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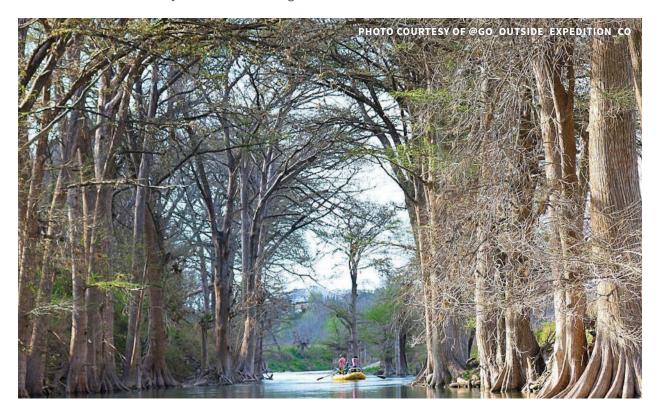
Check out our Fin & Field Excursion.

The first half of the day go upland hunting in Wimberley for quail, pheasant, or chukar over hard working gun dogs, then enjoy a hilltop lunch. The second half of the day cast for seasonal species from one of our rafts along local rivers. It's perfect for a day to unplug from your busy life or get a group of friends up to 12 people for a day of memories.

Stop by our booth or go online to see all that we offer at **www.hookandfield.com**, or call **512-842-7220**

ON THE COVER

rtist, illustrator and designer **Austin Buck** has lead CoPilot Creative Co. since 2010. Since 1975 CoPilot has helped businesses tell their stories with clever marketing and award winning branding and design. Austin has continued this tradition through thoughtful design and branding in New Braunfels, Texas. He's an outdoor enthusiast and leads the Comal Trails Alliance in bringing more trails and outdoor opportunities to Comal County. You can support his work at CoPilotCreative.com and join ComalTrails.org



ABOUT GRTU

uadalupe River Trout Unlimited (GRTU) is a non-profit, conservation organization whose mission is to conserve, protect, and restore North America's trout and salmon fisheries and their watersheds for the benefit of future generations. GRTU is the largest chapter of Trout Unlimited, with over 5,800 members.

GRTU has hosted Troutfest TX since 2008. Proceeds from Troutfest TX 2023 will support GRTU Youth Programs, The GRTU Tomorrow Fund, TU Teen Summit, Casting for Recovery, Project Healing Waters, Reel Recovery, Fishing's Future and a TPWD Summer Intern on the Guadalupe River.

TROUTFEST TEXAS 2023

TFTX'23 COMMITTEE

Co-Chairs

Lise Lozelle and Bill Marshall

Master of Ceremonies

Bill Marshall

Exposition

Lise Lozelle and Bill Marshall

Movie Night

Banning Collins

Sponsors, Donors, and Exhibitors

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Banquet and Auction

Lise Lozelle and Bill Marshall

Marketing

Lise Lozelle and Bill Marshall

Guest Coordinator

Mark Dillow

Fly Casting

Bill Marshall

Fly Tying

Odom Wu

Merchandise and GRTU Store

Tiffany Yeates

Treasurer

Brad Garner

Special Thanks

Robilyn Pettit

TFTX'23 MAGAZINE

Editor

Michael Racis

Publisher | Art Director | Designer

Lyndsay Maclin Woods Purple Magnolia Design

Contributors

Duane Redford Alice Owsley George Daniel Jako Lukas

Venue

Lazy L & L

Cover Artwork

Austin Buck
CoPilot Creative Co

TROUTFEST TEXAS 2023 BANQUET AGENDA

5:30 PM	Banquet Check-In Starts
6:00 PM	Banquet Starts
6:30 PM	Dinner Served
7:45 PM	Keynote Address: Chris Wood
8:00 PM	Silent Auction Closes
8:15 PM	Live Auction Begins
9:00 PM	Raffle Give Away
9:30 PM	Check-Out and End of Presentation
09:30 рм - 10:30 рм	Reception

CHRIS WOOD BANQUET KEYNOTE SPEAKER



efore coming to Trout Unlimited in September 2001, Chris Wood served as the senior policy and communications advisor to the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service where he helped protect 58 million acres of publicly owned land. Chris began his career as a temporary employee with the Forest Service in Idaho and also worked for the Fish and Wildlife program of the Bureau of Land Management. He is the author and co-author of numerous papers and articles and three books including, Watershed Restoration: Principles and Practices (AFS 1997), From Conquest to Conservation: Our Public Land Legacy (Island Press, 2003), and My Healthy Stream: A handbook for streamside owners (Trout Unlimited and Aldo Leopold Foundation, 2013).



