies

There are certain situations when size matters. Pike flies don't usually come in attractive colors, but what they lack in visual flair, they more than make up with their large measurements and flamboyant designs. They are certain to win the attention of bass.



Bait Flies

Given the rather slothful characteristic of bass, it is easy to predict that it will, more often than not, opt for the bigger and easier feed. Bait flies are designed to move just as slow as many natural fodder fish.



It is important to note that there are over a thousand varieties of artificial baits that experienced fly fishermen use. Part of the excitement of fly fishing is coming up with a lure that no one else has developed and that is efficient in catching a particular type of game fish.

Like master chefs, fly fishermen actually concoct "recipes" for their proud creations. There are a lot of these floating around and it would be fun if you'd give them a try.

Chapter Five
*The Thrill
of the Game*
A General Overview
Of Fly Fishing

What makes fly fishing a more exciting and thrilling activity?

Answers vary.

If the NBA has Michael Jordan and the Tennis Association has Pete Sampras, fly fishing also has its legend by the name of *Jack Hemingway*.

For the late *Jack Hemingway*, the thrill of fly fishing is in setting up live bait. He said in an interview before he passed away, that he remembers one time when he sneaked out of his house when he was 10. He carried with him his stepmother's fly rod and put a live grasshopper (which took him many challenging minutes to prepare) into the hook. He caught his very first fish afterwards.

Setting up the bait is sometimes more challenging than the fishing itself. This is probably what little Jack Hemingway discovered at a very young age, and it instilled in him the beauty of fly fishing.

Joan Wulff, who is said to be the most famous lady fly fisher on the planet, also started her career as a fly fisher at the age of 10. She immediately joined a tournament after convincing her father that girls can also fish.

For her, the thrill of fly fishing isn't just in the game, but in the person's ability to take care of the natural resources around him, most especially the hydrosphere as well as aquatic life.

Her point is quite clear. A fly fisherman's first challenge is to catch a fish, but the most difficult task lies in taking care of where the catch comes from – our waters.

Simon Bain, also known as “Bonefish Simon,” paid the best fly fishermen on his island to teach him the art of fly fishing, and then kept working at it. Now, he is currently one of the most sought after fly fishing instructors in the world.

The key to learning, which is also the most thrilling part of the game for him, is in determining the location of your fish.

Before going to fish, you have to first plan where your exact destination will be and the types of game fish you can catch there.

To this effect, Bonefish Simon had this to say: “Learn to understand the movement of your fish and where it hides in the water.”

I. Determine Your Trout And Its Location

A. Know Your Fish

It is important that you know what you'll be getting when you fish. Later on, we will discuss the best fly fishing destinations in the world and the type of fish their rivers hold, but for now, we must learn how to know our fish.

Below are some of the most common fish in the world:

1. Rainbow trout
2. Brown trout
3. Atlantic salmon
4. Rock bass
5. Small Mouth Bass

6. Large Mouth Bass

7. White Bass

8. Carp

9. Black crappie

10. White crappie

B. Know Your Location

In almost all fishing lakes and rivers, there is what you call a “hot spot.” Many fly fishing authors often mention this in their books.

So what’s so special about these hot spots?

They say it is called a “hot spot” because this is where most fish flock at most times. This is not just a mere hypothesis, as many have testified to the veracity of these claims.

Here are some probable hot spots in any given fishing area.

1. Inlet

The inlet is the spot where the river and stream flows into the lake. Ron Kovach, in his book entitled, “Trout Fishing in California,” states that these inlets serve as a cool resting place for most trout species. This is primarily because the water here contains higher oxygen than in other parts.

The unstable rivers trap oxygen at their surfaces so when the water reaches the *inlet*, most oxygen is dissolved because of the sudden change in movement.

Fish need a high amount of oxygen so they wander to where this can be provided.

2. Seam Edges

Seam edges also provide a hot spot for fish. This is where the speed of the river changes due to what they call “riffles” – a section of water that flows over a rocky bottom.

As the water flows on the rocky bottom, turbulence is formed, and because of this, oxygen is likewise dissolved in water, creating a refreshing hub for the fish.

In fly fishing, determining the location of the fish is highly important. You do not want to waste many hours of your day waiting for a fish to bite your hook when there are no fish in that area to begin with, save for a trout that gets separated from its school from time to time.

