



# *The Flyline*

The Newsletter of the Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association

June 2023



Nice Day Near Crested Butte, Colorado  
Photo by Dan Peterson  
Second Place Winner of 2023 HFFA Show Photo Contest



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# The President's Hatch

Now that the weather is nice, I hope all of you are out fishing! Prior to our April meeting, we were approached by professors at Upper Iowa University interested in sampling streams throughout the driftless during the periodic cicada hatch in 2024. For those that are unfamiliar with the periodic cicadas, they only emerge once every 17 years and will be present in Fayette, Clayton, and Delaware counties next year. In collaboration with the Iowa DNR, Upper Iowa University's student-led Science and Environment Club is conducting a 4-year research project that will evaluate the availability, use, and potential benefits of the 17-year Periodical Cicadas in Driftless Area stream fishes (e.g., Brook Trout). The goal is to better understand and characterize the ecological relationships between this rarely available terrestrial resource and fish populations in Driftless Area streams. We are excited to contribute to this project and look forward to hearing more about the results upon the project's completion.

As many of you know, we were short a workday coordinator and didn't have anyone to organize the Bluegill Outing. A few weeks ago, Ronda Long stepped up and decided to take over as our workday coordinator and she will also assist with planning the Bluegill Outing. I look forward to hearing about the results of that get-together as I know fishing has been fantastic in years past. I'd like to personally thank Ronda for her dedication to the organization and stepping up to assist us. If you plan on working with Ronda, never forget a trash bag in your stream pack. She will make you diligently clean up streamside and we love that about her!

This past month we had our follow-up meetings to the 2023 show. Many positives and negatives were discussed, and



Davis Horton

we've even started planning for the 2024 show, which our folks from the Iowa City and Cedar Rapids areas will host. A venue has not been secured as of now, but that should be solved in the coming weeks. Thanks again to the 2023 show committee for putting on such a great event. We can't wait to see what the next one has in store!

Many of our members and clubs will be busy with projects, local events, and meetings in the coming months. I'd like to use this President's Hatch as a reminder to push for new membership at those various gatherings. The club would like to see an influx of younger members and the best way to reach those kids is at your respective events, via social media, or through in person engagement on the water. We've streamlined the process of becoming a member now. All you must do is visit the HFFA website, click the Join/Renew tab, click on the block to renew your membership, and then fill out the

information. It's easy! In a world where everything is going virtual, this is the easiest way to keep our membership up to date and readily available to the public.

I've heard great reports on crappie, smallmouth bass, northern pike, and even walleyes across the state the past few months. Take the time to explore new water and venture outside your comfort zone. Iowa has many great opportunities for warm and cold-water angling, so never stick to the same place twice! Have a great summer and I hope your lines stay stretched to the max.

*Davis*



Driftless TU's Cleanup Day led by Steve Perry  
Threatening rain made for a small crew.  
Obviously they were successful!!!



**Help Support  
Port-a-Potties at N&S Bear Creeks  
Go Fund Me**  
<https://www.gofundme.com/port-a-potty>

# Contacts & Meetings

## 2023 Board of Directors

### **Davis Horton, President**

Colo, Iowa  
dhorton@hardincountyia.gov

### **Ron Stahlberg, Vice President**

Swisher, IA  
flyfish@southslope.net

### **Dave Jones, Secretary**

Muscatine, IA  
dave.jones@kentww.com

### **Keith Wunder, Treasurer**

West Des Moines, IA  
keithwunder72@gmail.com

### **John Miller, Past President**

Dubuque, Iowa  
dbqflyfisher@mchsi.com

### **Kirk Rosenow, Director**

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kcrosenow@gmail.com

### **Kate Lodge, Director**

Geneseo, Illinois  
katelodge25@gmail.com

### **Rob Kundert, Director**

Dubuque, IA  
robbiek244@gmail.com

### **Martin Acerbo, Director**

Des Moines, IA  
macerbo@iastate.edu

### **Dale Tayloe, Director**

Cedar Falls, IA  
tayloedb@gmail.com

### **Conservation Chair - vacant**

### **Ronda Long**

### **Work Day Coordinator**

Center Point, IA  
rondalong67@yahoo.com

### **Don Otto, HFFA Flyline Editor**

Knoxville, IA  
hawkeyeflyfisher@gmail.com

## **Project Healing Waters**

### **Fly Fishing**

Meets 1st & 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of Month  
7 to 9 pm

