Welcome to the September 2010 issue of the ClubWire e-mail news service for clubs.

- **FFF Member e-newsletter** –
  If you’re not getting our monthly FFF Member e-newsletter and would like to, it’s easy to sign up. Go to [http://visitor.constantcontact.com/manage/optin/ca?v=001oqwWjY62mfmlihsoPjZtRg%3D%3D](http://visitor.constantcontact.com/manage/optin/ca?v=001oqwWjY62mfmlihsoPjZtRg%3D%3D) and just enter the e-mail address you would like it to be sent to.

- **National Fly Fishing Fair & Conclave – Education, Inspiration, Celebration** –
  The 2010 National Fly Fishing Fair & Conclave has come and gone. What a great event! All who attended had an enjoyable time.

  Keep an eye out in the next issue of the Flyfisher for the announcement of the location for the 2011 Conclave.

**Book & DVD Reviews**
Reviewed by Bruce E Harang

*Tying & Fishing Tailwater Flies* by Pat Dorsey
Headwater Books/Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, PA 2010
196 pages, hardbound, illustrated, Color and B&W, suggested price $39.95

Bead headed flies especially nymph and pupae patterns have become "go to" flies. Among the most popular and successful of such patterns are those using glass beads, and particularly silver metal lined clear glass beads. This book, by the designer of the Mercury glass bead style patterns, presents a comprehensive guide to both the tying and fishing of these very effective patterns. The reader is given the opportunity to retrace the journey the author has traveled to create a successful system of fishing for trout and Tailwater trout in particular. To provide a comprehensive discussion of rigging and fishing methods there are also included a number of other types of flies which compliment and support the glass bead head patterns.

In total the book presents twenty-four fly patterns each having a separate chapter. Each chapter presents excellent tying sequence photos and text as well as very well done line drawings illustrating rigging and fishing techniques. Also included are lovely photographs of actual fishing. This book presents the material very well on several levels. Of course the fly patterns are well documented as are the preferred manner the author ties them. But there is also an excellent discussion of fishing techniques and rigging going on simultaneously as well as the author's view of fly design criteria and fishing strategy.

All of this is well presented in an easy to read style that is well edited and within a beautifully designed book. There is good value here in both cost and time spent in reading.

*Trout Lessons* by Ed Engle
Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, PA 2010
184 pages, hardbound, illustrated, Color and B&W, suggested price $29.95
The author presents alternative techniques and methods of presenting a fly to trout. Some of these provide the angler with a better understanding and ability to present a fly. Others provide means of salvaging a day's fishing when conditions are less than optimal to downright near impossible. The book opens with a chapter on nymphing techniques to allow the angler to more clearly and often feel the strike. This is followed by a chapter on fishing attractor flies and one on tight-line tactics. Ideas and methods for fishing meadow streams, small streams and streams experiencing high-water conditions are also discussed. There is also a chapter on techniques for catching difficult trout. While the author doesn't present any new material it comprises ideas, strategies, and food for thought which may well allow the reader to find more success or salvage an otherwise difficult set of fishing conditions. This book is an easy pleasant read which is well written and edited. It is accompanied by excellent pictures and diagrams which illustrate the text very well. Check this volume out. If it addresses the kind of water you fish it may fill a niche in your knowledge base and your library.

*Learning from the Water* by René Harrop
Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, PA 2010
214 pages, hardbound, illustrated, Color, suggested price $39.95

This is a visually beautiful book. The author's line drawings and the reproductions of his artwork make this part coffee table art book. In addition, the photography, mostly by Bonnie Harrop, is lovely and well reproduced here. The photographs of the fly patterns by Bonnie Harrop are top notch. The book presents no new patterns. The tried and true René Harrop designed patterns of the past several decades are highlighted. The author's methods of presentation are fully described though they too are not new. This is really the story of one man's love of spring creek trout and fishing. And while it is a good story it is not an easy read. The chapters are written as if they were a collection of magazine articles assembled into a single volume without editing. This presents the reader with a massive amount of repetitive material. For those that enjoy fishing the René Harrop CDC flies you will very much like this book. Otherwise the book presents what can only be described as a tedious read.

*Tips To Help Manage The Release Of Your Fish At The Boat*
By Steve Parker – Taken from the Tampa Bay Fly Fishing Club Newsletter

1. Bending the barb- the first step in tying a fly- I typically use forged stainless hooks, so the barb is removed with a snap and there is seldom a trace of it. Other stainless hooks allow for the barb to be bent flat. I keep the pliers in alignment with the point of the hook to bend the barb rather than approaching the barb at 90 degrees. Leaving a flat barb or removal of the barb is all that is important. De-barbed hooks are far easier to remove from your fellow anglers.