II. Tips And Tricks From The Masters

The following is a compilation of tips and tricks from various fly fishing masters such as the Southern Cross Fly Fishers, the Pro Fly Fishers Club, Mohican Fly Fishers Club, Don Berthiaume who is the publisher of the American classic, “Long Lost Fly Fishing Secrets,” and Tony Oswald of World Angler Magazine.

I came up with a good summary of the most important tips from the following resources, which I believe will be beneficial for both starters and professionals.

Landing your catch

1. Tire the fish by carefully releasing the line and controlling it cautiously with your hand using the reel. A hooked fish, after several attempts to escape, will finally give up and approach you, and in this case, rotate the reel slowly - the line going back towards you.

2. Ready your net. Keep in mind that a responsible fly fisherman will see to it that his equipment is in good condition, including the net. Check if your net is resistant to breakage and out of tangles before using it.
3. Now, you are ready to place your fish in the net. Instead of scooping the fish out of the water, pull the net upwards then place your fish inside. Keep a part of your net submerged in water so that it will be easier to hold and the fish's movement will still be absorbed by the water.
4. Remove the hook.

Tying your fly to your tippet

If you are having trouble tying your fly to your tippet, try to hold the fly against a solid and single background, like the clear blue skies on a sunny day, where you can clearly see your fly. This can also be done behind a big, single-colored leaf.

Look around you. You will definitely see solid-colored backgrounds which can help you with this problem.

Hiding from the fish

A fish can easily be distracted by movements and can clearly see the figures of any threats from the water. So, answer this by being INVISIBLE!

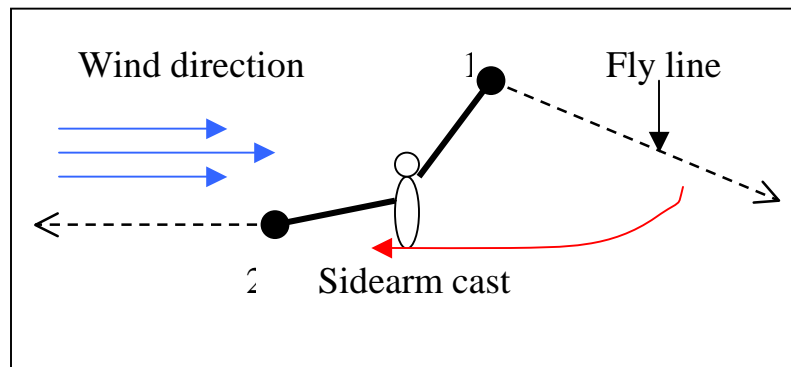
A simple trick is by remaining in a shaded area instead of standing in a sun-lit part to avoid detection.

Wind problems

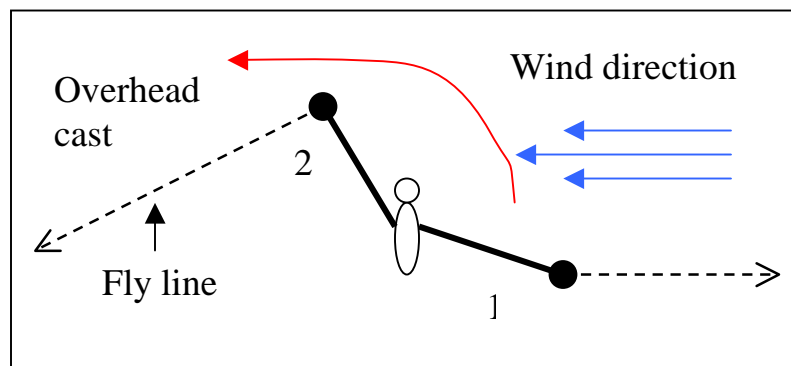
Don't allow windy weather to ruin what can be a nice fishing day. Learn to adjust. How, you might ask? By changing your casting technique!

To achieve a good result in doing the techniques below, the wind must be 20 to 30mph at 10 feet above the water, or, 5mph at 2 feet over the water. Other circumstances need a relative adjustment.