Paralyzed Veterans of America  
Iowa Chapter

7025 Hickman Road Ste #1  
Urbandale, IA

Contact: Dale Sanders  
iaflyfisher@outlook.com

## **Quad Cities Chapter**

Meets 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday Every Month  
6:00 pm to 8+

QCCA Expo Center

2621 Fourth Ave  
Rock Island, IL

Contact: John Channon  
jc.channon@mchsi.com

## **Dubuque Fly Fishers**

Meets 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Monday 6:00 pm  
September to May

Swiss Valley Nature Center  
13606 Swiss Valley Rd., Dubuque,  
IA

Contact: Gary Kruse  
garykruse97@gmail.com  
facebook.com/dubuqueflyfishers

## **Central Iowa Fly Fishers**

Meets 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday 9:00 am  
September to May

Our Lady's Immaculate Heart  
Church

510 East 1<sup>st</sup> St., Ankeny, IA

Contact: Kirk Rosenow  
kcrosenow@gmail.com

## **Iowa City Contact**

Contact: Ryan Maas  
maas\_ryan@yahoo.com

## **Cedar Rapids Contact**

Contact: Lance Zook  
l.a.zook@mchsi.com

## **TROUT UNLIMITED NORTH BEAR CHAPTER**

Meetings held second Thursday  
of month

September – May, Starting at  
6:30 pm.

The Tavern Pizza & Pasta Grill  
1755 50th St.

West Des Moines, IA  
Website: tu-northbear.org  
David Klemme - President  
president@tu-northbear.org

## **TROUT UNLIMITED DRIFTLESS CHAPTER**

Meets the first Thursday of the  
month October through May @

7:00 pm in the basement of  
T-Bocks Sports Bar and Grill,  
206 Water St. Decorah  
www.iadriftless.org

## **Iowa Women Fly Fishers**

Join us for good fishing  
and good company .

[https://www.facebook.com/  
groups/170891783425206](https://www.facebook.com/groups/170891783425206)