2. Pliers- there are many super high quality pliers on the market today dedicated to fishing. There no longer a need to use rusty old steel pliers intended for automotive repair. Pliers are available manufactured from stainless steel, aluminum and titanium to withstand the corrosive environments that we fish in. Although I seldom use pliers for hook removal, they are always in my bag. I use them for bending barbs on the boat and even outboard motor repair. Removing a fly with pliers can be a bit rough on the fly. The most useful tool that I have found is the hook removal tool offered by Teeny Products: http://www.jimteeny.com/indexMain.html?content=catalog&page=jtCatalog/catalog/catIntro.html. Using this tool, the fish can be released next to the boat or wader only lifting its head up above the surface. The release is quick and super easy. The orange (middle size) is the best for flats fishing. The only down side to this tool is that it does not float. I will have more information on this tool at the meeting and will demonstrate how it is used.

3. Curved mosquito forceps are also a useful tool in hook removal. They are small enough that it is hard to put too much pressure on the fish yet strong enough to remove stubborn flies. They are made of stainless steel to hold up to salt water and can be easily carried by locking onto a fly shirt or lanyard. I have purchased 50 of these to be given to club members at the next meeting. It is fair to say that the fish had a rough go of it based on very cold winter. Every fish we can save by taking a little extra care will benefit all of us.

*Casting Tip for TBFFC: 9*
By Pat Damico – Taken from the Tampa Bay Fly Fishing Club Newsletter

“Don’t be a creep!” Tailing loops are caused when the rod tip travels in a concave direction. This results in the tip being lower in the middle of the casting stroke. A frequent cause is a casting fault called creep. Creep is defined as the movement of the rod tip without power in the direction of the cast. If a definite arc is needed to cast a prescribed fly line
length, trying to make that cast with a shorter arc will cause a tail. When the back cast is completed with a crisp stop the caster will move the rod tip forward before beginning his forward cast therefore reducing the distance the rod tip will travel. This can be very subtle, but destructive.

**The Hex Ultimatum**

By Billy Vail - from the St Joe River Valley Fly Fishers Newsletter

I walked into the house after my “Barnes and Noble” shopping trip for books to read while on my annual Ausable excursion with the SJRVFF gang. My wife, Coleen, remarked, “First of all, this house is overflowing with your hard cover books! And, if you don’t stop reading all that espionage stuff you are going to start seeing conspiracies behind every tree!. I have to admit, I love my books and I really lean towards the David Baldacci, Vince Flynn, Michael Connelly, and Robert Ludlum stuff. I dig all the twists and turns and the ways they really take down the bad guys.

I decided this year up in Grayling I was going to take some of the advice I had gotten from club members and fish later in the evening when the Michigan hatches were at their best. If the Isonychia hatches and the famous Hex hatch were going on at night, then that is when I had to be on the water if I wanted to whack some big browns.

My first night, I had some limited success as sulphurs and stones were coming off while I waited for the iso’s and hopefully a hex appearance. This was my fourth year now on the AuSable in June, and I must admit that I have never seen a “hex” either on the water or off. Well, I sat on a log and waited, and waited, and waited. No bugs and no fish were rising. It was about 11:30 pm and I decided to pack it in and go to Spike’s for the first time and try one of the famous “Spike burgers” I had heard so much about.

I went in and sat at the bar and ordered a root beer and a burger. As I was waiting on my order this big tall drink of water came in and took the stool next to me. He seemed friendly enough, gave me a toothless grin, stuck out his huge hand and introduced himself as Neldon. I told him my name was Billy and asked him how he was. I just got out and thought it would be great to get a Spike burger. It seemed a little weird that he said he “just got out” but I assumed he was just getting out to eat and then he was going to fish the Hex hatch later that night. I asked him if he was from around Grayling. He said, no, that he was from Missouri area and had come up to fish the Hex. I mentioned that I was in town for a few days and it would be neat to fish with someone who was experienced chasing the famous Michigan monster bug. I was pleasantly surprised when he invited me to go with him and a couple of buddies the next night to chase big browns. “meet us at Gates at 6:00pm and we will get us some hell trout”!