JOIN US SUNDAY WINTER CHAPTER MEETING

We will be hosting our next GRTU Chapter Meeting at Troutfest TX on **Sunday, February 19**. The session will start at **8:00** AM for an update on GRTU activities. The meeting will be held at **Lazy L&L Campground.**





KIDS ZONE FEATURES

- The Cabela's Fish Pond
- Kids Casting
- Archery

- The Game Thief Vehicle
- Entomology Education

2023 MAP



EXHIBITORS TENT LAYOUT



_						_
	Living Waters	Trout Unlimited National	Science on the Fly	Texas Council FFI	Texas Council FFI	
	Living Waters					
	Alaska's Bearclaw Lodge		Spoke Hollo	Sightline Provisions	Marys Mountain Cookie	
	Entrance		Spoke Hollow Outfitters	Stonefly Artworks	Land of Enchantment Guides	
	GRTU					
	GRTU	GRTU	Anglers Covey	Featured Speakers	On the Fly Mag	

OUTSIDE EXHIBITORS

IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

Action Angler All Hands Cocktails All Water Guides Austin Fly Fishers Basecamp Provisions Behrnes Pepper Salts Bimini Custom Rods Captain Experiences Charcuterie Outfitters CHIEF Provisions LLC Diablo Paddlesports Duck Camp Fish for Change
Fishing's Future
Heavy Metal Gun Safes
Kuiu Ultralight Hunting
Listo Provisions
Milam & Greene Whiskey Distillery

			_					
Mesquite Furniture	Texas Women's Fly Fishers	CFR	FIRE EXIT	TX Fly Co.	Project Healing Waters	The Mayfly Project	Hells Bay	Hells Bay
							Hells Bay	
Marys Mountain Cookie	Gordy & Sons		Gruene Outfitters	Moonlit Fly Fishing	Moonlit Fly Fishing	Sportsmans Finest		Dave Fish Alaska / Dr Fly
Colorado River Land Trust	Gordy & Sons		Gruene Outfitters	Moonlit Fly Fishing	Moonlit Fly Fishing	Sportsmans Finest		Flyest Shop Around
								Black Duck Skiffs
TFO	Brookbow & Dayle Mazzarella	Lone Star Fly Fishing	Sight Cast Fishing	Sight Cast Fishing	CCA	Reel Recovery	Fly Fish Rockport	Black Duck Skiffs

New Braunfels Fly Fishers

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Texas Parks & Wildlife Department TEXAS TARPON COLLABORATIVE Treaty Oak Distilling Twisted X Brewing

TROUTFEST TEXAS 2023

FEATURED SPEAKERS

CHRIS WOOD KEYNOTE SPEAKER





GEORGE DANIEL

HILARY HUTCHESON





JAKO LUCAS

ALICE OWSLEY





DUANE REDFORD

SPEAKERS SCHEDULE

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18

9AM-5PM

TIME	SPEAKER	TOPIC
9:00 AM-10:00 AM	Duane Redford	The Dance, Landing Fish with a Fly Rod
10:00 AM-11:00 AM	Panel Discussion	Homewaters: Fishing the Texas Hill County
11:00 АМ-12:00 РМ	HIlary Hutcheson	Waterway Identification and Streamflow Management
12:00 PM-1:00 PM	Jako Lucas	Destination Fly Fishing and More
1:00 PM-2:00 PM	Panel Discussion	Women in the Fly Fishing World
2:00 РМ-3:00 РМ	George Daniel	Intro to Euro Nymphing
3:00 PM-4:00 PM	Alice Owsley	Tips for Your Trout Trip to Yellowstone

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 19

8 A M - 3 P M

TIME	SPEAKER	TOPIC
8:00 AM-10:00 AM	Kevin Terry (Trout Unlimited)	Chapter Meeting
10:00 AM-11:00 AM	Jako Lucas	Destination Fly Fishing and More
11:00 АМ-12:00 РМ	HIlary Hutcheson	Backcountry Bucket List
12:00 РМ-1:00 РМ	Alice Owsley	Reading Trout Water and Sight Fishing
1:00 PM-2:00 PM	George Daniel	Streamer Tactics 2.0
2:00 рм-3:00 рм	Duane Redford	The Perfect Drive, Easy as X, Y, Z

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Fly-fishing. Bahamas Bonefishing, Panama sportfishing, Amazon Peacock Bass, Uruguay and Bolivia Golden Dorado, Patagonian Argentina and Chile for trout, Iceland Char, salmon, and trout, Scotland and Nordic countries, Africa, British Columbia, and lower 48 and Alaska.