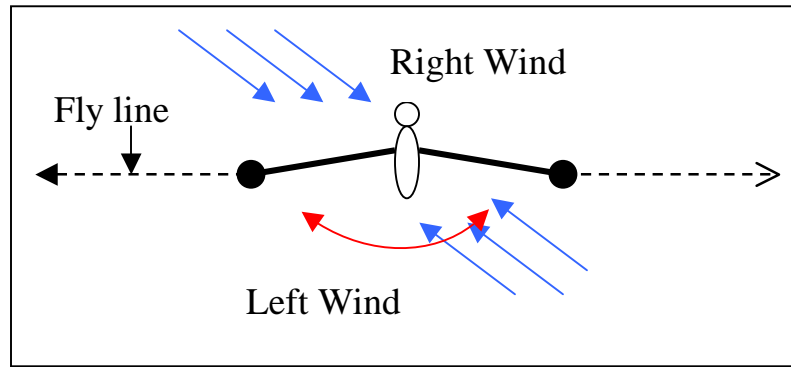
1. *If the wind is blowing at your face*, simply throw your line backward, and when it drops horizontally a few feet from the water at your back, use a sidearm cast and pull the line on the low level to the front.



2. If the wind is blowing at your back, do the opposite of number 1. Low sidearm cast your line backwards then simply make your normal overhead cast.



3. *If the wind is blowing on your left or right*, do low backward casts and low sidearm casts perpendicular to the wind.



Accident-proofing your Fly Fishing Activity

Always take necessary precautions whenever you set out to fly fish. Your safety should always come first and this should be true even with a generally tranquil activity like fly fishing.

Here are some guidelines to assure your well-being.

1. Obey all signs. Known fly fishing reservoirs put caution boards and warnings about slippery rocks or the usual occurrence of heavy currents. Better choose to obey them than be sorry forever.
2. If possible, do not go alone. Have someone watch over you while you do your fishing. If you decide to bring your children with you, supervise them as closely as possible. Remember, you are near water, so there is always that danger of drowning.
3. Know the weather. A portable radio will help you determine the possibility of continuing with your fly fishing activity for the day.
4. Always bring a first-aid kit when going fly fishing to relieve simple injuries. Your kit must contain antiseptic cream, waterproof adhesive plasters, and insect repellent.
5. When casting, be sure to check for any people near you to avoid accidentally hooking them. Also, look up for any overhead obstructions like tree branches and electrical wires.

6. Keep your fluids up especially on warm days. Always bring a bottle of drinking water with you.
7. Dress appropriately. Wear layers of clothing that you can remove if the day gets warm.
8. When a thunderstorm is approaching, get out immediately from the water.
9. Protect yourself from sunburn. Put some maximum protection sunscreen on your skin and always wear a hat on sunny days. Sunglasses will protect your eyes from damage due to prolonged exposure to the sun.
10. Wear non-slip shoes with felt soles to avoid stumbling on wet surfaces.
11. Be aware of the schedule of tides and dam releases.
12. Keep a set of dry clothes in your car.
13. Avoid alcohol until fishing is over.

III. Fly Fishing Around The World

Fly fishing originated in Macedonia, then it developed in Scotland, and afterwards, flourished in Southern England. Now it is in the United States of America.

But who says that you can only fly fish in these countries? Modern fly fishing is a worldwide passion these days! A lot of other countries have fishing fanatics too!

Below is a world map. Let us try to figure out some of the countries that adore the art of fly fishing.

Fly Fishing Destinations All Over The World



COUNTRY	DESCRIPTION
Alaska	<ul style="list-style-type: none">the ultimate freshwater fishing destination on the North American continent.home of the biggest population of salmon.rivers have five species of Pacific salmon, rainbow trout, and Arctic char.
Argentina	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Patagonia rivers are filled with different

	<p>kinds of fish especially during spring.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rivers have Atlantic salmon, Brown trout, and rainbow trout. • The best fishing season is from November to April.
Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rivers have the finest trout and steelhead on the North American continent. • Is said to be the best bargain in the fly fishing travel world because it can give the best deal on equipment and travel packs.
Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Casting flies for brown trout and grayling is most breathtaking in the mountain streams of southern Germany • The rules and regulations of the fly fishing tournament in Germany are one of the most difficult in history,
New Zealand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides many beautiful streams and rivers in the world. • Rivers are inhabited with brown trout and rainbow trout. • Some of the best fly fishing reservoirs in the country are: Waihou river, Kaniwhaniwha stream, Puniu river, Coromandel Region, Lake Otamangakau, Lake Whakamaru, and Mohaka river.
Russia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rivers in Kamchatka Peninsula contains one third of the world's pacific salmon. • Also has a countless population of trout and steelhead - most of these die in old age rather than caught.
France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers great year-round trout fishing. • Rivers are stocked with rainbow trout, brown trout, char and largemouth bass.
Brazil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rivers are inhabited mostly by peacock bass and giant catfish. Rainbow trout can also be found. • Fishing season can be throughout the year but is best from May to November.
Costa Rica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has one of the largest rivers and lagoon systems