The next day, in my excitement, I got to Gates’ shop early. I was getting my gear together and starting to lather up with bug goo when this Ford Escape pulled up next to me. The passenger window rolled down. I could see Neldon in the driver’s seat, but the passenger barked at me “Hey, what the hell are you doing!” He shot Neldon an irritated look and turned back to inform me that “You don’t tack up in Gate’s parking lot. Pull your jeep way over to the end of the lot in that isolated spot and we will transfer your gear over”. I thought to myself, wow this dude is pretty uptight. Oh well, no problem, we are just going fishing, right?.

I repositioned my jeep and Neldon and the two others got out. He introduced me to “Mad Dog and Glam”. I said those are cool nicknames, what are your real names. Glam looked right through me and coolly told me “It’s Glam and Mad Dog to you”. “No problem”, I said. Hmmm, this can’t get much weirder. Wow, was I wrong. Just as I finished stowing my gear, somebody came up behind me and through a hood over my head. Then the three of them started spinning me around in circles and then they threw me in the car. I was so disoriented I couldn’t tell which way they had exited Gate’s parking lot and which way we were going. As I started to protest Mad Dog said “Shut your trap. Glam, sweep all his gear and his clothes for GPS or listening devices”. I thought to myself this is a nightmare. I thought I was just going fishing!.

I was sitting there in shock with this hood over my head and Neldon seemed to be driving in circles. Glam was giving Neldon directions in some sort of encryption that they all seemed to understand, but I had no clue what they were talking about. The only thing I followed was when Mad Dog said “When we get close we need to start looking for red rooster emblem nailed to that tree”.

We finally stopped and, of course, I had no idea where we were. They made me stay in the car as they were getting their
OK, let’s recon. Neldon you take the point. Glam you stay with Newbie and make sure he doesn’t fall behind” said Mad gear on and were messing with my stuff. They finally let me out, took off the hood, and told me to put my gear on. I

your line at that length. The last thing you want is to foul your line up in the middle of the hatch when you are trying to nice structure and some good holes. Start casting until you find a good radius of spots that you can reach and then keep entire area. We let nobody and I mean nobady penetrate our perimeters! Now look you are in a good spot here. There is perimeter. “What the hell do you mean by maintain the perimeter?.” “You heard Mad Dog. We want to lock down this depths. In the dark your world is going to get very small and will look eerily different. Your ability to remember these things will have everything to do with you getting back to the car at the appointed time. And if you don’t you will be sleeping in these woods, got it!” We kept wading and hiking passing what seemed like good water to fish. Neldon had waded into some deep holes, stuck his leg under some undercut banks, and found plenty of structure. The hardass Mad Dog seemed gleefully transfixed. “Oh F&*^ yeah. This is awesome. Glam you will secure the low end here. Neldon, Newbie and I will continue upstream. I want to lock down this entire area.” We went around the next bend and Mad Dog took up a location and we carried on. Neldon and I finally stopped and he told me that I was to maintain the upward Neldon spotted him. “Newbie, send him packing. If he won’t listen we placed a taser in your vest pocket. It is set to around and wade back upstream.” I thought to myself that he must be kidding, right? As the fisherman approached, Things were pretty quiet for the next 90 minutes as the sun was setting and it started to get darker. All of a sudden I noticed another fisherman upstream from me and heading my way. “I have a fisherman approaching” I whispered into my Dr. Slick. Immediately Mad Dog’s voice came into my ear buds. “Do not break mission protocol. NOBODY penetrates the perimeter newbie! You tell that clown that we have this entire area locked down and he needs to turn around and wade back upstream.” I thought to myself that he must be kidding, right? As the fisherman approached, Neldon spotted him. “Newbie, send him packing. If he won’t listen we placed a taser in your vest pocket. It is set to disable. You need to take him down if you have to.” Holy crap, this is crazy.

Well, this age 60 something guy nicely walks up and asks if I minded if he waded through. I didn’t have the heart to tell him, no. What harm could it do? I let him through and just as he got past me all hell broke loose. Neldon started screaming in my ear “Perimeter penetrated on the north end!” Mad Dog went ape. “Newbie, TAKE HIM DOWN! If you don’t I can take out either one of your eyes with a cast from 50 yards and you won’t even know it is coming!” I can’t believe what I did next. I tased the dude. He fell onto the bank, started convulsing, and then he stopped moving. “Oh my god, I think I killed the guy!” Mad Dog calmly said “You didn’t kill him a**hole. Roll him into the river. The cold water will revive him. When he comes to, tell him you saw him get struck by heat lightning. Let him know he will probably be OK, but he should get checked out at the local hospital. Neldon, get up there. If he doesn’t come to….well, you know what to do.