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TROUTFEST TEXAS 2023

CASTING INSTRUCTORS



JOHN BIGGERS



GARY DAVISON



CAMRON DUNN



JEFF FERGUSON



JEFF GRAHAM



JIM HUND



ALAN KING



DAYLE MAZZARELLA



ANDY PAYNE



JIM RICHARDS



JOHN SLOCOMB



REX WALKER



STEPHEN WEAVER

SCHEDULE SATURDAY CASTING INSTRUCTION

* 1.5 HOUR COURSE			BASIC SKILLS CLASS
Saturday Field A	Saturday Field B	Saturday Field C	Saturday Field D
9:00AM-10:30AM* Trout Casts LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Dayle Mazzarella	9:00AM-10:00AM Heavy Lines and Flies LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Jim Hund	9:00am-10:30am* Accuracy Casting LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Rex Walker	9:00am-10:30am* LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Gary Davison ASSISTANT INSTRUCTORS: Camron Dunn, Jeff Graham
	10:00AM-11:00AM Saltwater Casting LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Jeff Ferguson		
11:00AM-12:00PM Switch/Two-Handed Spey Casting LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Gary Davison	11:00AM-12:00PM Casting in the Wind and Fighting the Fish LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Jim Richards	11:00AM-12:00PM Preparation for learning the Double Haul LEAD INSTRUCTOR: John Slocomb	11:00AM-12:30PM* LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Jim Hund ASSISTANT INSTRUCTORS: Steve Weaver, John Slocomb
1:00PM-2:30PM* Understanding momentum & acceleration and practical application LEAD INSTRUCTOR:	1:00PM-2:00PM Dock & Overhang Casting LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Steve Weaver	1:00PM-2:30PM* Double Haul LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Jeff Ferguson	1:00PM-2:30PM* LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Alan King ASSISTANT INSTRUCTORS: Jeff Graham, Gary Davison
Dayle Mazzarella	2:00PM-3:00PM Casting with the Ring Finger LEAD INSTRUCTOR: John Biggers		
3:00PM-4:30PM* General Casting Styles & Demo To Improve Your Casting LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Rex Walker	3:00PM-4:00PM Single Hand Spey Casting LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Jim Hund	3:00PM-4:00PM The Underpowered and Overpowered curve casts. LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Cameron Dunn	3:00PM - 4:30PM* LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Steve Weaver Jim Richards Gary Davison
	4:00PM-5:00PM Casting Dr. All Instructors	4:00рм–5:00рм Casting Dr. All Instructors	

SCHEDULE SUNDAY CASTING INSTRUCTION

* 1.5 HOUR COURSE			BASIC SKILLS CLASS
Sunday Field A	Sunday Field B	Sunday Field C	Sunday Field D
9:00AM-10:30AM* Trout Casts LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Dayle Mazzarella	9:00am-10:00am Heavy Lines & Flies LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Jim Hund	9:00am-10:00am Saltwater Casting LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Jeff Ferguson	9:00AM-10:30AM* LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Jim Richards ASSISTANT INSTRUCTORS: Gary Davison, Camron Dunn
	10:00AM-11:00AM Roll Casting LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Rex Walker	10:00AM-11:00AM Preparation for the Double Haul LEAD INSTRUCTOR: John Slocomb	
11:00AM-12:30PM* Double Haul LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Jim Hund	11:00AM-12:00PM Casting in the Wind, and Fighting Fish LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Jim Richards	11:00AM-12:00PM Single Hand Spey LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Gary Davison	11:00AM-12:30PM* LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Jeff Ferguson ASSISTANT INSTRUCTORS: Jeff Graham, John Biggers
1:30PM-2:30PM Learn how to shoot fly line LEAD INSTRUCTOR: John Slocomb	1:30PM-2:30PM What you need to know when using light tippet for large fish LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Dayle Mazzarella	1:30PM-2:30PM Casting with the Ring Finger LEAD INSTRUCTOR: John Biggers	1:00PM-2:30PM* LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Rex Walker Jim Hund Camron Dunn
3:00PM-4:30PM* Casting Dr. All Instructors	3:00PM-4:30PM* Casting Dr. All Instructors	3:00PM-4:30PM* Casting Dr. All Instructors	3:00PM-4:30PM* LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Dayle Mazzarella ASSISTANT INSTRUCTORS: Gary Davison, Jeff Graham

SCHEDULE

CLASSROOM CASTING INSTRUCTION

NYMPH RIGGING

Saturday 3PM-4PM Sunday 11AM-12PM

Mr. Dayle Mazzarella

Dayle will discuss and demonstrate how to rig up a nymph leader. This rigging will provide the angler with more hook ups.

