



The Flyline

The Newsletter of the Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association

September 2023



Intense Concentration & Proud Grandfather
Photo by Tom Polehna
Third Place Winner of 2023 HFFA Show Photo Contest



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The President's Hatch

It has been an extremely hot summer, but hopefully the fishing has been exceptional for everyone. I've heard great reports from many of our HFFA members targeting smallmouth bass, pond species, carp, and bowfin. As we look towards fall, the fishing will only improve! Just a few updates for the organization as we transition into the next season.

There is an opportunity for the HFFA to assist in a coldwater stream easement acquisition. If all goes according to plan, there would be 2.57 miles of new, fishable land available on an already well-known stream. Currently, the creek harbors healthy numbers of brown and rainbow trout and we have a general idea of what population age dynamics this stream has thanks to data from the Iowa DNR. During our August meeting, the board decided to pledge \$10,000 to assist with this project. For now, no further details have been released on when it will be publicly available, but we are glad to support. We are excited about this project and look forward to partnering with the Iowa DNR to make this new chunk of water a reality for our anglers.

Secondly, the HFFA has been approached by The Iowa Nature Summit to attend and collaborate with conservation entities from across Iowa at Drake University (Nov 16-17). I am a graduate of Drake's Environmental Science and Policy Program and look forward to working with some of the people I already know quite well. This is a two-day gathering of nature advocates and organizations representing a broad spectrum of Iowa's natural world. The purpose of the summit is to connect Iowans interested in protecting nature and to increase public awareness about Iowa's most crucial conservation needs. For example, the ongoing battle with protecting



Davis Horton

Bloody Run. Our organization, in addition to dozens of others, will be in attendance. Two of our board members will be there to represent the HFFA and we are excited to be a part of this gathering of brilliant minds.

Last, we've fielded numerous questions about what's being done with Iowa brook trout. There's been a noticeable decline in brook trout numbers on our creeks, so what's happening? We started chatting with some of the fisheries folks to figure out the scoop on brookies and a few of our members were able to tour the Manchester fish hatchery to observe what is being done for brook trout conservation. The hope is that a brood stock can be developed in captivity using South Pine strain fish. South Pine genetics come from our native, hardy variety of brook trout that have lived in Iowa for generations. This unique strain is well adapted to our water conditions and likely have better survivability in our streams vs the genetic strains

that were used in previous stockings. The fish with non-native genetics just didn't survive well. Once the native strain fish are reared in captivity, the plan is to reestablish brookies in a select number of conditionally unique streams where survivability and reproduction is viable. Whether that is on publicly fishable land or not is still up in the air, but we are excited regardless! This is a giant leap in brook trout conservation, and we encourage you all to contribute to the effort by donating to the Friends of the Manchester Fish Hatchery as they continue pursuing wild strain brook trout production.

Davis



State Fair Fly Tying Contest Judges
Paul Domoto, Keith Wunder, & Dave Rosset



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

Contacts & Meetings

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rondalong67@yahoo.com

Don Otto, HFFA Flyline Editor

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Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing

Meets 1st & 3rd 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 3rd 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 2nd & 4th 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 3rd Saturday 9:00 am
September to May

