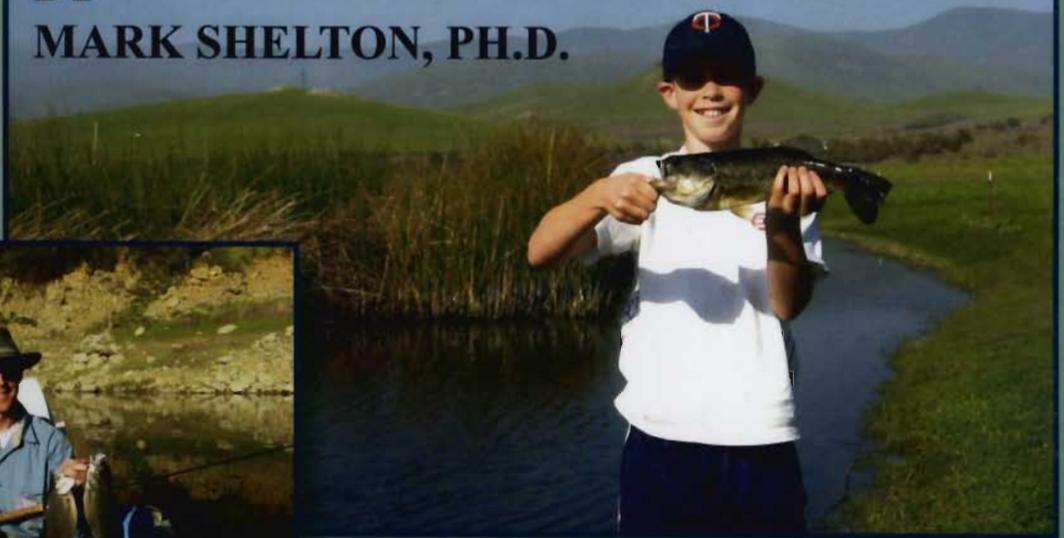


INTRODUCTION TO FLY FISHING

BY
MARK SHELTON, PH.D.



Introduction to Fly Fishing

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Goals for class:

- Everyone learns fly fishing basics
- Simplify the science, technology of fly fishing
- Have fun!

Course Content:

Wednesday – 6:00-9:00 p.m.

- Sources of information
 - Books, magazines, web sources, T.V. shows, fly fishing clubs
- Fly rods, reels, lines, leaders, waders, boots, nets, vests, gloves, float tubes, etc.
- Basic fly fishing knots – how and when to use
- Game fish identification, behavior – trout, bass, stripers, steelhead, etc.

Friday – 6:00-9:00 p.m.

- Aquatic entomology - what the fish eat in streams, lakes and ponds
- Flies to imitate natural fish food
 - Dry flies, nymphs, streamers, midges, poppers, terrestrials, scuds, egg patterns
- Fly fishing strategies
 - Reading the water
 - Stealthy presentations
 - Fishing dries, nymphs, etc.
 - Strike indicators, dropper fly rigs, line mending
- Slides/video of fly fishing tactics

Saturday – 8:30-4:30 p.m.

- Fly casting video
- Fly casting – on lawn
- Trip to local farm pond for casting on water
- Trip to local stream to read water, practice nymphing

FLY FISHING INFORMATION SOURCES

Books:



A Treatyse of Fysshynge with an Angle. 1496. Dame Juliana Berners?
-1st book on fly fishing

The Curtis Creek Manifesto. 1978. Anderson.

Fly Fishing Strategy. 1988. Swisher and Richards.

A River Runs Through It. 1989. Maclean.

Joan Wulff's Fly Fishing: Expert Advice from a Woman's Perspective. 1991. Wulff.

California Blue-Ribbon Trout Streams. 1991. Sunderland and Lackey.

Joe Humphrey's Trout Tactics. 1993. Humphreys.

Western Fly-Fishing Strategies. 1998. Mathews.

Books con't.

Stripers on the Fly. 1999. Tabory.

Fly Fishing the Sierra Nevada. 1999. Sunderland.

Trout Flies: Proven Patterns. 2001. LaFontaine.