katelodge25@gmail.com  
willacamp@gmail.com

## **Trout Unlimited Spring Creeks Chapter**

Ray Thys – President

Check Their Facebook  
www.facebook.com/springcreekstu

## **Iowa's Coldwater Conservancy**

Tom Murray  
jandtmurray@gmail.com

# Event Calendar

<p><b><u>June 2023</u></b></p> <p><b>Wisconsin Women's Fly Fishing Clinics</b>  <b>June 14 - 16 Intermediate</b>  <b>June 16 - 18 Beginner</b>          Need to preregister!          Avalanche, WI  <a href="mailto:wisconsinwomenflyfishing@gmail.com">wisconsinwomenflyfishing@gmail.com</a></p> <p><b><u>July 2023</u></b></p> <p>July 31  <b>Deadline for State Fair Tying Contest</b></p> <p><b><u>August 2023</u></b></p> <p><b><u>September 2023</u></b></p> <p>September 9  <b>Brule River Spey Day</b>          Lake Superior Steelhead Assn.          Brule river@ McNeil House          Brule, WI  <a href="http://www.steelheaders.org">www.steelheaders.org</a></p> <p>September 30  <b>HFFA &amp; DNR Workday</b>          Manchester Hatchery          Manchester, Iowa          Details to be determined          Ronda Long  <a href="mailto:rondalong67@yahoo.com">rondalong67@yahoo.com</a></p>	<p><b><u>October 2023</u></b></p> <p>October 6 - 8  <b>2023 Drifless Flyathon</b>          Decorah, Iowa  <a href="mailto:flyathon@driftlessonthefly.com">flyathon@driftlessonthefly.com</a>  <a href="http://runingrivers.org">runingrivers.org</a>          April 15th Signup Limited</p> <p>October 6 8  <b>2023 Casting for Recovery</b>          Camp Ewalu's Stone Retreat Center          Strawberry Point, IA 52076  <b>Must Register by July 27th</b>  <a href="mailto:norrisl@ihaonline.org">norrisl@ihaonline.org</a></p> <p><b><u>November 2023</u></b></p> <p><b><u>December 2023</u></b></p> <p><b><u>January 2024</u></b></p> <p><b><u>February 2024</u></b></p> <p>February ?  <b>Mid-Iowa Bass Masters</b>  <b>Swap Meet &amp; boat Show</b>          4-H building State fairgrounds          Des Moines, IA  <a href="http://www.midiowabassmasters.com">www.midiowabassmasters.com</a></p> <p>??  <b>HFFA Annual Fly Fishing Show</b>  <a href="http://Hawkeyeflyfishing.com">Hawkeyeflyfishing.com</a></p>	<p><b><u>March 2024</u></b></p> <p>March ?  <b>Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo</b>          Hamline University          St. Paul, MN  <a href="mailto:info@greatwatersflyexpo.com">info@greatwatersflyexpo.com</a></p> <p>March ?  <b>Fly Tyer Rendezvous</b>          Spring Creeks TU          Eagles Club, Monticello, IA  <a href="https://Facebook.com/springcreekstu">Facebook.com/springcreekstu</a></p> <p>March ?  <b>Sowbug Roundup</b>          North Arkansas Fly Fishers          Mountain Home, AR  <a href="http://www.sowbugroundup.org">www.sowbugroundup.org</a></p> <p><b><u>April 2024</u></b></p> <p><b><u>May 2024</u></b></p> <p>May ?  <b>HFFA Bluegill Outing</b>          Lake Wapello          Drakesville, IA          Ronda Long  <a href="mailto:rondalong67@yahoo.com">rondalong67@yahoo.com</a></p> <p><b><u>June 2024</u></b></p> <p><b>Wisconsin Women's Fly Fishing Clinics</b>  <b>June ? Intermediate</b>  <b>June ? Beginner</b>          Need to preregister!          Avalanche, WI  <a href="mailto:wisconsinwomenflyfishing@gmail.com">wisconsinwomenflyfishing@gmail.com</a></p>
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The Flyline is the official publication of the Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association. It is published in April, June, September, and December. The HFFA is a chapter of the Fly Fishers International. Articles may be submitted as MS Word or as a text file. Typed, printed or clearly handwritten documents are also accepted. Photos can be submitted digitally. Send original jpeg. Deadline is one month before publication. Send all materials to:

Don Otto, The Flyline Editor  
[hawkeyeflyfisher@gmail.com](mailto:hawkeyeflyfisher@gmail.com)  
 641-230-1468



# HFFA Business Report

## Minutes of HFFA Board of Directors Meeting

April 29, 2023

### Manchester Fish Hatchery, Manchester, Iowa

Meeting called to order by President Davis Horton at 11:00 AM

Attendees: Davis Horton, Ron Stahlberg, John Miller, Dave Jones, Keith Wunder, Kate Lodge, Rob Kundert, Martin Acerbo, Kirk Rosenow, Dale Tayloe, Don Otto, Steve Veysey, and Ryan Maas