Our Lady's Immaculate Heart
Church

510 East 1st 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><u>September 2023</u></p> <p>September 9 DNR & TUDARE Conservation Workday Decorah Hatchery Decorah, Iowa 8 am to early afternoon Mike Siepker michael.siepker@dnr.iowa.gov waiver required please email</p> <p>September 9 Brule River Spey Day Lake Superior Steelhead Assn. Brule river@ McNeil House Brule, WI www.steelheaders.org</p> <p>September 30 HFFA & DNR Workday Manchester Hatchery Manchester, Iowa Details to be determined Ronda Long rondalong67@yahoo.com</p> <p><u>October 2023</u></p> <p>October 6 - 8 2023 Drifless Flyathon Decorah, Iowa flyathon@driftlessonthefly.com runingrivers.org April 15th Signup Limited</p> <p>October 6 8 2023 Casting for Recovery Camp Ewalu's Stone Retreat Center Strawberry Point, IA 52076 Must Register by July 27th norrisl@ihaonline.org</p> <p><u>November 2023</u></p> | <p><u>December 2023</u></p> <p><u>January 2024</u></p> <p><u>February 2024</u></p> <p>February 24 &25 Mid-Iowa Bass Masters Swap Meet & boat Show 4-H building State fairgrounds Des Moines, IA www.midiowabassmasters.com</p> <p>?? HFFA Annual Fly Fishing Show Hawkeyeflyfishing.com</p> <p><u>March 2024</u></p> <p>March 15 - 17 Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo Hamline University St. Paul, MN info@greatwatersflyexpo.com</p> <p>March 23 Fly Tyers Rendezvous Spring Creeks TU Eagles Club, Monticello, IA Facebook.com/springcreekstu</p> <p>March 22 - 24 Sowbug Roundup North Arkansas Fly Fishers Mountain Home, AR www.sowbugroundup.org</p> <p><u>April 2024</u></p> <p><u>May 2024</u></p> <p>May ? HFFA Bluegill Outing Lake Wapello Drakesville, IA Ronda Long rondalong67@yahool.com</p> | <p><u>June 2024</u></p> <p>Wisconsin Women's Fly Fishing Clinics June ? Intermediate June ? Beginner Need to preregister! Avalanche, WI wisconsinwomenflyfishing@gmail.com</p> <p><u>July 2024</u></p> <p><u>August 2024</u></p> <p><u>September 2024</u></p> <p><u>October 2024</u></p> <p><u>November 2024</u></p> <p><u>December 2024</u></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
641-230-1468

HFFA Business Report

Minutes of HFFA Board of Directors Meeting August 5, 2023 Manchester Fish Hatchery, Manchester, Iowa

Meeting called to order by President Davis Horton at 10:00 AM

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

- Welcome from Davis Horton
- A motion was made and unanimously approved to accept minutes from the April 29, 2023 meeting.
- Keith Wunder reviewed the financial report and reported the latest cash balance. Keith also reported on various activities to transition treasurer responsibilities including switching banks. Keith reported on several pending funding commitments. A motion was made and unanimously approved to accept the treasurer's report.
- Old Business:
 1. Abbey (Catfish Creek) watershed and stream restoration project update was provided by Dave Jones. Project work is underway but behind schedule. When completed the project will be protected by a conservation easement. Dave also shared highlights from the recent fish survey conducted by the DNR.
 2. Save Bloody Run update provided by Davis Horton reported that a revised nutrient management program submitted by the current property owner is currently undergoing a technical analysis.
- New Business:
 1. 2024 show update by Ryan Maas & Ron Stahlberg reported that several potential venues have been identified in the Iowa City - Cedar Rapids corridor. Current plans assume a 3 day show. Decision on a show location will consider costs and available meeting room space. The planning committee will decide on the show location during August.
 2. North Bear & Patterson Creek habitat improvement project funding request was reviewed. After further discussion a motion was made and approved to fund \$5,000 to support this project.
 3. The Nature Summit will be held November 16 & 17 at Drake University. Conference attendance by HFFA board members was proposed. After further discussion a motion was made and approved to pay \$125 per person for two board members to attend.
 4. Davis Horton reported that the Otter Creek Easement Acquisition project is fully funded and does include \$10,000 of funding support from HFFA.
 5. The board discussed a recent decision by a property owner to withdraw public access privileges on a section of Waterloo Creek just downstream of the Bee Bridge.
- A motion to adjourn the meeting was unanimously approved at 12:00 PM.
- Meeting minutes submitted by Dave Jones August 5, 2023

Dave

Disrespect Results in Lost Access to Part of Waterloo Creek

By Dave Rosset

Public access to Waterloo Creek below Bee Bridge is no more. Larry Murphy and I were there today and watched the DNR put up the sign. According to the DNR, two fly fishermen had parked their truck blocking the land owner access. When he went and asked them if they would move the truck so he could drive down and check on his cows, one of the men, a fly fishing guide, told him that he was with a client and he would move it later.

Since the same individual owns the land both below and above the bridge, I suspect that it won't be long before access on that side will also be closed.