It turned out just the way Mad Dog said. The guy came to and I told him he got hit by lightning. He thanked me and shakily waded back up stream and out of sight. I thought I may need to clean out my underwear and I really wanted to escape these maniacs myself. But, it was about pitch black and I had no idea where I was. So, I went back to waiting. I don’t remember what time it was, but all of a sudden through the darkness I could hear and see new fish rising. Next
thing I hear Glam in my ears “We have sailboats on the water! Fish rising everywhere. Engage, engage!” Suddenly, fish started exploding through the surface all around me. I was so excited I just started blindly casting. I finally calmed down and started observing the rising fish. I concentrated on a few in the grid in front of me. I began to cast and drift Neldon’s emerger selectively. Wham! First, one nice 15 in. brown, followed by a couple more. This is awesome I thought to myself. This is what this is all about. I don’t know how long this continued, but the rises started slowing. I was mentally fried and ready to call it a night. However, there was this one big, rising fish that seemed to be antagonizing me. OK, a**hole you are mine. I cut back my tippet and began casting to that fish in a rhythm that I hoped would coincide with his feeding. By this time Neldon had moved up and was nearby. He told me that the hog was playing me and it was my duty to whack it. I carefully timed my cast, adjusted my drift and….CRASH. I never had a fish hit a fly like that! My rod was shaking and my line was screaming upstream. “Hog on” Neldon advised the team. “Moving in to help the newbie land the hell trout.” As Neldon showed up to my side I was making some progress on the beast who had taken me into my backing. I was shaking and praying that it wouldn’t break off. Ten minutes later I got him close enough for Neldon’s long arms to reach out and net him. Wow, a 25 in. Michigan brown on a hex! By far the biggest trout I had ever seen, no less catch. Neldon took a picture and we released the monster back into the river to fight another day.

We got back to the car and the mood had calmed noticeably. I didn’t fear for my life anymore and I volunteered to put the hood back on. I was allowed to take it off when we got back into Grayling. We wound up at Spike’s before last call and in time to order a Spike Burger. Glam was the last to order. He ordered his Spike burger medium rare and asked for a bottle of Penfold’s Bin 707. The waitress gave him a vacant look. He realized she didn’t understand and ordered a 1998 Robert Mondavi Reserve Napa Cabernet Sauvignon instead and told her to make sure it was served at 63 degrees. The waitress backed away and disappeared. The manager showed up. He said he was worry, but we don’t carry that kind of stuff, whatever you asked for. Glam glared at him, just shook his head and ordered a beer.

WE enjoyed our burgers and shared stories and pictures. The three “Trout Whacker’s” took me back to Gates and I unloaded my gear. They then apologized for some of their tactics, but said that is just the way the stealthy, Hex hunt works. I said I now understood and thanked them for the most unusual fishing experience of my life. I walked again to my car and turned to say goodbye and their car was already screeching out of the parking lot.

As I drove back to the house I was staying in I reflected on the night and thought maybe, Coleen was right. I better stick to reading John Gierach and The Drake for awhile.

All characters besides myself, are fictional….sort of, as is the 25 in brown, unfortunately.

How Has Fly Fishing Changed
By John Berry

I was fishing with a client the other day, when he asked me an intriguing question. How has fly fishing changed since you started? I immediately started going through some of the changes in my head and quickly realized that there had been substantial change. Most of it was positive. I began fly fishing three decades ago and I must admit that I spend most of my time trying to manage change.

The most obvious change to me is that there are a lot more of us. There are more people fly fishing now than when I first started. Back then there were precious few fly fishers. Most of the anglers that you saw were bait fishing. Now it seems like there is parity in the numbers of fly fishers versus bait or lure anglers. A lot of the increase is due to technological advances in fly fishing gear. The advances in fly fishing gear have had a profound effect on the sport by making it easier to do and to make the anglers more comfortable. Another cause is the popularity of the movie, A River Runs Through It. I think that you could boost the popularity of Tiddlywinks if you made a movie about it featuring Brad Pitt.