LINES, RODS, AND REEL SELECTION

Saturday 1PM-2PM Sunday 1AM-2PM

Mr. Jim Richards

Jim will provide a general overview of Fly Rod's, Fly Reel's & Fly Lines.

IMPORTANCE OF ACCURACY

Saturday 11AM-12PM

Mr. Rex Walker

This ability will help greatly on your next fishing trip, when your guide asks you to cast to a specific target to catch that fish of a lifetime.

FLY FISHING KNOTS

Saturday 2PM-3PM

Mr. John Slocomb

This class will demonstrate many of the knots needed to attach backing to the reel, fly line to the backing, fly line to the leader, Tippet to leader, and hook to tippet.

*Classes will be located under The Pavilion by The Fly-Casting Field. Tables will be set up with chairs.

SCHEDULE ON WATER DEMONSTRATIONS

TROUT CASTS ON THE WATER

Saturday 11AM-12PM

Mr. Dayle Mazzarella

Dayle will demonstrate casts that help create drag free drift in various current conditions.

These casts catch more fish!! If the observer wishes to work on these casts sign up for Dayle's Trout Casts on Saturday at 9:00 – 10:30am and follow Dayle to demo the casts on the water.

HOW TO CAST BIG HEAVY STUFF ON THE WATER

Saturday 1PM-2PM

Mr. Jim Hund

Jim will demonstrate how to pick up and cast big flies and heavy lines on the water.

This class will address good line management techniques when wading in water.

ROLL CASTING ON THE WATER

Saturday 3PM-4PM

Mr. Jeff Ferguson

Jeff will demonstrate the Roll Cast on the water.
The Roll Cast is one of the most overlooked foundation cast by many anglers. This class will provide you with great information to help you succeed in making this cast on the water.

SINGLE HAND SPEY CASTING ON THE WATER

Sunday 1PM-2PM

Mr. Gary Davison

Gary will demonstrate using a single hand rod to make spey casts on the water. This class will help all those casters who want to add additional casting options to their angling in both still -moving water. Current and wind directions will be addressed in this class to help you determine what Spey Cast to use.

SCHEDULE FLY TYING

	02.18				02.19		
Time Slots	9-11	11-1	1-3	3-5	10-12	12-2	2-4
Chase Smith	X	X	Х	Х	X	Х	Х
Mike Morphew	X	X	Х	Х	X	Х	Х
Jim Gray	X	X	Х	Х			
Gabe Crossing	X	X	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
Chris Skinner / Chris Kowaleski	X	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
Cooper Woods	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
Zach Harris	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х



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5 REASONS TO FISH NEVER FISHED REGIONS

BY JAKO LUCAS

1. PLANNING AND ANTICIPATION

It's my belief that fly fishing is one the most challenging forms of fishing in the world. Fly fisherman are constantly evolving and we keep challenging ourselves in every aspect of our sport. Personally, I love to fish new destinations, especially if it is a place that has never been fished by anyone else!

However, as amazing as that might sound, there is always the looming possibility that you might fail. Therefore, planning is key to exploring new destinations. It can be very challenging as there are a lot of different variables you have to consider and being able to understand all the elements involved, whether it be within or without your control, this ranges from tides, moon phases, water temperatures etc.

Once you have poured over every detail and done as much planning as possible, the anticipation and excitement starts.

2. THE JOURNEY

We are lucky enough that fishing helps push us to explore some amazing places, and more often than not it's the journey to get there that makes it an adventure worth sharing.

The more time I spend fishing these amazing new places I have realized that it is very important to enjoy the journey just as much as the destination. There are so many things to see and experience, and it will just take the trip to a whole new level when you sit back and enjoy the journey.

3. UNKNOWN

As I said before, there is a very high chance of failure. There is also a lot of trail and error, so you have to be willing to fight through the hard times. However, in saying that, if you have done enough prepping and you work hard and give it everything you can, the reward is just so satisfying and life changing. It is this element that will drive you all the way through the adventure to a better understanding of not just your skill but also your abilities and a deep respect for the majesty of nature.