Dave

Editor's Note: I called Dave about this post. His opinion is that we could lose the access on the upstream side as well. DNR was putting an additional sign on the upstream side that said **NO CAMPING**. Obviously folks are not treating this land with the respect it deserves. For those that do not know we lost access to the downstream section of Cold Water Creek a few years back, due to the same kind of disrespect. Access is very hard to get and very easy to lose. Don Otto



2023 Iowa State Fair Fly Tying Competition Results

By Larry Murphy

Junior Division

Dry Fly Category

| | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1 st Place | Josiah Cornelder | Griffiths Gnat | Des Moines |
| 2 nd Place | Ledger Smith | Miss Midge | Chariton |
| 3 rd Place | Cruz Coorough | Ant | North Liberty |

Wet Fly/Nymph

| | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|------------|
| 1 st Place | Josiah Cornelder | Black Beauty | Des Moines |
| 2 nd Place | Ledger Smith | The Shaggy Maggy | Chariton |
| 3 rd Place | Marky Mendick | Orange Crush | Moulton |

Open Category

| | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| 1 st Place | Josiah Cornelder | Matt's Bluegill Fly | Des Moines |
| 2 nd Place | Cosette Coorough | Marabou Jig | North Liberty |
| 3 rd Place | Ledger Smith | The Golden Guinea | Chariton |

Streamer Category

| | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| 1 st Place | Josiah Cornelder | Mickey Finn | Des Moines |
| 2 nd Place | Ledger Smith | The Bucktail Bass | Chariton |
| 3 rd Place | Maverick Mendick | Bob | Moulton |

Adult Division

Dry Fly Category

| | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------------|
| 1 st Place | Ray Corry | Hornberg | North Liberty |
| 2 nd Place | Andy Hunsinger | Blue Wing Olive Kink | Pella |

Wet Fly/Nymph Category

| | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| 1 st Place | Mark McConnell | Beadhead Halfback #12 | Pella |
| 2 nd Place | Ray Corry | Clouser Crayfish | North Liberty |
| 3 rd Place | Andy Hunsinger | Euro Copper John | Pella |

Open Category

| | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1 st Place | Andy Hunsinger | Scud Bomb | Pella |
| 2 nd Place | Ray Corry | Joe's Hopper | North Liberty |
| 3 rd Place | Tom Polehna | Orange Streamer | Cedar Rapids |

Streamer Category

| | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| 1 st Place | Tom Polehna | Bob's Pink Lady | Cedar Rapids |
| 2 nd Place | Mark McConnell | Goldilocks Squirrel Leech #10 | Pella |
| 3 rd Place | Andy Hunsinger | Shovelhead Sculpin | Pella |

Expert Division

Dry Fly Category

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|------------------|-----------|
| 1 st Place | Mark Smothers | Flying Ant | Peosta |
| 2 nd Place | Larry Niday | Dark Hendrickson | Knoxville |

Wet Fly/Nymph Category

| | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|------------|
| 1 st Place | Larry Niday | Free Style | Knoxville |
| 2 nd Place | Mike Jacobs | Blowtorch | Monticello |
| 3 rd Place | James Barnhart | Royal Coachman | Indianola |

Open Category

| | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------------|------------|
| 1 st Place | James Barnhart | Deer Hair Popping Bug | Indianola |
| 2 nd Place | Mike Jacobs | Fishmask Murchie Minnow | Monticello |
| 3 rd Place | CJ Klenske | Candy Hopper | Dubuque |

Streamer Category

| | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-----------|
| 1 st Place | CJ Klenske | Slumpbuster Black | Dubuque |
| 2 nd Place | James Barnhart | Saylor Shad | Indianola |
| 3 rd Place | Mark Smothers | Matuka Badger & Black | Peosta |

Giving Can Be Oh So Satisfying

By Duke Welter

In an organization like Trout Unlimited, sometimes volunteers find themselves doing unwished-for, or thankless, tasks. It's for the good of the order, we tell ourselves, and we plug on through.

In contrast, a task came to me this past year that's been one of the most uplifting of my time with Wisconsin TU. Let me share.

A Missourian and long-time TU leader there, Bill Lamberson of Columbia, enjoys fishing and exploring the Driftless Area streams and comes here at least twice a year. We'd met before Covid when his Mid-Missouri TU chapter asked me to speak on TU's work in the Driftless Area.

Now, Bill is a bamboo rod builder. He started his first rod about 1980, and finished it around 2000. Since then, he's built a rod a month. Now that he's retired from his faculty position at the University of Missouri College of Agriculture, he'll have more time for rod-building and fishing.

