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# The Backcountry Flyfisher

BackCountry Flyfishing Association  
<http://www.bfacfl.org>



A MEMBER CLUB OF THE FEDERATION OF FLYFISHERS

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### *What I Like About Not Catching Fish*

I'm a glass-half-full -kinda- guy. I really am. I'm happy to see the sun rise and to attack the day. I like babies and dogs. I talk to my neighbors. I think that the golden rule is a great baseline for doing life. But I'm really tired of not catching fish. The glass is starting to look half-empty.

Last winter (08-09) I was a fish catching machine. I was finding 'em, landing 'em and telling fish stories without any embellishment. I didn't have to. I had the pictures to prove it and was I posting them on my Facebook page to friends around the country. In my own distorted little universe, I was "all that".

When December rolled around this winter I was raring to go. I had my cool temperature, shallow water spots. I had my new favorite flies and I had my goals. The anticipation was palpable (whatever that means). Then reality set in---a busy schedule, a cold winter and a wind that never seemed to drop below 15 miles per hour. For several weeks the concern was not whether we would catch fish but with how badly the Resource had been destroyed and how long it would take to recover.

For most of us, time with our fly rods is just part of the toy-department of life. There are far more pressing matters and each of us has a drama behind the face. But still, I want to catch fish and when you take all the ingredients of weather, location, time, traffic and human error, I just couldn't find fish or entice the few I found to eat. It didn't matter if I was wading, kayaking or in a boat. Didn't matter if I was on the IRL, ML, NMZ or waters further south. 0 for 1. 0 for 2. 0 for 3-4-5. Today I joined two club members for a few hours behind the Clinkers. 0 for 6. I've paddled more miles and logged more hours this winter for nothing more than a few undersized trout. Almost don't want to write about it for the sake of my ego, but it is what it is.

As I was paddling back to the launch at the end of the morning, fishless and battling the wind, I thought "I've had it. This isn't worth it. Whine. Whine. Whine." And then something in my head asked, "So what did you like about today"? And as I made notes in my head I was reminded again that there is an awful lot to like about not catching fish. Here's my list, just from things experienced today.

### CLUB OFFICERS

**President:**  
Mike Adamson

**Vice President:**  
Bill Ockenden

**Treasurer:**  
Bill Norton

### DIRECTORS

**Membership:**  
Cas Summers

**Outings:**  
Tom Dyll

**Fly-Casting:**  
Joe Mulson

**Communications:**  
Mark Hayes

### PAST PRESIDENTS:

Bill Norton

Laurence Lurie

Phil Triano

Brian Eastman

Cas Summers

1. The pace of a stealthy paddle. Purposeful and relaxed.
2. Roseate Spoonbills in formation reflecting the rising sun.
3. The anticipation of tails, wakes and showering bait.
4. Stalking a flat on foot with my fly rod.
5. A hundred yards of sandy holes peppering the grass flat in front of me.
6. The effortless rhythm of a well executed cast.
7. A fly that turns over nicely and lies down softly.
8. The equipment. From rods and reels to the electronics to the material the flies are tied with. For the most part they're a great mix of art and science crafted by gifted minds.
9. The simplicity. Even in the midst of all the equipment and the consumerism, in the end it's just me and the estuary.
10. The hope in the capacity of the environment to rejuvenate itself as we work together to be good stewards of Creation.
11. The absolute certainty that *next time* there will be picture-worthy fish.
12. Sharing it all with friends.

Truth be told, catching is always better. Exponentially better. But even NOT catching is made up of a multitude of magical moments. Some days are just going to be "sans-adrenaline" but there's a lot to like, even in the smell of skunk.

Mike

## **April Speaker**

April is all about Tarpon! We will not have a speaker this month. Instead, we will mix it up and watch the video "Chasing Silver" which of course is all about Tarpon. In addition Cas Summers will be providing some instruction on fly tying and Phil Triano will review how to construct a leader that won't break. This is a "no miss" session for anyone interested in catching 'Poon this season.

## **April OUTING – Ft. Pierce**

*April 17-18 2010*

BFA members are headed to Ft. Pierce for a couple of days of fishing. The primary target species will be trout (big trout ;- ) but redfish should also be plentiful. Even a few snook may be found. This trip is in an area that has accessibility to all anglers. Boaters, kayakers, and wade fisherman all have plenty of places to go and experienced club members will help steer those who are new to the area in the right direction.

Note: The Dock Side Inn was to be our official lodging but it is already full. An alternate site will be provided soon.

## **Fly of the Month**

*Ed Note: Brian Eastman shared an article with me recently that he wrote awhile back. I was so impressed with the content that I wanted to reprint it here. Too often, we feel it is necessary to learn how to tie every known salt water fly in existence. This article makes a compelling point for having 5 or 6 "go to" patterns that work for a number of species in the flats. As a trout fisherman, I must say that there were probably about 5 nymphs that were my "go to" patterns and maybe another 5 dry fly patterns that always worked. In the article below, Brian and three of his buddies proposed their top picks.*

### **Tippet of the Month**

*By Brian Eastman*

Nick, Jeremi, Jon, and I get asked on an almost daily basis what the best fly is for Redfish, or for Tarpon, or even Spanish Mackerel. We have to stop and explain that it isn't really a case of which fly is best but rather which fly we have faith in for any particular use. There are so many different patterns out there that it can become terribly confusing to the newcomer. Especially when anyone can take a basic Clouser design, change a color or material, put his or her name on it and state that it's the "Must Have" fly for the upcoming Striper run. It's still a Clouser Minnow and I hope that Bob Clouser is getting royalties every time someone attaches their name to his. Enough ranting for today. My point is this...Base your fly box on a few basic designs with variations in size, color, and weight to cover a variety of situations and species.