Fly rods have under gone significant change. When I first started fly fishing, my first fly rod was made of fiber glass. It was heavy and had a very soft action. I remember casting a graphite rod for the first time. It was a Sage and it cast like a dream. It was lighter and had a much stiffer action than my fiberglass. I was so impressed that I went out and bought one (my daughter still fishes with it). The rods then were mostly eight footers. The rods now are much longer. Most are nine feet and several are ten feet. The actions are stiffer and they weigh less.
Fly lines have undergone some fundamental change. Years ago they were either level (no taper) or they were double taper with a distinct taper on each end. The level lines were inexpensive but cast poorly. The double tapers were popular because you could use one end until you wore it out and then turn it around and use the other side. Now the most popular lines are weight forward which have a distinct taper and are heavier on the tapered end. The other end is smaller and lighter. This allows the line to be cast further. There are also a variety of specialty lines that did not exist then. We now have sink tips, which have a front sinking section and a floating rear section, this allows us to fish deep and still cast the line easily. We also have bass bug lines designed to cast wind resistant bass flies and nymph lines designed to cast double fly rigs, weight and strike indicators. There are more.

The fly reels used when I first started were basically unchanged since the nineteenth century. They used a simple spring and pawl drag. The big change since then is that most fly reels sold today feature a disc drag system similar to that used in automobile brakes. Reels with disc drags weigh a bit more than spring and pawl drags. The current trend is toward larger arbors which allow you to reel in line more quickly. Larger arbors weigh more than smaller arbors. So, while rods are getting lighter, reels are getting heavier.

One change that we don't think about often has been the improvement in leaders and tippets. Back in the day we made our own leaders. We would take several sections of different sized tippet material and carefully join them with blood knots to produce a tapered shape. The knots had a tendency to grab algae or any trash in the water. We now buy knotless tapered leaders that perform flawlessly. Tippets have gotten much stronger over the years. When I began fishing 4X was four pound test. Now 4X is six or even seven pound test. Then there is fluorocarbon. This stuff is stronger, more abrasion resistant and has a specific gravity greater than water (it is heavier than water and it sinks).

The change in waders has possibly been the greatest change of all. When I began, I used a borrowed pair of rubberized cotton boot foot waders. They were clumsy, bulky and clammy. The first pair that I bought were neoprene. They were the hot new thing at the time and great during the cold months when their insulating properties were appreciated. They were stocking foots with separate boots that were much more comfortable and provided significant ankle support. However when the summer came, they were stifling. The new style breathable waders are the perfect waders for our area. They are lighter in weight and breathe making them much cooler in summer. In the winter we wear a pair of fleece pants and we are quite comfortable.

The last major change that I have seen has been in fishing ethics. Thirty years ago we kept everything we caught. A stringer was a regular part of our fishing gear. As I grew with the sport, I came to realize that the fish were too valuable to kill. I would rather release them so that I can return and catch them again. As our rivers get more crowded and fishing pressure increases, this is the only viable strategy to provide a quality fishing experience. I am not the only person with this opinion. Arkansas Game and Fish Commission creel studies prove that there are more anglers per mile fishing in Catch and Release waters than other sections. Years ago, I also fished over spawning trout. I caught some great fish but I came to realize that it was more important for the trout to naturally procreate than to provide me with a little recreation. Others have come to agree with me and the major spawning grounds are now closed during the spawn.

I have seen a lot of change in the last few years and it has been for the better. I have better gear that is much easier to cast, it keeps me more comfortable and I regularly catch quality fish that are the equal of good trout anywhere. Sometimes change is good!

Fishing In Texas Is Fantastic
By Clay Gill – Taken from the Alamo Fly Fishers Newsletter

Howdy and welcome to the Alamo Fly Fishers! Everyone is welcome and fishing in Texas is fantastic. Come and join us outdoors for some family fun. Outstanding outings are planned and the opportunity to get started quickly is waiting for you in our organization if you are new to fly fishing. We can help you.

The best time of the year is right around the corner. Fall fishing is the best time to take advantage of cooler temperatures and feed frenzy predators as they ready for winter. Fish school up soon feeding heavily. Top water action, (a local favorite), becomes big draw for many fishermen. Fall fishing is just the best!

Instruction and mentorship is available for you. Scheduled activity in classroom, on open water, or the casting practice is ongoing. If you need to hone skills or just get the basics, please contact us or check the web site for details. Often the
outings provide safety in numbers. Please advise us on any special needs.

Freshwater drift trips are really good right now. Rivers have adequate flow now. Be sure to check for weather alerts before you start a day long canoe or paddle trip. Have a cell phone and safety items and file a float plan with responsible people which will send help if you are a no-show.