Selective Trout, revised ed. 2001. Swisher and Richards.

The Masters on the Nymph. 2002. Lyons, Migel, Wright and Whitlock.

Western River Hatches. 2002. Morris.

Fly-Fishing Techniques and Tactics. 2002. Kreh.

Advanced Fly Fishing Techniques. 2003. Kreh.

Fly Fishing with A.K. 2005. Best.

Fish Food: A Fly Fisher's Guide to Bugs and Bait. 2006. Cutter.

Magazines:

Fly Fisherman

Fly Rod & Reel

California Fly Fisherman

Trout (Trout Unlimited)

Southwest Fly Fishing

Northwest Fly Fishing

Catalogs:

Cabelas

L.L. Bean

Dan Baileys

Bass Pro Shops

Orvis

The Fly Shop

Sierra Trading Post

Streamborn

Bob Marriott's

T.V. Shows (OLN):

Cabela's Outfitter

Hunt for Big Fish

North to Alaska

Fly Fishing America

The KT Diaries

One More Cast – Shaw Grigsby

Websites:

Dan Blanton's Bulletin Board - <http://www.danblanton.com/bulletin.php>

The Fish Sniffer - <http://www.fishsniffer.com/>

Troutnut – <http://www.troutnut.com>

Midcurrent Fly Fishing News – <http://www.midcurrent.com>

Mark's Surf Fishing Page – <http://home.att.net/~surf.perch/Main.html>

Fly Fishing Organizations:

Santa Lucia Fly Fishers – Margie's Diner, SLO, 2nd Thursday of month, 6:00 p.m.
-call 934-2476 or 543-7596 for more information

Trout Unlimited

Federation of Fly Fishers

California Fly Fishers (SACTO area)

Shasta Mayflies (women only!)

California Fly Fishing Trade Shows:

San Mateo, Ontario

Local Fly Shops:

Hole-in-the-Wall Fly Shop – The Creamery, San Luis Obispo – 595-3359;

<http://www.holeinthewallflyshop.com>

Four Season's Outfitters – 432 Higuera St., San Luis Obispo – 544-5171

FLY FISHING EQUIPMENT

Fly Rods:

Classified by:

Weight (0000-15) of line used

Choice of rod weight depends on type of fishing and size of flies used

e.g. size 2-5 rods good for small streams, small flies, trout, panfish, surf perch

5-6 wt. rods good for trout, bass, larger flies

7-8 wt. rods good for larger bass, steelhead, salmon, larger flies, poppers

9+ wt. rods good for salmon, pike, tarpon and other aggressive saltwater fish

Action – slow-medium-fast

-how fast rod straightens out after flexing (“loading”)

Slower action rods provide gentler presentation of flies

Faster action rods have power for larger flies, windy conditions, larger fish

Length – most are 6-10'

-Spey rods

Shorter rods (7-8') good for creeks, brushy streams, shorter casts

Medium length rods (8-8.5') good all around

Longer rods (9'+) give best line control for nymphing, mending line, float tubes, distance

Fly Rods con't.

Blank material – bamboo, fiberglass, graphite, graphite composites

Graphite rods have best combination of sensitivity, power

Quality = cost! (\$25-\$4,000+)

Lots of cost in cosmetics – cork quality, rod guides, rod appearance, rare wood in reel seat, etc.

Good rods have quality guides...smooth, often coated with metal or ceramics
-stripping guide should be large for funneling line; snake guides for castability

Number of rod sections – travel vs. 2 piece

-Airline 62" linear bag rule

Fly Reels:

Main purpose = to hold fly line!

Cost: \$20-\$1000+

Right vs. left handed – personal preference

Standard vs. "large arbor"

-line and backing storage

-line retrieve rate

Manual vs. automatic

Drag systems: click vs. disk (usually with cork washer....store with drag loose)

Try to balance reel to rod

Fly Lines:

Provide weight to deliver the fly, rather than lure weight

Size: 0000-15, based on line weight

Usually 90' long

Tapered vs. level lines:

-level is inexpensive, marginally useful

-Double taper (DT) – good for delicate presentations

-Weight forward (WF) – better for distance; best all around

-Shooting heads – 24-30' long, connected to running line – distance champs

-“integrated shooting heads”

Fly Lines con't.