4. PIONEER

There is nothing better than the adventure of going out to a place that has not been fished by another person or very few have had the courage or privilege. This might not be for everyone, but this is definitely very exciting thing for me, especially if you succeed.

5. REWARD

The reward for me is the ability to successfully bring all these elements together, to not only catch a fish myself, but to put a client in a position to catch their fish of a lifetime. I love all the extreme elements of exploratory fishing... where you would mostly find yourself in the middle of nowhere surrounded by all kinds of obstacles, without the possibility to of a quick phone call and all you have is your instinct. It not as extreme as the movie Castaway but there definitely is a sense of danger that lurks around the corner, and most importantly, a sense of catching a 'fish of a lifetime'!

CASTING TIPS TO PRACTICE BEFORE YOUR NEXT TRIP TO YELLOWSTONE

BY ALICE OWSLEY

When most people think of fly casting proficiency, their minds race off to saltwater flats where long, accurate casts to fast moving fish are often the norm. However, in my experiences guiding and fishing for trout in Yellowstone National Park the anglers that I see having the most success are often the better fly casters. Let's dive into some of our challenges.

Many anglers struggle with casting and retrieving their line when fishing a dry fly upstream. This involves casting 20-35 feet of line accurately and delicately upstream, retrieving the slack line as the fly drifts back to the angler and then picking up the fly and shooting the line out on the next cast. Many trout anglers who are used to fishing a set length of line while nymphing are challenged with the line control skills of the retrieve and shooting line. A great fix for this is to strip line in before shooting line out on medium length casts, warm water fishing for bass and panfish can be a great place to practice these skills.

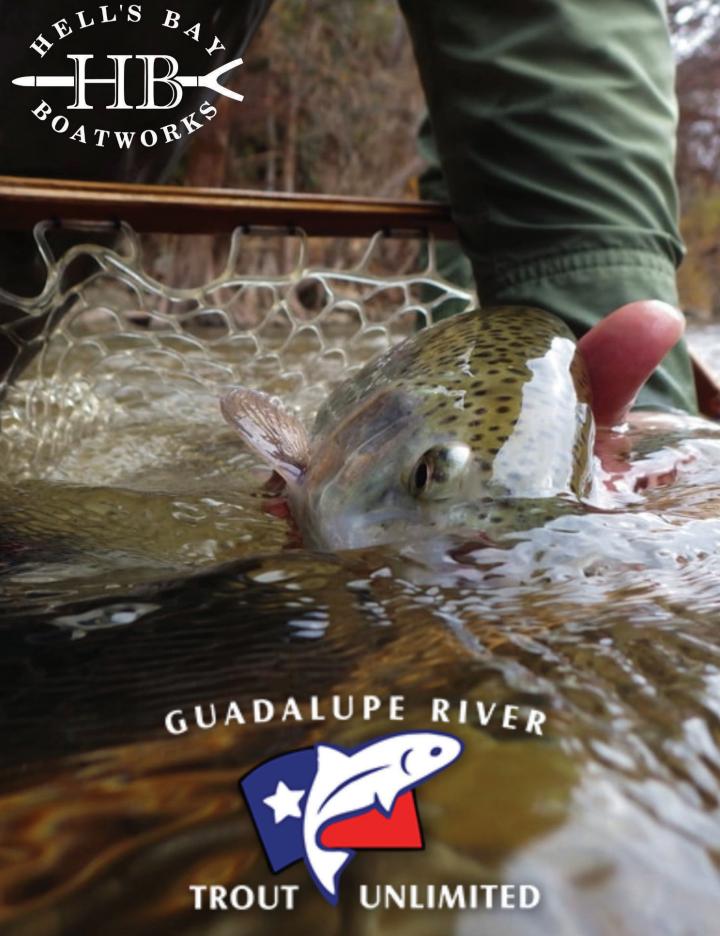
Dry fly fishing to trout demands an accurate presentation. If an angler sees his or her dry fly land on the water, it is far easier to keep sight of the dry fly throughout the drift. So many times my anglers struggle to see their dry flies and miss many takes as a result. The key to seeing your fly is to look at the spot you want the fly to land on the water and place the fly RIGHT in that spot, no matter what the wind tries to tell the fly to do. Practice casting to small targets, practice in the wind and make sure your leader turns over right above the target rather than fluttering down from the heavens as the cast unrolls. It seems impossible, but with practice you will see your tippet unfurl and your fly land on the water.