	<p>of fishable waters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fishing season peaks from January to May and September to October. • Water is filled mostly with bone fish and tarpon.
Iceland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land of ice and fire, salmon fishing and trout fishing. • There are hundreds of rivers good for fishing. • Rivers are inhabited mostly by brown trout and Atlantic salmon. • Fishing season is best from May to October.
Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has one of the largest man-made lakes in Africa. • The stunning desert is bordered by the clean water of the lakes.
Gambia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rivers have tarpon, lady fish cubera, sailfish, and black fin tuna • Other freshwaters contain countless Tiger fish.
Greenland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The freshwaters are clean and have an abundant number of Arctic char. • Fishing season starts in May and ends in October.
Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The continent is surrounded by clean and rich fish-filled waters. • Waters are inhabited by Atlantic salmon, rainbow trout, and brown trout.
USA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has one of the biggest population of fly fishing lovers! • Houses countless reservoirs in most of its regions. • Fishermen can spot rainbow trout, wiper, small mouth bass, large mouth bass, Atlantic salmon, yellow perch, and crappie.

The countries listed here are only some of the territories with an amazing number of fly fishermen.

The love for fly fishing is continuously growing throughout the years. Now, the number of fly fishermen is a remarkable 1.3 million, more or less.

Wow!

Chapter Six
Gone
Fishing
A Conclusion

And so we have come to the end of this journey, but your wonderful foray in the highly enjoyable and addictive world of fly fishing is just about to start. May you soon discover what millions around the world are already experiencing... the sheer exhilaration of the sport!

But with farewells, though bittersweet, come some parting words, and this book should not be an exception.

In fly fishing, learning is a mixture of reading, instructions, interactions and discoveries: By these, we mean reading materials like books, modules, and magazines; instructions from an experienced fly angler; interactions with nature; and best of all - discoveries from actual experiences.

The legendary Jack Hemingway made his debut in fly fishing by means of discovery and imitation of what he always seen from his parents.

Joan Wulff and Simon Bain learned from instructions – Wulff, from her father, and Bain, from paid fly fishing instructors.

It is good that these days, resources are easily accessible, and information about this great pastime is a click of the button away.

However, I believe that you cannot achieve the kind of “perfection” we have discussed in the previous chapters by just learning. What I mean is, the brain can absorb the needed knowledge in order to know how fly fishing works technically, but, it is the heart that can endure and conquer the difficulties along the way.

The point in fly fishing is that you must have a good proportion of one to one (1:1) – knowledge must always be equal with passion.

On another note, fly fishing is truly a superbly gratifying activity, but we have to be responsible enough to make it last a long, long time.

The biggest factor that can contribute to the long existence of fly fishing is a good and healthy environment.

Nature has provided us with a world that gives us sustenance and joyful recreational opportunities. Human beings, by design, should take care of what is provided.

Personally, I practice, and delight in, fly fishing at a very small stream on our 2-hectare farm.

Whenever the tranquil rhythm of the craft penetrates my soul, I begin to feel like I am the center of the universe. That is how liberating and empowering fly fishing can be.

Many would agree with me in this illusion, and this I believe is why many anglers have grown obsessed with fly fishing.

To repay nature for what she has given, many fly fishers, including myself, have adopted the catch-and-release method, that is, once a game fish is caught, the hook should slowly be removed from its mouth and it should be released back into the water.

Maybe some would think that it is a waste of time, to catch a fish and release it in the end, but for many dedicated anglers, it is not just about the catch.

It is about feeling the heartbeat of a fish and realizing that its precious life is in your hands. You could easily end its existence, but you choose to bring it back to its natural habitat to live and reproduce.

Call it melodrama, but many fly fishermen the world over observe this practice. It's their way of giving back what fly fishing has blessed them with: natural thrill from nature's bounties.

And this will ensure that our children and grandchildren will also enjoy this glorious activity that we have come to love so much.

HAPPY FLY FISHING!

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