Salt water fishing is outstanding. The club just participated in the July “Lydia Anne Fly Masters” charity tournament at Port Aransas. It was a great success. Many exciting outings are planned for the rest of the year. This is the best time to get out! Bays, beach, near shore and offshore seem to be better each year. With the net bans, no major freeze events in years and superb management, we enjoy the best fishing around. Go soon, often, and take advantage of our resources. The popularity of catch and release and better fish handling techniques have really helped conserve our fish.

White Bass school in the late summer and the fall. It happens early and late in the day. Places where large fish concentrations exist, rise early for very exciting action. Try Inks Lake State Park. Early in the morning or late afternoon, White Bass push Shad into lake coves. Use a small white lead eye Clouser. They hit almost every cast while feeding near the surface. Many large lakes repeat this annually.

Another way to acquire fast fishing action this time of the year is to hit lights over water along coastal regions for Speckled Trout. Nothing fancy, these fish gang up in lights. You can often catch them non-stop. From the “Land Cut” to piers and bridges, this fishing is well suited for fly rods. Small very sparse Clousers fished in the edge of the light halo will not scare fish like a larger lure does. Be very quiet!

Remember as you head to the outdoors, Mother Nature will humble you quickly if you mess with her. Have safety items and do not play with lightening. Safety first --every time. File float plans and check the weather. Big storms can ruin your weekend. Live to tell about it and go out another day. Be an example.

*We will not say the “H” word. It is right around the corner. Lets hope they all dissolve in the cold North Atlantic! Word is it will be very active in a few weeks.

Check the AFF web site. Call us if you need help. Come join-in on a meeting or outing. Please let us know if you have special needs. We can and will help you. Have fun, be safe and join us soon. You will not meet a stranger!

Do Flies Always Work?
By Pat Damico – Taken from the Tampa Bay Fly Fishing Club Newsletter

When taking out clients, I often ask them about previous experience with guided trips. This information is very helpful and varies across the whole spectrum from very good, to poor. Recently, the answers were from clients telling me about two guided trips. In both cases they wanted to catch redfish on a fly. They started fishing with flies, but soon switched after being unsuccessful. One trip was in South Carolina, the other on Florida’s west coast. Instead, they ended up fishing with shrimp and whitebait, and caught some fish. Why the switch? Is the reason there are times when fish will refuse flies and take only live bait? Yes, I’m sure there are instances when this is true. Could there be any other reasons why flies will fail? After getting more information, the reasons began to fall into a familiar pattern.

Most fly fisherman I know enjoy the challenge that fishing with the long rod presents. When they begin fly fishing they must also accept the journey that is necessary as they pursue success. What is success? Success to many fly fisherman I know is not measured in how many fish are caught, but by how they are caught. One nice fish on the fly could make the whole day a worthwhile event. Stalking the fish, making a perfect presentation with a fly that you have tied, seeing the take, setting the hook and finally bringing the fish to hand where it can be admired, and often released, all make for a successful outing. There are even times that fly fishing can outperform other fishing techniques. Catching freshwater trout in the middle of a mayfly hatch when the pattern is duplicated and well presented is one example. When snook are feeding at night on small baitfish, a fly that matches the hatch is very productive. The fly itself, many times, is a small part of the equation. When someone asks what fly pattern are you using, should he also ask how you are using it? Have you ever fished near someone, using identical equipment, who either out fished you or you beat them by a large margin? Let’s look at some reasons why flies may not be productive. We will begin with the guide.
If someone calls a guide and says they want to fly fish, very few guides will not take them as clients. It can be a decision based solely on economics. The guide may prefer to fish live bait or scented plastic spinning lures primarily, but without telling you this agrees to take you out. He may have a fly rod, or you bring your own equipment. This is your first saltwater fly fishing experience and you are understandably very excited. You’ve watched Lefty, Flip and others on Saturday morning make that perfect cast which resulted in instant success. You expect to do the same. The guide shows up with a tower boat and a livewell full of scales sardines, and a bunch of spinning rods with corks on the leader. How do you fly cast from a boat with a large tower in the middle, and what is the live bait doing there? My first saltwater “fly fishing trip,” about twenty years ago started similarly, with a well respected guide. I had several phone conversations with the guide before our trip telling him I wanted to catch fish with a fly rod. One fly rod rigged with a freshwater muddler minnow sat in the rod holder all day while we threw spinning outfits with live shrimp. We did catch fish, but it was not what I wanted to do. He did say, “Right now, this is the best way to catch fish.” Why, if he believed that, didn’t he tell me on the phone, or refer me to a fly fishing guide?