- Welcome from Davis Horton
- Approval of Minutes: Motion made and unanimously approved to accept minutes from 2023 business meeting held during 2023 show.
- Treasurer Report: Keith Wunder reported that Iowa biannual report has been filed. New check signers have been set up for checking account. Current bank balance is \$67,457.81, excluding the PayPal account balance of \$14,460. The PayPal funds will be transferred to the club checking account. Preliminary show report: gross income approximately \$26,000, expenses \$22,189 and profit of \$3,861. Motion made and unanimously approved to invest funds in excess of \$40,000 in a savings account or CD's not to exceed a duration of 1 year. Motion made and unanimously approved to accept the treasurer's report.
- Old Business:
  1. Still seeking someone to fill Conservation Chair.
  2. Ronda Long is the new workday coordinator and will be responsible for the Bluegill Outing.
- New Business:
  - 1, Iowa Smallmouth Alliance  
Jason Hochstetler requested that HFFA financially support signage for protection of smallmouth bass. Funding will be considered once DNR approved the signage project.
  2. Catfish Creek Project – Dave Jones reviewed a multi-year riparian restoration project at New Melleray Abbey on Catfish Creek upstream of the public access property at Swiss Valley Nature Center. Project objectives are to reduce downstream flooding, increase water quality, increase quantity and quality of riparian habitat and wetlands. Estimated cost for phase 1 is approximately \$550,000. Dave Jones requested HFFA funding support of \$5,000 to \$10,000. After much discussion, the board decided to reconsider this funding request upon receipt of the fishing biologist report from the Manchester Hatchery.
  3. Upper Iowa University Cicada Project Funding Request  
Upper Iowa University is seeking \$2,000 to purchase drift nets to sample 17-year brood hatch cicadas. Joint project with Iowa DNR and referred by Mike Siepker. HFFA has received completed project budget and request form. Motion made and unanimously approved to donate \$2,000 to purchase drift nets.
- Environmental report  
Bloody Run update provided by Steve Veysey. Steve will be seeking additional funding from HFFA for water permit challenge and testing kits to assist with this effort. Formal funding request to be made at a future HFFA board meeting.
- 2023 Show Review  
Friday family night programs were successful. Saturday attendance was strong. Sunday attendance was low. Show attendance was estimated to be 320.  
Notes from the Show Committee: Good volunteers but not enough. Discussion about improvement ideas for silent auction. Casting pond was a huge success. Improved vendor participation.
- 2024 Show Discussion  
Location of 2024 show to be determined  
Discussion held regarding local or state wide planning committee for future shows.
- Meeting unanimously adjourned at 1:30 PM

Submitted by Dave Jones April 29, 2023

*Dave*

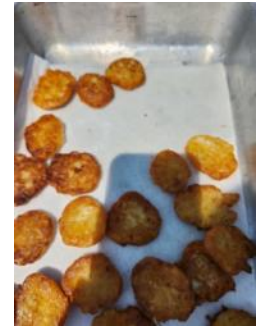
John Carl Miller presenting the 2022 Landowner Award  
Diane Rissman made the easements on the Yellow River  
possible two times!!



# All Things Bluegill

The 2023 HFFA Bluegill Outing was held at Lake Wapello State Park, just west of Drakesville, Iowa, May 20 & 21. The weather was great and the fish were biting. Unfortunately the number of participants was small but they were enthusiastic. The food as usual was fantastic. I can attest that no one left hungry, although an after lunch nap might have been needed. I think photos tell a better story than I can so see below.

*Don*



The cooks left to right: Dan Peterson, John Channon, & Steve Anderson  
Cheryl Channon creating her tasty onion fritters, shown on right  
Just some of the food, including the fish & Dan's baked beans and rhubarb crisp  
Find below left and right the happy folks eating the meal



Central Iowa Fly Fishers sponsored a one fly Bluegill contest May 16th. Mike Schrader on right won for the second straight year. He was using "Matt's Bluegill Fly"  
Mike is now known as the  
**"Bluegill Whisperer"**

# *FFI Fly Tying Group Rendezvous*

## **Dear FFI Member**

We're excited to invite you to a wonderful opportunity to connect with other FFI members and the FFI Fly Tying Group at the Inaugural Fly Tying Group Rendezvous in Branson, Missouri.

Branson may never be the same after the FTG makes its first tying event visit, so you definitely want to be a part of this event September 14-16, 2023. This will also be the perfect time to get together with your FFI and Fly Tying Group friends you may not have seen since COVID. So, bring your family and stay a few days to tie, see some family friendly shows and fish in and around beautiful Lake Taneycomo.

## **Who Can Tie**

You can tie as long as you are a member of the Fly Tying Group! Said another way, you don't have to be a Dave Whitlock to tie. This event is for individuals that like to tie to get together and have FUN. It is a Judgment Free Zone.

## **EVENT LOCATION:**

**Lion's Community Center  
1015 E. State Highway 76, Branson, MO**

## **EVENT SCHEDULE:**

SEPTEMBER 14, 2023, from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM: Kickoff Party for the tiers. Tickets \$6.00 each. Food will include hot dogs, hamburgers, chips and drinks.