Nick, Jeremi, and I came up with a list of six flies each that we think would serve well as the basis for any well stocked saltwater fly box.

### NICK'S PICKS

- Clouser Minnows
- E.P. Baitfish
- Seaducers
- Bendbacks
- Sliders
- Schminnows

### BRIAN'S BEST

- Clouser Minnows
- E.P. Baitfish
- Seaducers
- Bendbacks
- Toads
- Gurglers

### JEREMI'S JEMS

- Clouser Minnows
- E.P. Baitfish
- Seaducers
- Sliders
- Gurgler/Popper
- Deceiver

I hope that everyone notices that the lists are identical down to the 4<sup>th</sup> picks. The top three are some of the best and most versatile patterns around, they're fairly simple and they catch fish. Let's take a look at each on in detail.

Clouser Minnows: Best all around saltwater pattern available. It can be tied with natural or synthetic materials, bright or dark colors, lightly or heavily weighted. It works for everything

E.P. Baitfish: A great baitfish imitation that is a favorite of Snook and Tarpon anglers but can be tied to impersonate nearly any prey species. E.P. materials can also be used to make some killer shrimp and crab patterns.

Seaducers: A very light weight generic fly that also works for everything from Redfish to Tarpon. They land softly, sink slowly, and display a great deal of action in the water. All black, red/white, yellow/chartreuse, red/yellow, grizzly olive or burnt orange make some of the best color selection. I actually got my first Redfish and Tarpon on Seaducers so it's no wonder they get a spot on my list.

Bendbacks: Just take a look at Flip Pallot's Prince of Tides and you can understand why it's a fish catching design. The best feature of a well tied Bendback is that it's weedless. They work very well in areas with a lot of weed or when casting into Mangrove shorelines. They can be weighted if necessary.

Sliders: A very good Shrimp, Mud Minnow, or Goby imitation. They are extremely versatile for a wide variety of fish. Tim Borski has some wonderful patterns that he developed for bonefish, permit, and redfish.

Schminnows: Although they don't look much like the prey they imitate, their profile fools most predators. They are very simple to tie and require little in the way of skill due to the limited number of materials. Highly effective on the beach and around dock lights. This fly is nothing more than a saltwater version of a Woolly Bugger with mono eyes.

Toads: Whether tied for Tarpon or Redfish, they just look like a simple, easy to catch morsel of food worth taking a swipe at. They don't look like anything in particular but they must appear shrimpy, crabby, and fishy all at the same time.

Gurglers: The only top water fly on the list. Well worth having a couple of colors and sizes available for everything, especially Seatrout. Poppers also work well in the salt but I think the reason Nick and I chose the Gurgler is its versatility and variety of materials, sizes, and colors.

Deceivers: Jeremi chose to include these flies because they create some of the most realistic profiles of any fly out there. Whether you are trying to imitate a Threadfin, or a Scaled Sardine it is hard to beat this style of fly. Most of them include natural materials like bucktail, saddle hackles, and Peacock Herl, but they can be made from a variety of other materials as well. White/blue or white/green seem to be the most common colors, but shark fishermen will go to white/red or even yellow/red.

That seems like a whole bunch of flies and variables to think about while on the water but I think we have really simplified things. You can go anywhere in saltwater and be successful with a limited number of designs as long as you vary their construction related to the quarry, the location, and prey availability.

You can take any one of the listed patterns and change the size, color, and weighting to meet your needs in nearly any situation. Just look at the Clouser Minnow. Use bead-chain eyes for shallow water or large dumbbell eyes for deep. Tie it with natural materials for bonefish or synthetics for toothy critters like Bluefish and Spanish Mackerel. You can't go wrong either way.

This "Tippet of the Month" isn't meant to convince you that variety isn't the spice of life, but rather to show everyone that it might be nice to get back to the roots of fly fishing wherein people traveled lightly and packed efficiently. Give one of those old timers a single box of flies and I all but guarantee you that he (or she) will fish circles around those of us with a thousand patterns, sizes, and colors to choose from. They knew what worked and how to work it.

So take a look at your fly box this winter and determine which patterns you throw the most and consolidate if possible. You'll lighten your load and most likely improve your skills when throwing a fly you have faith in. And, if you're like me, you might even wonder why you've been carrying all those other flies around for years.

## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| April 14    | BFA monthly meeting @ O'Boys in Winter Park – 6:30pm  |
| April 17-18 | April Outing - Ft. Pierce. Dates, times and locations will be discussed at the March meeting and posted to Facebook |
| May 2       | Casting Practice @ Loch Haven Park 2-4pm  |
| May 5       | Flies and Lies at Orlando Outfitters – 6-8:30pm   |
| May 8       | May Outing – Jacksonville Kayak Fly Fishing Tournament. Check out Facebook for details                              |
| May 12      | BFA monthly meeting @ O'Boys in Winter Park – 6:30pm  |

## **NOT GETTING THE NEWSLETTER?**

If you are not getting the newsletter via E-mail and can only view it via the website, please send a message to [mark@bolderado.com](mailto:mark@bolderado.com) and I will add you to the E-mail list. Otherwise, the newsletter can always be accessed through the BFA website: [www.backcountryflyfishingorlando.com](http://www.backcountryflyfishingorlando.com)

**Pic of the Month**



*Bill Ockenden with a "freaking awesome" steelhead! Bill caught the fish in the Chagrin River in Ohio earlier this month. Nice work Bill!!*