Last fall, Bill stopped by my home in Viroqua. He was carrying four bamboo rod tubes. He said, "I'd like you to give these rods to dedicated TU volunteers across the Driftless Area, the people who keep doing the thankless things that contribute to TU's mission. You can pick them, but let me know who you hand them to."

Over the past 8 months, I've carried out this task. It was one of the treats of my life as a TU volunteer. Over the past 20 years, I've been lucky enough to meet many, many great volunteers and see the impacts they make. So off I went.

First, over to Rochester Minnesota, for a Hiawatha TU chapter meeting. This chapter has long been one of the bright stars of TU's habitat work in the region, a model for many others. Lately, it's had about \$1.5 million a year of sales tax revenue (obtained through Minnesota TU) to put into projects in the southeast.

For 13 years now, project management has been led by Paul Krolak, a soft-spoken scientist. He's held the reins of several projects a year and done an outstanding job. Meanwhile, he's served in almost every capacity for his chapter. He had no idea it was coming. One down.

Next, up to the Kiap-TU-Wish TU December Christmas dinner and awards gig. KTU's long been one of TU's best chapters (in my humble and unbiased opinion) and has had a solid impact on the streams of western Wisconsin. One of its mostly unheralded stars is Randy Arnold, who has led the chapter's stream work days and off-season brushing teams for almost 20 years. By my count, that might be 20 or 30 days a year. Randy has a yearning for the smell of box elder sawdust, and has cut down thousands while others lop and drag and burn them, in all kinds of weather. When I told folks about my task, and called Randy up to accept his rod, he leaned over and said quietly to me, "You're gonna make me cry". His cohorts in KTU gave him a standing ovation.

Third came a trip to Decorah, Iowa, where the Iowa Driftless TU Chapter hosted the Fly Fishing Film Tour in late April. There, chapter co-founder Tom Murray has been a tireless force for northeast Iowa's trout streams. Currently, he serves as president of Iowa's Coldwater Conservancy, formed a few years back to buy land and easements along streams to allow project work to be done. He's nurtured the group which has made some great progress.

And just this past weekend, a few miles from home, a new group called "Driftless Women on the Fly" held its second annual get-together at Esofea-Rentz County Park near Westby. Several dozen women anglers and teachers from all four Driftless States got together and fished, talked resource and organizing issues and generally had a rollicking good time. They're the nucleus of women's angling groups across the region.

Among them was Kate Lodge, a member of Iowa's Spring Creeks chapter and the paragon of enthusiasm for women getting into this sport and with it, conservation of coldwater resources. Kate seldom misses an opportunity to teach women to fly fish for trout, to encourage a new women's group in its early stages, or to bring women speakers to fishing events.

That was it. Mission complete. Thanks, Bill, for presenting me with this treat. I'm so proud to have worked with all these people and to have an opportunity to honor them. Maybe we'll get out on the water together to test out those rods soon. But, as I think of it, another dozen or so volunteers come to mind as also deserving of that recognition. Maybe your chapter might consider how to do that. Recipients are pictured below left to right Paul, Randy Tom, and Kate.

Duke



Traveling With Kate

Katherine Lodge, past president of Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association and current board member, takes some various interesting trips. It seems she is always looking for adventure. She is definitely encouraging women to get into fly fishing. She always has her camera handy and ready to take photos and has shared many of these photos with me. Duke Welter presented her a bamboo fly rod (see previous page). I thought I would give her a page in the Flyline. This was selfish on my part since it allows me to use the unbelievable moose photo.. I edited Kate's text as she explains the context of these photos.

Don



The trip to the Amazon was a Fly Fishers International Women Connect trip. We had eight women from all over the United States on this trip. We met up in Sao Paulo, Brazil and proceeded to the Rio Negro. It is a tributary to the Amazon River. Mat and Geri (Driftless Angler) are now hosting these trips. I would highly recommend it. We had a couple of women in their 80's fish hard for 11 hours a day. So I believe most people can do it. Marlene Huston (Root River Rod) and Geri Meyer (Driftless Angler) were on the trip.

On June 9 - 12, 2023 Driftless Women on the Fly camped at Esofea County Park in Wisconsin. This group included 32 women from the four states of Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. A large part of the membership is from these four states, but there are members from other states. This is the second year for this gathering, and we are looking forward to next year.

If you are interested in more information, contact Iowa Women Fly Fishers, Willa Campbell willacamp@gmail.com and Kate Lodge katelodge25@gmail.com.