We tend to have a fair amount of wind in Yellowstone country, and this can play havoc with your casting. Most anglers can cast a tight loop that cuts into the wind at a specific distance. At short range they often have too long a casting stroke which opens up the loop. Your casting stroke is directly related to the length of line you are casting. Start by practicing different casting stroke lengths as you change the length of line you have out the rod tip. Once you feel comfortable with shorter casting strokes, practice casting to a target at short range until you can consistently fire out tight loops with just the leader out of the rod guides.

Ultimately, fly fishing for trout in the variety of waters within Yellowstone is going to require more than a straight line cast to your prey. Casters with the ability to use the pile, reach and curve casts to accurately place slack on the water simply get better drifts than anglers who can only cast a straight fly line. Practice casting the fly at a target and manipulating the fly line in the air around obstacles. By moving the rod tip immediately after stopping the forward cast you can move the fly line anywhere you like and place slack where it needs to be for an accurate drag free drift.

Practice your casting with these suggestions before your next visit to Yellowstone and I assure you will catch more fish and have more fun.

Alice Owsley is the owner of Riverside Anglers, Inc. in West Yellowstone Montana that has been guiding the areas blue ribbon waters for 20 years. She is also an award winning fly caster who enjoys teaching casting and fly presentation across the country.





Canyon Lake Gorge, one of Texas Hill County's most unique landmarks, is a must-see for recreationalists, conservationists, budding geologists and nature enthusiasts.

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Join a certified guide on a trip down to the bottom of the 64-acre Gorge to explore limestone layers, perfectly preserved fossils and much more.

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Explore two fun, easy hiking trail options:

Gorge Overlook Trail takes visitors on a scenic 2-mile round trip hike along the north rim of the Gorge with eight observation points overlooking some of the most unique features.

The Gorge Nature Trail is a circuitous 1-mile hike with a wealth of information about the plant and animal species native to Canyon Lake and Central Texas. Hiking trails are open to visitors of all ages.



Hiking Trails: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., last entry 4:30 p.m. last entry 6:30 p.m.

Canyon Lake Gorge is open to the public Tuesday through Sunday. Hours vary by season. Hiking trails are available for \$5 per person (children under 12 free).

SUMMER HOURS (MAY - OCTOBER)

Park Hours: 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

For more information or to make a reservation visit: canyongorgetours.com or call 830-964-5424





DROWNING IN INFORMATION

BY DUANE REDFORD

I've said many times that fly fishing is a lot like golf, you don't really win it, you play it, you participate. Sure you're competing, but some get confused with whom they're competing. I contend that even if you're a fly fishing member of a world team competing for a championship, you're really competing with Mother Nature. She will decide the eventual individual winners and losers. It's always been that way, Mama Nature has the last word, so you might as well play along and try to learn as much as possible about how to maximize your chances at catching fish.

Everywhere you look there's material you can grab that gives fly fishing information. It's one of those endeavors where we are drowning in information but starving for knowledge. We are inundated with how-to's, equipment reviews, tips and techniques, and countless opinions, but many anglers don't really have the missing ingredient, the *experience* to make it all fit.

I remember as a kid, probably fifteen years old or so, yelling across the Firehole River in Montana to my dad, "What'd you catch that one on?" He yelled back, "A good drift!" In other words, figure it out kid. There's the written and digitized information, and the information that comes from experience. The experience derived from doing or watching others do. The experience that comes from attempting to apply what you've seen and read and tried it on your own. You fail or succeed and you learn from it. Your common sense and ability to rationalize why you

failed or succeeded coupled with your ability to learn to avoid failure and foster success leads to knowledge. Make sense?

Information is simply data, while knowledge makes that data useful. You have to analyze to get knowledge, to get information you simply just observe. Here's the kicker, all that knowledge you've been gathering is useless without experience. In other words, go fish. Go fish a lot!

Why am I carrying on so about knowledge, information and experience? I'm carrying on because; fly fishing is a long journey down a short road. The ability to become somewhat proficient can occur quickly in your journey; however, the last few miles can take years. Imagine the fly fishing journey as a road ten miles long. It doesn't take too long to get to mile marker five with most folks. Mile marker seven takes an incredible amount of "water time" accumulated, and mile marker ten in my mind is perfection. If I were to scout myself like a major league scout scores a player, I'd honestly put myself in the seven to seven and a half mile marker range. I'm good enough to put hundreds of people on fish a year, write a few books on the subject, and travel the country speaking to many different groups, clubs and organizations, but I don't know what I don't yet know about fly fishing. The bad news is, I need more work, the good news is, I need to go fish! And fish a lot!

Fear No Water!