Floating lines – for dry flies, poppers, nymphing with weighted nymphs

Sinking lines – types I-VI, slow to fast sink (inches/sec.)

- good for nymphs, streamers...get flies down
- harder to pick up line off water
- uniform sinking lines best – e.g. Teeny® lines
- Sink-tip* variation

Slick lines easier to cast

- keep line clean
- check for nicks
- coated lines

Fly line backing:

- Why? 1) more line if big fish hooked
2) fills out spool on reel

Backing types: -Dacron, micron, braided, gel-spun (e.g. Spiderwire®)

Color – best if different than fly line

Leaders:

Connect fly line to fly, hopefully invisibly!

- Knotted, knotless, braided

Usually tapered: *butt – tippet*

- straight mono O.K. for aggressive fish (e.g. stripers)

Use **Surgeon's knot** to make your own!

Tippets: - classification: 0X-8X

- breaking strength*: subtract tippet size from 9 = lbs. test
 - e.g. 9-6X = 3 lbs. tippet strength
- size of tippet depends on size of fly used
- Shock tippet** (bite tippet) – wire or heavy mono for pike, etc.
- Fluorocarbon vs. monofilament

Leader length – 7.5-10' average

- longer good for delicate presentation
- depends on water clarity, spookiness of fish
- shorter leaders good for sinking line fishing (4-6')
 - flies can “suspend” underwater on long leaders

Birds and leaders

Waders:

Keep you dry, unless they leak, you fall in, etc. (option:wet wading)

Neoprene vs. breathable

- Breathable wader repair – Aquaseal® for pinholes; seam tears, you're done!

Bootfoot vs. stockingfoot

Boot soles – rubber, felt, studded

Wading Staffs:

From sticks to folding aircraft aluminum

Nets:

Good when wading

Gloves:

Sun gloves, Neoprenes, Ragg wool (fingerless only!)

Float Tubes:

For lakes, ponds

Nippers:

Essential!

Forceps:

BASIC FLY FISHING KNOTS – HOW TO TIE AND WHEN TO USE

Lots of knots...lots of opinions.... keep it simple

Good knots ~ 80-90% of original line breaking strength

All knots should be lubricated as you tighten

Mark's 4 essential knots:

- 1) **Slip knot** – connects backing to reel
- 2) **Nail knot** – backing to fly line, fly line to leader
- 3) **Surgeon's knot** – for making leaders, adding tippet
- 4) **Clinch knot** – for attaching leader to fly

Two other very useful knots:

- 1) **Perfection loop** – for loop-to-loop connections
- 2) **Loop knot** – for tying on streamers, etc. for natural movement

GAME FISH IDENTIFICATION AND HABITS

Bass

Found nearly everywhere

Aggressive!

Like structure

-rocks, sunken logs/brush, dropoffs, ledges, lily pads, old streambeds, docks

Smallmouths like cooler water.....67-71⁰F optimal

Largemouths like warmer water.....65-78⁰F optimal

Bass food – anything they can catch (ambush hunters)

-favorites: crawdads, shad, minnows, worms, frogs, insects

Bass generally avoid light – most active early, late

-great topwater fish

Local bass fishing spots:

- Lakes – San Antonio, Nacimiento (Spotted, White bass), Santa Margarita, Lopez
- Ponds – Fort Hunter Liggett, private farms
- Rivers – Nacimiento at Camp Roberts, Santa Ynez above Cachuma L.

Other good bass spots in California:

- Delta
- Most reservoirs (“trophy bass” lakes – Castaic, Dixon)

Striped Bass (“stripers”)

Native to eastern states, now throughout U.S.

Anadromous – move between salt and freshwater

Spawn in major rivers in California – e.g. Sacramento

Some lakes have land-locked populations

Very aggressive! Eat just about anything

Favorite foods: baitfish – minnows, shad, sculpins, anchovies

Watch for bird activity

Local striper fishing spots:

- Lake San Antonio

Other good spots in California:

- San Luis Reservoir
- California Delta (best fall-winter, on “big” tides)
- Sacramento river
- Pacific ocean – northern California, S.F. Bay

Trout

Rainbow, Golden – Native to California

Brown – from Europe (“German Brown”)

Brook – from eastern U.S.