The bamboo rod I received from Duke Welter, has fished a number of streams and rivers in the Bighorns and Absarokas. My good friend, Kathy Crofts who is a shop manager and guide at the North Fork Anglers Fly Shop in Cody, WY, spent a couple of her long weekends fishing with me. This photo was on the North Tongue River west of Burgess Junction, WY.

Kathy was fishing ahead of me and I had checked to see if she was in view. The second time I checked there were three figures and my immediate response was to say twice, "Kathy, stay down". Her dog, Mocha, looked up and gave a couple of low woofs, but did not make a commotion. It was unbelievable that I had my phone handy in my waders. After a couple of minutes, the moose wandered off across the river. Kathy wasn't sure if there was a grizzly or what until I showed her the photos.

My husband was up in the parking area and had taken a picture of the bull moose going down into the willows. Then a short time later, he could hear Kathy and I giggling where the moose had disappeared. I think our giggles told him we were fine.

The moose seemed to be looking with the question, "Is there moose mane in that fly?"

A Fly Fisher's Beginnings

By Ron Smith

Third Place Essay in 2023 HFFA Show Essay Contest

The Cedar River forms from the West, Middle, and East forks in southeastern Minnesota draining fertile farmland as it flows southeast passing through Austin, Minnesota, Charles City, Waterloo, and Cedar Rapids joining the Iowa River at Columbus Junction before emptying into the Mississippi. The river picks up its major tributaries, the Little Cedar, the West Fork of the Cedar, and the Shell Rock (which Winnebago joined as a tributary) above Cedar Falls. The river passes Cedar Falls and as it approaches Waterloo it curves near where my family moved in 1954, Cedar Bend Drive paralleling the river. I was 10 years old when we moved to the Cedar Bend neighborhood just two city blocks from the river. That is where and when my fishing interest began in earnest.

During summer vacation mornings I gathered garden worms and walked south a block to the end of Fairfield Street, cut west through a vacant lot, crossed Cedar Bend Drive and traversed another short vacant lot down to the river. My fishing technique was thousands of years old. I had a hand-line of black Dacron, (little known fact: yes, the ancient forebears of anglers had Dacron) probably 20lb strength, with a small crappie hook, all tackle carried in a Prince Albert tobacco can. Employed during the summer when river level was low, I could hand line my bait around the shoreline rocks for the hungry sunfish that lived there. My fellow neighborhood anglers and I caught mainly green sunfish, pumpkinseeds, and occasionally a small crappie. Once I caught an orange spotted sunfish, an absolute jewel, which I could identify from Dad's copy of Iowa Fish and Fishing, my first angling study. An aside, that rocky bend in the Cedar had many round rocks about softball size we would break open and marvel at geodes. I thought geodes were only found in southeast Iowa, but not so. One late summer afternoon I employed a stick about 30 inches long to extend my "casting" distance and, baited with a grasshopper, I caught, more like "derricked", two smallmouth bass about 12" and 14" long from their lair behind rocks. I took them home and proudly showed them to Dad who could hardly believe my prowess with simple tackle let alone there were smallmouth in that area.

When I was a 7th grader my neighborhood buddy, Bruce Dix, and I pooled our resources and bought a kit (it might have been from Chris-Craft) to make an 8 foot pram. My dad was a skilled carpenter and he assembled the boat. We painted it blue and white. This little boat would row like a cork, but Bruce had a 1.7 hp Neptune Mighty Mite outboard motor with a gas tank capacity of about one pint. It was just the right motor for the pram. However, we were more transformed into Tom Sawyer explorers, rather than fisherman. We would throw a rug over my Radio Flyer wagon, load the pram with our water canteens and any necessary provisions, and follow the before mentioned land route to the river. We would park the wagon in the willows, launch, and head up river to explore. Note that we rookie explorers were savvy enough to head upriver in case we ran out of gas and it became essential to row down river to the load-out point. There was a cutoff from the river we could follow upstream towards "the old stone bridge", an overnight camping spot. Thankfully we had parents that allowed us that freedom of summer adventure.

