

Dougherty's Fly Box Tips

By: Brian Dougherty

Stream specific flies:

- Try a size 16 bead head green weenie caddis larva or a floating green inch worm on Clarks Creek, PA from late spring through late summer.
- Try a size 20 grey adult midge in the fly fishing section of the Yellow Breeches Creek, PA from January through March.
- Try a size 20 olive deer hair beetle in the fly fishing section of the Yellow Breeches Creek, PA during the summer months.
- Try a size 8-10 black muddler minnow on the Letort, PA any time.
- Use flies with rubber legs on the Salmon River, Pulaski, NY.

Saltwater:

- If you're comfortable casting flies of varying weights, you can simplify your life by fishing an intermediate line nearly 100% of the time. This is true for both boat and shore fishing. Less time is spent switching lines and rigging rods. Additionally, it's one less thing to carry, i.e. spare spool or extra reel. Experience is based on Northeast fishing from MA to NC, bluewater not included. There are times floating and sinking lines are preferred, i.e. extremely shallow or deep swift water and when solely fishing top-water flies.
- Begin by covering the top of the water column with a 4-6 inch white Deceiver, then switch to a half and half style fly like a Vineyard Minnow to cover the bottom.
- Walk with the current and fish, don't stay stagnant. The intent of this technique is to locate fish. Every shoreline holds minor changes in bottom structure. These changes hold fish. Due to water depth, you may be unable to see these changes. By walking and fishing you'll fish structure not visible to the eye.
- Mark depressions or points with a GPS at low tide, return to fish these spots on the incoming tide.
- Wear sandals over stocking foot waders to prevent sand from filling in boots. Simple gravel cuffs on boots is not enough when wading sandy beaches.
- Use pliers and a leather glove to tighten knots when 20 pound tippet or heavier is used.
- Fish in front of obstructions like bridge pilings on an outgoing tide.

Freshwater:

- Use a casting bucket when fishing large or fast flowing rivers.
- Use a braided leader to reduce tangles. Cut the thicker braided loop and serve directly onto the fly line.

- In my opinion the best all around Mid-Atlantic trout dry fly is a size 16 black deer hair beetle with a fat abdomen. It can be used from Spring to Fall and can elicit strikes when slapped on the water. Beetles contain the largest Order of insects and include both terrestrial and aquatic species.
- In my opinion the best all around Mid-Atlantic trout streamer is a size 10 non-weighted olive krystal flash woolly bugger with reddish-brown hackle. I once read, woolly buggers were at one time provided in US military survival packs. If true, another reason to add this fly to your box.

Safety:

- Wear clear safety glasses at night when fishing.
- Tape your fingers to prevent line cuts if you plan to fish several days, particularly if you're saltwater fishing.
- Use a wading belt that contains a pouch-type inflatable life preserver.
- Be conscious of wind direction when casting. To prevent bodily harm keep your cast and fly downwind of your body. Creative casting may be necessary, i.e. casting across your body or reverse casting. If barbless hooks aren't your thing, you may wish to reconsider if fishing in strong wind.
- Hook removal - The following is provided as a possible remedy, ***I'm not a doctor***, so please use your best judgment. The most successful method I've seen and used for removing an embedded barbed hook is to advance the hook point through the skin until the barb is exposed at which point the barb is cut off with wire cutters and the remaining hook is backed out. Liberally wash punctures with soap and water and cover with a thin layer of antibiotic ointment (i.e. Neosporin or Polysporin). Cover wound with a sterile dressing. Follow-up with your physician for a possible tetanus shot. *Special note - Depending on location of injury and underlying tissue structure (i.e. blood vessels, nerves or tendons), trying to remove a hook without professional help may cause more damage.*

General:

- Rub your fly on the fish. This technique should not be used with dry flies, however when used with streamers the scent from the fish will help mask unwanted odors, i.e. human, glue, moth balls, etc.. This technique usually makes catching the next fish easier. IGFA rules on scent - "No scent, either natural or artificial is allowed on flies. The use of scented material in a fly is prohibited."
- Mentally prepare yourself for fighting and landing a fish of a lifetime. Every time you fish, visually inspect for possible obstructions and preferred landing spots.
- If you're a beginner fly fisherman and find yourself losing fish, try the following. Practice "clearing your fly line". Have a friend pull your fly line as you practice raising your rod while maintaining tension on the line. Feather line out through your fingers as the rod rises, constantly maintaining tension on the line. Raise the rod to the 1 o'clock position at which time the remaining line can be wound on the reel. Many first time saltwater or salmon fishermen will lose fish simple because they lock their stripping finger (with fly line) against the rod handle. They neglect to give the fish line and the tippet snaps.
- Go to the fish. Don't just fish places with easy access. Use aerial photos and topographical maps to find bends in rivers, feeder streams or deep pockets of water close to shore. This areas typically hold more fish.