SEPTEMBER 15, 2023

Morning Session Tying from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM

Afternoon Session Tying from 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM

Raffles and Auctions from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Tier's Dinner from 5:00 PM to 6:30 PM Tickets \$16.50 each.

7:00 – 9:30 PM – OPTIONAL EVENT – Attend Texas Tenors Concert as a group. (\$37.50 each)

SEPTEMBER 16, 2023

Morning Session Tying from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM

Afternoon Session Tying from 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM

Raffles and Auctions from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM

## **REQUIREMENTS:**

Each tier must bring two boxes of flies. One to swap on Thursday night and one to raffle. Also please bring any raffle donations with you.

To tie, you must be a member of FFI and the Fly Tying Group. But, if you aren't a member now, it is not too late to join! Not only will you be able to tie at this fantastic event, but you will start receiving education and conservation information and will have access to the FFI Learning Center, with over 1000 fly patterns.

Please note that FFI members have exclusive registration until June 16, 2023. Starting June 17, 2023 registration will be opened to the public if any spots remain.

**Editor's Note: Since I am a FFI member I received this as an email.. This sounds like a good function and also a good reason to check out the FFI website to join FFI and become a member of the Fly Tying Group.**

**<https://www.flyfishersinternational.org>**

*Don*



# Memories Old and New



Dean Elder & Dave Rosset  
Photo by Larry Murphy

## The Brown Drakes and Northern Lights

by Dean Elder

Jim and I were on our annual "Iowa Guys" trip to the Prairie River. Our hosts lived in an old farmhouse west of Gleason, Wisconsin. The Brown Drake hatch was on.

Darkness comes later in upper Wisconsin in the early summer. We fished for several hours and decided it was time to head back. About 10 pm we were walking back to the house. There was a thunderstorm coming and we wanted to be out of our gear before the storm began. We could see lightening in the clouds North of the house. Bright flashes and rolling thunder boomed.

Watching the lightening flashes in those towering gray and white thunderheads was quite a sight. Spectacular and fun to watch. But the really special sight was the northern lights. Behind the illuminated thunderheads was a huge bank of northern lights. A truly awesome mix of colors and light. A full rainbow of colors.

It's been quite a few years since we have fished the Prairie but those special memories are still fresh.

*Dean*

Editor's note: Jim is Jim Maxted of Marshalltown, another founding member

## A Beautiful Fall Day

by Josiah Cornelder, age 10

We were finally at our destination, and eager to wet a line. At the fourth hole of Little Paint Creek, the weather was sunny, still, and 73 degrees. While hiking to the fishing hole, we looked at the beautiful scenery. Dad and I stopped several times to fish. On the way there, we talked about many things. The supplies we had included fly rods, flies, floatant, waders and nets. The water was calm. With my Copper John fly, I made a cast and got a bite! Out of the water jumped a brown trout, which was wild! Sadly, it fell off, but I was happy because that was the first brown trout I had ever tied into. We had a successful first day of fishing.

*Josiah*





# *The Old Bamboo Rod Comes Full Circle*

*By Mike Jacobs*

*Second Place Essay in 2023 HFFA Show Essay Contest*

When I was a young boy our family would often travel to destinations in the Rocky Mountain West. Camping in the mountains, and taking in all of the wonders that the mountains hold are memories that have stayed with me forever. On our trip to Alaska in 1968 we stopped for an overnight visit with my great aunt and uncle who lived in Sheridan, Wyoming. Uncle Junior was a lifelong fly fisherman and he often visited the trout streams in the nearby Bighorn mountains. During this visit Junior took dad and me into the mountains in the afternoon to do some trout fishing. I recall that he fly fished using an imitation grasshopper, while dad and I fished with live hoppers. Junior caught his limit of Rainbows while dad and I caught nothing. This was my first exposure to how effective fly fishing can be.