In another instance, the guide takes you out and after a couple fishless stops with you casting your fly rod, he suggests that maybe we should switch to spinning gear for awhile. Let’s say your casting skills were adequate, but the fish were holding close to the bottom in several feet of water, and a sinking fly on a clear sinking tip line would have worked. The guide’s inexperience was of no help here. Or, the fish were tailing in shallow water and his boat did not have a shallow enough draft to allow a stealthy, closer approach. He didn’t have a poling platform, or pole, which is needed under these circumstances, or you could have left the boat and approached the shallows by walking in the ankle deep water to get to the fish. A friend of mine who is a very busy live bait guide told me he never saw a tailing redfish. I frequently fish the same areas he does and we see them all the time. We usually wave to one another as he speeds by on his way to a “hole” where he anchors his boat and chums with stunned live greenbacks before beginning to fish his clients with baited hooks. I told him he never slows down long enough to watch the shallows for signs of tailers.

Under the above circumstances the guide may announce, “I fished a spot near here a few days ago, and we caught a bunch with shrimp.” You go to the spot, anchor the boat, and instantly hook up with a live shrimp. We have some excellent fly patterns that duplicate shrimp. Why not use one of them? After catching several fish, you don’t touch your fly rod for the rest of the trip. Was the fly pattern the reason for failure, or were your casting skills so poor that you couldn’t get the fly close to where the fish were? Did you make sloppy presentations that frightened fish in shallow water, were you unable to cast in the wind, did you false cast over the fish and spook them, or a myriad of other reasons relating to your lack of casting skill? When fellow guides, that are also excellent fly fisherman, discuss recent trips with me, their success will always relate to how well their client could cast. They have some poor days when fish are scarce, but on some of their best days when fish are located, the casting skill of the client will determine how the day went.

If you are having some casting problems, and you are amenable to some helpful suggestions, can the guide analyze your cast and be of assistance? If your skills are so poor, how do you feel about spending most of your trip learning how to properly cast? The deck of a flats boat is not the place to learn to cast a fly rod. I have had clients who after a few minutes of instruction were able to improve their casting sufficiently to have a good day with the fly. Others were either so inexperienced, or couldn’t admit that the problem was theirs, but rather some other reason, like the action of the rod, the brand of the rod, the rod’s length, or weight, or something else.

What can we do to insure that a fly fishing trip will have the best chance for success? Research the guide thoroughly? Study their website, have some candid conversations, or written communication with him, or her. Get some references. Be sure to explain your experience level. If you need to prepare yourself, sign up for a saltwater casting clinic, or get lessons from someone who is skilled in the areas you need help. The Federation of Fly Fishers has a casting certification program that is rigorous and will help narrow your choices of where to begin.

I began fly fishing at the age of ten. I enjoy the sport now more than ever. Many people have contributed to my continual learning experience in both fresh and saltwater. Saltwater fly fishing will definitely provide you with the most excitement available in our great sport. Take advantage of it by doing your homework.
Upcoming FFF Council Conclaves
FFF Southern Council Conclave
September 30 - October 2, 2010
Mountain Home, AR
http://www.southerncouncilfff.org/index.php

FFF Great Lakes Council - Fall Steelhead Outing
October 22 - 24, 2010
Wellston, MI
Contact Don Sawyer at dsesi@aol.com
http://www.fffglc.org/

FFF Florida Council Conclave
October 22 - 23, 2010
Kissimmee, FL
Contact Pete Greenan at captpete@floridaflyfishing.com
http://www.fff-florida.org/conclave.htm

FFF Great Lakes Council - Fly Tying Expo
December 4, 2010
http://www.fffglc.org/

Keep Informed and Spread The Word
We need more clubs to join the ranks to help in the conservation and education efforts of the FFF. If you would like to start a club or know of a club that might be interested in affiliating with the FFF please direct them to the Club Information pages below:

Please send an e-mail to fffoffice@fedflyfishers.org should your club have a fishing / tying event / banquet. We would like to add these events to our web site calendar of events. Provide the date, location, name of your club and a website address that I can link to direct our members for more information. The events calendar is on the following web page http://www.fedflyfishers.org/Default.aspx?tabid=4513