My dad had some fishing tackle, but nothing extensive. He had two steel casting rods and two Pflueger level wind bait casting reels, two bamboo fly rods with metal ferrules probably made in Japan, and two fly reels. Dad fished when he could, but not extensively. He was busy working, raising my younger sister and me, gardening, and improving our home on Fairfield Street. He had bait fished for French Creek Iowa trout back when Iowa had a spring trout opener and our family lived in West Union in the late 40's. We occasionally fished for Waterloo area gravel pit crappies on a few summer evenings; a minnow under a bobber lobbed out with a fly rod. My parents retired to the Brainerd, Minnesota area about 1972 and he could devote more time to fishing.

After a flirtation with the Bass Anglers Sportsmen Society I gradually transitioned to fly fishing in the late '70's influenced by Ed Powell, Hawkeye Fly Fishers, Outdoor Life, Field and Stream, Sports Afield, and the growing number of fly fishing books. I started building fly rods beginning with a couple of Fenwick glass rods. I haven't turned back except when my boat owning spin fishing friends invite me to join them and were leery of someone waving a fly rod who might bury a hook in their anatomy. I respect this image, don't present an argument, and joyfully join them in their outing as an appreciative guest, secretly wishing I could cast a fly into some likely bass coverts.

Ron

The Five Essentials of Fly Casting

&

The Pick Up and Lay Down Cast

by Marty McVey

History of the Essentials

In 1988, Judy Lehmberg, VP of Learning for the Federation of Fly Fishers (predecessor to Fly Fishers International), approached Jay Gammel and his son, Bill, to write a casting pamphlet for beginners.¹ Together, Jay and Bill studied hours of video footage of the great casters of the time, including Lefty Kreh, Joan and Lee Wulff, Jim Green, Mel Krieger, Chris Korich and Steve Rajef. The goal was to determine what good casts and casters have in common, separating the substance of a good fly cast from style. After 2 years of work, Jay and Bill completed the 24-page pamphlet, **The Essentials of Fly Casting**, in 1990.

The Five Essentials of Fly Casting

Below are the 5 Essentials of Fly Casting, revised from the original by Bill Gammel in his article, “*Adjustments on the Fly*”²:

1. The rod tip must travel in a straight line throughout the casting stroke.
2. The casting arc or angle, through which the rod butt travels from the rod straight position (RSP) to rod straight position (RSP), must vary with the amount of bend placed on the rod. As the bend gets deeper, the casting arc must get wider.
3. The pause between each cast must vary with the amount of time it takes the line to straighten. Very simply the line must straighten before the next stroke begins.
4. For the rod tip to move in a straight line, power must be applied in a smooth acceleration from RSP to RSP.
5. There can be no slack in the casting system during the application of power.

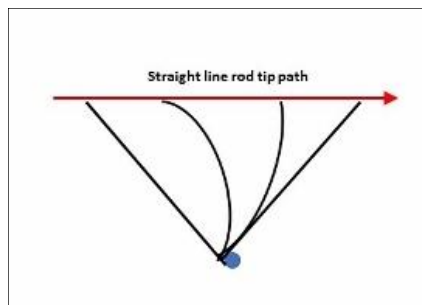
In the article, Bill states, “There is one overriding result that must occur for a tight, straight loop to result from the cast. The rod tip must travel as close as possible to a straight line during the casting stroke.” The remaining 4 Essentials are HOW we maintain a straight line rod tip path in the vertical plane.

So, let's look closer at these Essentials, beginning with Straight Line Path (SLP) of the rod tip.

Essential 1: Straight Line Rod Tip Path

Essential 1 states that the rod tip path must stay on a straight line path throughout the casting stroke. In other words, the rod tip path must not be rounded. Figure 1 shows a side view of a SLP. How to execute a cast with a straight line rod tip path was covered in last month's article, “*Control Your Loop Shape*”³.

Figure 1. Straight Line Rod Tip Path Viewed From The Side.