A few years later Uncle Junior passed away and I inherited the fly rod he had used so effectively for many years in the Bighorn range. The rod sat on a shelf in our home for nearly 50 years without being used. When planning our western vacation this year I decided to venture to the Bighorn Mountains near Burgess Junction, west of Sheridan. I'd be fishing some of the same trout streams that Uncle Junior had fished so many years ago. For nostalgic reasons I decided to take along Junior's old bamboo rod, hoping I could catch at least one trout with it.

During our first two fishing days the old bamboo rod waited patiently in the car while we fished the South Tongue river and Shell Creek. On day three we decided to give the East Fork of Goose Creek a try. The time had arrived to see if the old rod could work its magic once again after a half century of retirement.

We hiked downstream on East Goose creek about a half mile, keeping an eye on the beautiful riffles and runs as we passed silently by in the shadows of the pine forest.

When we reached a large bend in the creek that was too difficult to skirt around and too deep to wade, we decided to begin fishing our way back upstream to the truck.

With the Pine tree canopy along both sides of the stream, long casts were impossible. Realistically, long casts were not even needed as the East Fork of Big Goose creek is the true definition of small stream, pocket water fishing.

On my first upstream cast, the #16 Elk Hair Caddis drifted through the run untouched. I turned to focus my attention on the next upstream target and suddenly realized that a trout had grabbed my fly as it dangled downstream. The fish released itself after a couple of tugs on the fly.

On the next cast my eyes were focused on the fly while it drifted through the short run. As the fly passed overhead a trout shot up from the bottom of the stream and engulfed the fly. A brief, spirited fight ensued, and then I guided the small Rainbow into the shallows.

I took a couple of quick photos of the pretty Rainbow next to the old bamboo rod, then watched as he darted back into the run after regaining his freedom.

This small but memorable Rainbow was the first of around 35 trout I caught that day. My fishing friend caught nearly the same number of fish. We figured that 70 trout caught between us, during our 4 hours of fishing, qualified as a pretty darn good day. During the day we sampled Rainbows, Browns and Brook trout, all small and gorgeous mountain trout, measuring between 6 and 10 inches.

After 50 years of silent retirement the old bamboo rod once again felt the cool mountain breeze and the pull of wild trout along its backbone.

We fished the same stream section of East Goose creek on our last fishing day. Once again I removed the old bamboo rod from Junior's handmade wooden case. The metal ferrules were joined and the guides were aligned for the last time on this trip. Again, several fish were caught and many great memories were made while fishing the old rod.

After returning home, the rod is once again stored in an honorable place in my "man cave" at home. Before my next adventure out west I'll put a size heavier reel and fly line with it. The reel and line I matched with it this year were just too light.

For far too many years this special rod has waited patiently as I fished some of my newer fly rods while exploring western waters.

I won't make the old bamboo wait another 50 years before experiencing the beauty of the mountain west or feeling the weight of a wild trout along its split cane length.

*Mike*



# 2023 Iowa State Fair Fly Tying Competition

**The Iowa State Fair will be held August 10 through August 20, 2023. We will be holding the Fly-Tying competition once again this year. I am sure everyone has practiced tying their favorite flies and are willing to enter them in the state contest.**

The Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association will again be sponsoring the Fly Tying competition at this year's Iowa State Fair. The competition is supported by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the Iowa State Fair. The goal is to provide an opportunity for the public to view the art of fly tying and to promote fly fishing in Iowa.

The fly tying display will be in the DNR Building on the Fairgrounds during the fair. The judging is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, August 9<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 p.m. in the DNR Building.

**Fly entries need to be received at the Fair Administration post office box by July 31, 2023.**

There are three divisions

- Adult Division is for anyone **17 years of age and older.**
- Junior Division is for anyone **16 years and younger.**
- Expert Division for tiers who have **sold flies.**

There are four categories for each division. The categories are the following:

- Dry Fly
- Wet Fly/Soft Hackle/Nymph
- Streamers
- Open Class

You may enter in each of the categories, but **only one fly for each category. No flies smaller than size #18. No flies larger than size #2. To enter, please provide the fly tier's name, the division to be entered, the category to be entered and the name of the fly.**

You must be an Iowa resident to enter or a member of the Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association. If you have **ever tied flies commercially or sold the flies that you have tied, you must enter the Expert Division.** If you won a blue ribbon for one of the categories last year, you are not permitted to enter the same category this year.

The Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association will provide judges for the competition. Ribbons will be given for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners. Each fly will be judged in its category. In our contest, a panel of judges will choose the places in each category and division. The visitors to the state fair will see the flies displayed in the DNR Building

Flies must be sent to the Iowa State Fair Administration Office, P.O. Box 57130, Des Moines, IA 50317 and **received by July 31, 2023.** Each fly entered must have the **fly tier's name, address, telephone number, name of the fly, division to be entered and the category. Junior Division entries must state the age of the fly tier.**

See below 2022 judges Keith Wunder, Paul Domato, and Dave Rosset



# *Fall Walleyes on the Fly*

*by Davis Horton*

During the fall, walleyes will change their feeding patterns in accordance with day length and temperature fluctuations. The general rule of thumb is to fish extremely shallow early in the fall and target progressively deeper water as winter approaches. When the walleyes are in consistent feeding cycles, no matter which part of the fall that may be, there are two general approaches I take to walleye fly fishing. The first strategy is to fish with big flies at night when walleyes are on the hunt. Secondly, I like to dredge smaller flies during daylight hours to entice fish that are behaviorally neutral when it comes to feeding.

When throwing big flies at nocturnal fish, you'll want to use streamers that make a lot of noise, draw a lot of water, and are easily visible in low light settings. Night fishing requires you to pound all the walleye's senses into overdrive so that they can see, hear, and feel the fly around them. Big flies will not deter a walleye strike, especially at night. For larger streamers, think about throwing patterns like Galloup's dungeon, double deceivers, or large bunny leeches. Just don't buy them from stores because you'll want to modify your flies with glass or tungsten rattle chambers, heavier dumbbell eyes or beads, and experiment with colors that show the profile of the fly best after dark. Black, yellow, and white are all great places to start. Sinking lines are a necessity for large streamer patterns. Full intermediate lines and S3 lines work well for keeping large flies in the walleye's kill zone. A 7 or 8 weight rod will be perfectly adequate for night fishing applications. Also, keep the leader system simple. 5 feet of 16-pound fluorocarbon is suitable for night fishing.

Daylight hours require more finesse fly fishing techniques. I like to say, "hit them in the face when it's sunny outside." The fish don't want to move much when it's bright out, but walleyes won't refuse an easy meal. European Sport Nymphing (ESN) is a great place to start when targeting daytime walleyes. A 10'6" 3 weight euro nymphing rod, 14-foot leader down to 5x tippet, and a light reel will make your walleye fishing comfortable. The strategy is to get the fly down quickly into the fish's kill zone. Utilize a combination of tight line nymphing, Holschlag crayfish hopping, and vertical jigging all packed into one to get the best response from fish. Hopping the bottom and dragging the bottom with jig hook woolly buggers or crayfish patterns can be great in early fall. Using the tip of the rod to pop and dart small baitfish patterns, like Clouser minnows or jig minnows, can be exceptional for late fall fishing to earn a reaction strike. Diversity in the retrieve will lead to more eats.

Day time fishing will also require modifications to fly patterns. For instance, traditional woolly buggers are a bit too "webby" and don't get down in the strike zone quickly. Instead, only take three wraps of hackle directly behind the bead rather than throughout the body of the fly. Doing this helps make the streamer more compact, allowing it to sink quickly. Adding 20 wraps of .020 lead free wire also helps the fly get down better. Consider using other materials as well. Replacing rabbit with pine squirrel is advantageous. Squirrel strips move similarly to rabbit hair, but the strips are cut thinner, and the overall material is lighter which will help the fly sink faster.

Walleye fly fishing can be frustrating but take these techniques to the water next time you feel obligated to try something new. Don't let bluebird skies, a little bit of wind, and post frontal conditions deter you from fishing. Walleyes will simply eat when they feel like it. My best fish of the year often come on days that traditional walleye anglers would consider non-ideal. If the fish are around, these techniques will prove successful for anglers looking to target walleyes on the fly.

*Davis*





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