Primary target for fly-fishermen

Can be finicky eaters, especially during a “hatch”

Easiest to catch in low light

-evening hatches

90% of trout’s diet is aquatic insects

-nymphs important to fly fishermen

Other trout food:

-terrestrial insects – ants, hoppers, beetles

-freshwater crustaceans – shrimp, scuds

-worms – *Tubifex*, annelids

Trout fishing spots:

•Salmon creek

•Santa Ynez R.

•Arroyo de la Cruz R.

•San Carpofofumo R.

•Nacimiento R. at Camp Roberts

•Lakes – Lopez, Santa Margarita

Best trout fishing spots (in my opinion!):

•Sierra lakes and streams, east and west side

•Northern California streams

-Sacramento, McCloud, Pit, etc.

Panfish – Bluegills, crappie, perch, redear sunfish

Easy to catch....great for kids and beginners

Found everywhere!

Eat insects, worms, crustaceans

Tend to have small mouths, sometimes tender (crappie)

Panfish fishing spots:

•Farm ponds

•Fort Hunter Liggett ponds

•Lakes – Santa Margarita, Lopez, Nacimiento, San Antonio, Cachuma

•Streams – Santa Ynez, Nacimiento, Kings (above Pine Flat Dam)

AQUATIC ENTOMOLOGY

The study of insects with aquatic life stages

Life Cycles:

Incomplete – egg-nymph-adult

-Mayflies, Stoneflies, Dragonflies/Damselflies

Mayfly variation: egg-nymph-**dun** (1st winged adult) – **spinner** (sexually mature adult)

Complete – egg-larva-pupa-adult

-Caddisflies, Midges, Mosquitoes, other true flies (gnats, deer flies, horse flies)

ARTIFICIAL FLIES

>1 million insect species

>30,000 artificial flies

- Some flies **imitate** natural food – e.g. insects, worms, crustaceans, etc.
- Some flies are **attractors** – suggest food, rather than imitate
-e.g. Royal Wulff, Humpy, Trude

General Fly Types:

- Dry flies – float on surface – flies, poppers, mice, frogs
-use of floatants
- Wet flies – sink – nymphs, streamers, scuds, shrimp, crabs, worms, eggs
-fly sink material, weights

Tips:

- keep hooks sharp
- go barbless

Flies for Game Fish:

Good bass flies:

- Streamers (clousers, deceivers, zonkers, wooly buggers, whistlers)
- Cork poppers
- Deer hair bugs

For streamers, use sink-tip or full-sinking lines; shooting heads good

For poppers/bugs, use floating lines, including shooting heads for larger types

Good striper flies:

- Streamers

Flies for Game Fish con't:

Good trout flies:

- Nymphs – Hare's ear, Prince, Pheasant tail, midges
 - Dries – Adams, Blue-winged olive, Pale morning dun, Mosquito, Humpy, ants, Elk Hair
- Caddis
- San Juan Worms
 - Scuds (freshwater crustaceans)
 - Streamers

Good panfish flies:

- Nymphs – just about anything will work; beadheads very effective
- Streamers – keep 'em small
- Dries – cork poppers, size 4 and smaller, with rubber legs

Selecting Flies:

- Visit a local fly shop
- Look for hatch charts, local fly fishing guidebooks
- Look streamside – spider webs, on brush, under rocks for insects
- Hire a fishing guide for ½-1 day

Fly Tying:

- Fun hobby
- Saves money, but takes time
- Good when the same fly pattern used often
- Great to catch fish on your own creation!