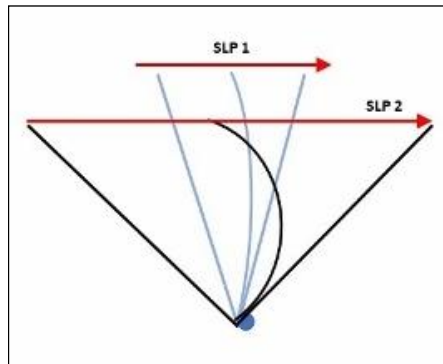


Essential 2: Variable Casting Arc

The size of our casting arc is determined by the maximum amount of bend our rod experiences during a cast. Figure 2 shows the impact that increasing rod bend has on our casting arc. In SLP 1, our rod does not bend very much. To keep our rod tip on the SLP1 requires a narrow casting arc. In the second scenario, our rod bends considerably more, causing us to widen our casting arc to keep our rod tip traveling along the SLP2. There are 2 ways to increase rod bend: 1) Increase the amount of fly line being cast. More fly line equates to more fly line mass causing greater rod bend, and 2) Assuming no change in line length, simply applying more force will cause the rod to bend more, like when we increase line speed casting into a headwind.

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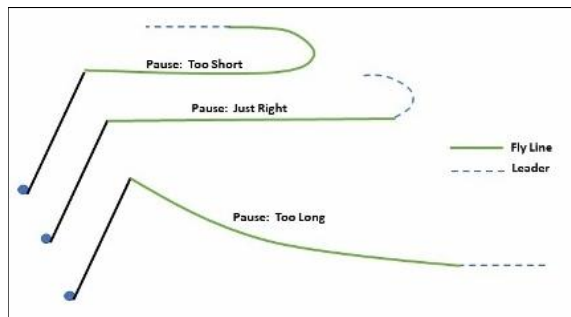
Figure 2. Example of Casting Arc Corresponding to Maximum Rod Bend.



Essential 3: Pause

Between each casting stroke, we must pause in order for our fly line to straighten (the fly line, but not the leader). If we don't pause long enough, our line won't be completely unrolled and the unrolled portion becomes slack in our cast. If we wait too long, our fly line sags and that sag becomes slack in our cast. Figure 3 illustrates too short of a pause, a proper pause and too long of a pause.

Figure 3. Pauses: Too Short, Just Right and Too Long.



Because of the slack introduced, our fly rod will only be pulling against the fly line between the tip of our fly rod and the initial point of slack. At the beginning of our fly cast then, our rod will not be pulling against the entire weight of the fly line, causing it to bend less than it otherwise would. Consequently, initially, our rod tip will deviate from the SLP by rising above the SLP, leading to an undesirable loop.

Essential 4: Proper Application of Force

Force must be applied by smoothly accelerating (constant rate of acceleration) the rod butt. As we accelerate, the rod bends more and more, allowing the rod tip to travel along the SLP (see Figure 1). At the end of the casting stroke, we apply a hard STOP and our rod begins to straighten with our rod tip accelerating along the SLP until the rod becomes straight. At rod straight, our rod tip starts decelerating as the rod counter flexes. Since our fly line does not slow down, our line overtakes the rod tip and forms our loop. Any changes away from a constant rate of acceleration will cause our rod tip to deviate from the SLP, resulting in an undesirable loop shape.³

Essential 5: Minimize Slack

Finally, we must minimize the amount of slack in our fly line during the casting stroke. If we don't, our fly rod will not bend (load) properly, because the fly rod is not pulling against the entire weight of the fly line. In other words, our fly rod will only be pulling against the fly line between the tip of our fly rod and the initial point of slack. At the beginning of our fly cast then, our rod tip will deviate from the SLP by rising above the SLP, leading to an undesirable loop. Our rod tip must be pulling against a taut fly line in order to properly load our fly rod so that the tip remains on the SLP, energizing the entire fly line. Slack robs our cast of efficiency, because some portion our casting stroke is devoted to removing that slack.

Pick Up and Lay Down Cast

The Pick Up and Lay Down (PULD) Cast is a very good cast for both practicing and fishing. This cast teaches how to pick your fly up off of the water, and how to properly lay your fly back on the water near or on target. This cast allows for high repetitions, requiring little time and effort.

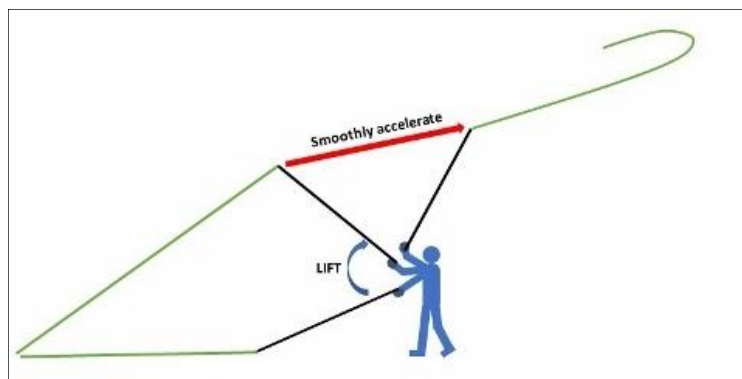
The setup for the PULD, starts with the rod tip down on the ground (imagine on the water) with the fly line (assume 40' toes to fly) straight from the rod tip to the fly with no slack in it.