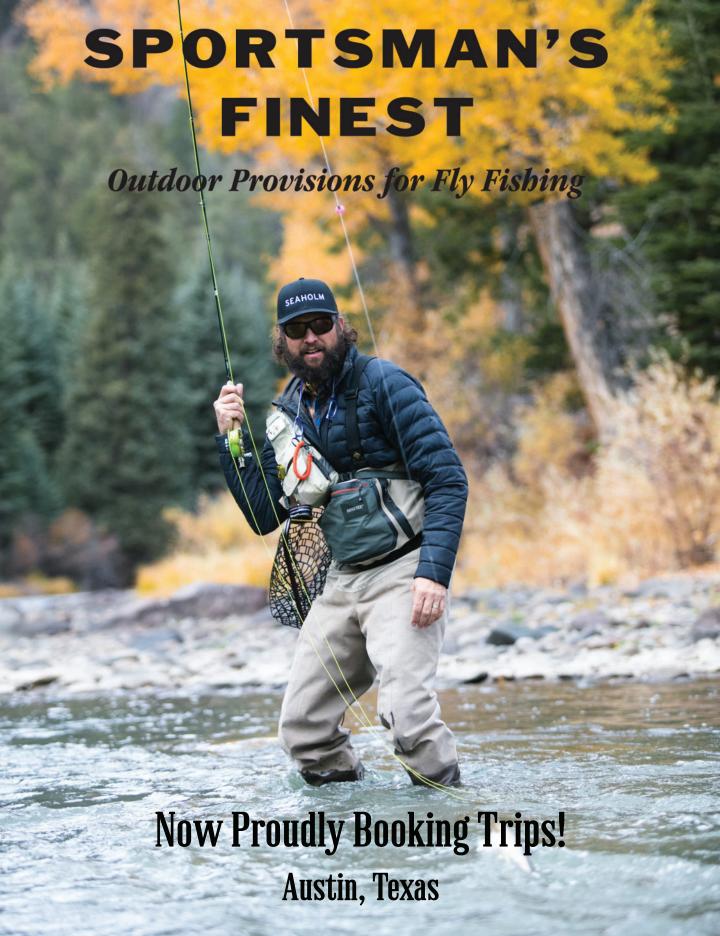


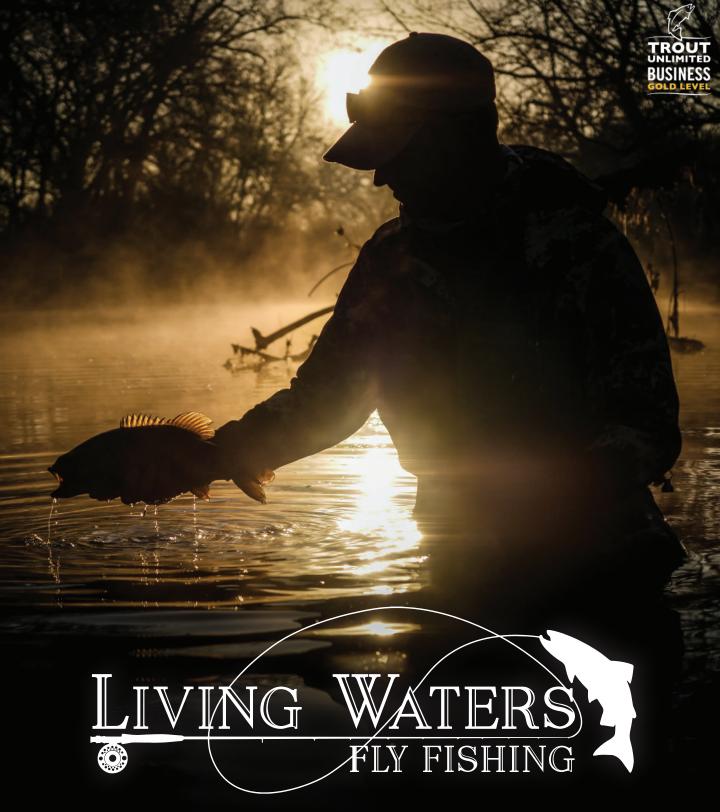
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HOW TO BUILD A BETTER EURO-NYMPHING LEADER AND DETECT MORE STRIKES

BY GEORGE DANIEL

When I was learning nymphing in the 1990s, it was commonly said that 50 percent of all strikes went undetected by the angler. In other words, half the time a trout ate your fly, you didn't know it. Given the tools and approaches most often employed back then, I'd wager that estimate probably held water. But, more recently, technology—whether by producing advancements in fly rod construction and design or by facilitating an explosion in the exchange of ideas and information through online communication platforms—has driven a series of evolutionary jumps in fly fishing that have changed the way we fish. This phenomenon is perhaps best exemplified by the ever-accelerating Euro nymphing craze, where advancements in fly rod design have dramatically changed how naturally and effectively anglers can present flies below the surface where, it's worth noting, trout do the vast majority of their feeding. Today's nymphing angler can improve greatly upon the 50 percent rule of yesteryear. In fact, I'd venture to

THE RIGHT APPROACH

as 90 percent.