HATCH CHARTS

Hatch Chart for Davis Lake

Hatches	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Midges			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Caddis					■	■	■	■	■			
Callibaetis Mayflies					■	■	■	■	■			
Scuds	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Leeches	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Dragon Fly Nymphs					■	■	■	■	■			
Damsel Fly Nymphs						■	■	■				
Waterboatmen & Backswimmers	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Chubs	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

Deschutes River Hatch Chart

June Hatch Chart and Pattern Recommendations						
Insect	Stage	Pattern	Size	Color	Water Type	Time of Day
Mayfly, Blue Winged Olive (Baetis)	Nymph	Crystal Flash Nymph	16-18	Dark Olive or Dark Brown	Slack slow water and back eddies	Mid-day (12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.)
		Pheasant Tail	16-18			
	Emerger	Baetis Soft	16-18	Dark Olive	Slack slow water and back eddies	Mid-day (12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.)
		Floating Nymph	16-18			
	Adults	Para dun	16-18	Dark Olive	Slack slow water and back eddies	Mid-day (12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.)
		Compared				
		Thorax				
Pale Evening Dunn (Heptagenia)	Nymphs	Pheasant Tail		na	Riffles and runs close to bank	Morning (8:00 am. to 1:00 pm)
		Soft Hackle	12	Dark Green		
		Hare's Ear		Olive		

FLY FISHING STRATEGIES

Plan trips ahead of time:

- Make list of gear
- Check fishing regulations (seasons, bag limits, gear allowed, e.g. barbless flies only?)

Times to fish:

Most game fish easiest to catch early & late

- many game fish avoid sunlight (fish lack eyelids)
- fish are cold-blooded, may reduce activity in heat of day, when water very warm
- overcast, cloudy days can be good all day
- tailwaters, spring-fed creeks usually consistently good

Evening hatches – fish often go wild!

- SACTO river stonefly hatch
- Sierra high lakes mosquitoes, midges
- Lakes – largemouth bass, panfish
- Streams – brown trout

Look for feeding birds

- Feeding on insects – indicates hatch is on
- Feeding on baitfish, e.g. minnows, shad – pushed to surface by larger fish (“boils”)

Be stealthy!

- Wear clothes that blend into scenery
- Approach fishing spot quietly, slowly; stay low, in shade if possible
- Don’t wade unless necessary – sound travels 4X faster in water than in air (Kreh)
- Kneel or crawl to cast to very close fish, in clear water
- Speak softly around fish

Fly Setups:

- Single fly
- Double fly (dropper or trailer)
 - dry/wet and double nymph
- Strike indicators

Fly Presentation:

- Critical!
- Must look natural for most game fish to bite
- Trout often in feeding “zones”.....won’t move far to feed
 - need accurate casts at these times

- Casts must be drag-free
 - “mending” line concept
- Bass/panfish/pike are opportunists.....a noisy cast may help!

FLY FISHING STRATEGIES con't.

Reading fish water:

- Why? Most water has no fish.....
- Successful fishermen avoid this water and concentrate where the fish are (art & science)

Streams:

- Fish face into current
- Good spots: *riffles* (if not too shallow)
pockets (before, after rocks)
undercut banks
seams of 2 currents
pools – esp. heads and tails
under logs
- Trout like water that:
 - is cool -52-56⁰F – Brookies
 - 55-60⁰F – Rainbows
 - 60-65⁰F – Browns
 - moves at right speed
 - has good oxygen levels
 - has food
 - is protected (shady, broken surface – e.g. riffles)

Stillwater:

- Fish may cruise shoreline, weedlines for food
- Seek depth for optimum temperature
- Fish often associated with structure, especially bass
- Look for creeks entering, leaving lakes
- Old roadbeds
- Springs; e.g. Lake Almanor brown trout story

Fishing Etiquette:

- Or, how to avoid fist-fights and gunshot wounds!

FLY CASTING

Casting principles:

- Smooth casts best
- Pretty casts don't equate to catching fish
- Need tight loops for distance
 - exceptions: heavy flies/poppers, double fly rigs, weight on leader
- Casting stroke varies with distance of cast, wind, obstacles, rod action, etc.
 - ignore "10-1" clock rule
- Must "load" rod to cast line
 - rods load differently, depending on action, line weight
 - "uplining"
- Line control essential

Main types of casts:

- Forward cast
- Side cast
- Roll cast
- Double haul
 - speed of "haul" affects distance
 - essential for windy conditions
 - water haul variation