Step 1: From here we raise our rod, slowly at first, freeing the fly line from the water. Lift the rod slowly to minimize the disturbance on the water, but fast enough so that fly line does not sag, introducing slack into it. As we free the line from the water, we want to begin to smoothly accelerate the rod into our back cast. In this scenario, the acceleration will begin when the rod reaches 10:30 o'clock and continue until we execute a hard STOP at 1:00 o'clock. Casting arc = 75°.

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Step 2: After the hard STOP, we PAUSE and allow our back cast loop to unroll behind us. During the PAUSE, we watch for our fly line to straighten – the fly line, not the leader. The back cast loop should be a loop with a straight top leg traveling in an up and back trajectory. Figure 4 illustrates the execution of Steps 1 & 2.

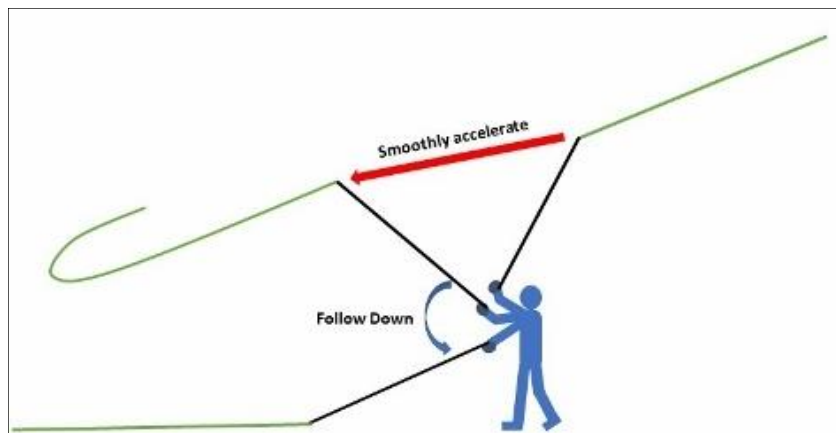
Figure 4. Steps 1 & 2 of the Pick Up and Lay Down Cast



Step 3: Once the fly line has straightened behind, we execute a forward cast by smoothly accelerating the rod forward from 1:00 o'clock to a hard STOP at 10:30. This will generate a loop with a straight top leg traveling with a downward trajectory.

Step 4: As the fly line unrolls and begins to fall, follow the line down to the ground(water) with the rod tip. Lower the rod tip at the same rate and time as the line falls. Properly executing this cast will result in our fly line and leader laying straight(no slack) on the ground from rod tip to fly, just as we began. Figure 5 illustrates Steps 3 & 4.

Figure 5. Steps 2-4 of the Pick Up and Lay Down Cast



How to use the PULD to experiment with the 5 Essentials

The PULD is very good cast to experiment with the 5 Essentials of Fly Casting. The above directions were for executing a PULD, based upon a cast of 40'. To see the impact of the Essentials, experiment by changing the length of fly line being cast. For example, shorten the length of fly line being cast to 30' toes to fly. Less fly line being cast means less fly line weight. Less fly line weight will require less force being applied to execute the cast. Less fly line and less force applied will result in less rod bend. To maintain our SLP, less rod bend will require a narrower casting arc. In terms of our casting mechanics, this will result in a stop at 12:30 o'clock on the pick up rather than 1:00 o'clock and a stop at 10:30 o'clock on the forward cast. Casting arc = 60°

Assuming approximately the same line speed, our pause will be shorter, because it will take less time for 30' of fly line to unroll versus 40'. All of these changes are required to help maintain our SLP. As your casting progresses, experiment by casting with different lengths of fly line and with different line speeds, determining the changes necessary in the 5 Essentials in order to achieve a narrow loop with a straight top leg. Improve your casting - catch more fish.

Acknowledgments

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