Such a level of success using Euro-nymphing techniques is achieved through the use of a customized leader that enhances your ability to detect strikes, one that is a modification of—or evolution of—a "traditional" Euro-nymphing mono rig. If you're

say that a talented angler using the right tools and

approach, can detect most strikes—perhaps as much

not familiar with mono rigs, they involve using a very long leader which acts not only as your leader and tippet, but as your fly line, as well. That's right, no fly line. But how do you cast a fly rod without fly line? That's a good question. And so before we discuss our custom leader formula for better strike detection, we should talk about modern Euro-nymphing rods.

THE RIGHT TOOL

Although there is no shortage of rods designed specifically for Euro-nymphing, I define a Euro-nymphing rod as one that is long and has a soft tip. The soft (often very soft) tips these rods feature offer two important advantages. First, softer tips enhance strike detection as more strikes are seen and felt with softer tips. Second, and equally important, softer tips allow anglers to cast light rigs because they require so little mass in order to load the rod. Traditional action fly rods are designed to cast fly lines, which have significant mass—making it incredibly difficult to cast long, light Euro leaders or mono rigs with traditional fly rods.

GO THIN FOR THE WIN

Most fly anglers are well-versed on the notion of slack. Depending on the situation and tactic being employed, an angler might want more or less slack in their fly presentation. Too little slack causes flies to move unnaturally in the water. Too much slack takes an angler out of touch with his or her flies, making

hook sets and strike detection far more difficult. In the world of Euro-nymphing, slack is represented by sag. That is, the sag of your leader either between the tip of your rod and your flies, or between the guides of your fly rod. Any sag occurring within a Euro-nymphing rig both inhibits and delays strike detection. The less sag, then, the better. But, beyond using sound tactics, how do we reduce sag? The answer is by reducing mass.

The less mass hanging you have within and outside the guide of your fly rod, the less sag that occurs between you and your flies. The smaller the diameter of your line or leader, the less mass it will have. Smaller diameter lines also offer increased sensitivity, further enhancing strike detection. Many of today's top Euro-nymphing anglers are using ultra-thin Euro leaders, where the thickest part of the entire line/leader setup may not exceed a 4X diameter!

The leader I'm currently using for most of my Euronymphing is constructed using a very simple formula. You can also feel free to substitute any of the materials — as long as you remain focused on keeping your leader thin through the use of low diameter materials.

THE FORMULA

Start with 30 feet or more of 6lb Maxima Chameleon tippet material. Although difficult to see, this material is much stiffer than traditional tippet material, which helps turning over ultralight nymphing rigs. If you find Chameleon's disappearing act not to your liking, feel free to use more brightly colored monofilament. Next, add 2-3 feet of 4X Scientific Anglers Sighter material. Then, finish the leader with a level section of 5-7X tippet. That's all there is to it.

I don't use tippet rings with this ultralight system, as I feel that even the meager weight of the rings may introduce hinging. Instead, form my connections with surgeon's or blood knots. If you prefer to use tippet rings, then go as small as possible to reduce mass.

To determine the length of the terminal tippet section, I guess at the average depth of the water I'm fishing and add 1-2 feet in length, to ensure the sighter material remains off the water. For example, if I guess the run I'm fishing to be around 3 feet deep, I'll make my tippet section 4-5 feet long.

WRAPPING UP

Using smaller diameter materials doesn't just increase sensitivity, their lack of mass also allows your flies to sink faster and drift more naturally. In fact, when fishing this ultralight Euro leader, you might be amazed how little weight is required to drift nymphs deep in the water column. It's for this reason that, even when fishing bigger water for large fish, I'll often use 6X tippet.

If you find these thinner materials challenging to manage with your line hand, it may be best to start with somewhat larger diameters. Once you get the feel for things, graduate to thinner materials. Finally, take care to check local regulations to make sure monofilament-only rigs are legal on the waters you fish.



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