



ALAMO FLY FISHERS

March 2009

San Antonio, Texas

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“Just One More Fish...”

BY ROB BURLINGAME, AFF PRESIDENT

AFF MEETING

TUESDAY, MARCH 17TH
ALAMO HEIGHTS
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Ah, the comfort of the late South Texas winter is upon us again. I have to conceal my grin when speaking to friends in the northeastern states when they mention the high for the day being 20 degrees. As I head out into the mid 70s day here I am reminded why I don't live that far north. The weather is not the only reason I have settled in Texas for some time, for the spring brings many more joys.

Soon, the wild flowers will begin to dot the country, the waters will quickly warm to comfortable wading levels and the warm water fish that inhabit them will come to life. Among these slimy South Texas rascals is the infamous white bass, staging for their annual spawning run that I am sure seems more like a gauntlet run through the hoards of wild eyed, winter stricken, fishing fevered anglers wetting their line for the first time in months. Sure there is trout fishing on the Guadalupe and occasional coast trips between cold fronts and windy days, but finally, the spring brings more predictable patterns and lots of hungry fish.

It seems that every year I find myself looking forward to our club's annual David Young White Bass Extravaganza. As the name itself implies, this is one of our greatest and best attended outings, and has become nearly an annual pilgrimage for many in our club. The buckets of fish you can catch, group fish fry and the awesome fellowship aren't bad either!

But, there is one particular White Bass Extravaganza that stands out most in my mind. Many of you have seen my wife Anna (aka The Cookie Monster) off and on at the club meetings and outings through the years. Several years ago, when we were new in the club, we attended what would become our favorite trek to Colorado Bend State Park each year. To set the scene, my wife had always been somewhat intimidated by fly fishing after her first attempt during a very cold spring break in Colorado. We spent the better part of a day trying to catch trout in the frigid waters, between "thawing sessions" in and out of the stream. From that day on, the common comment I heard was that fly fishing was



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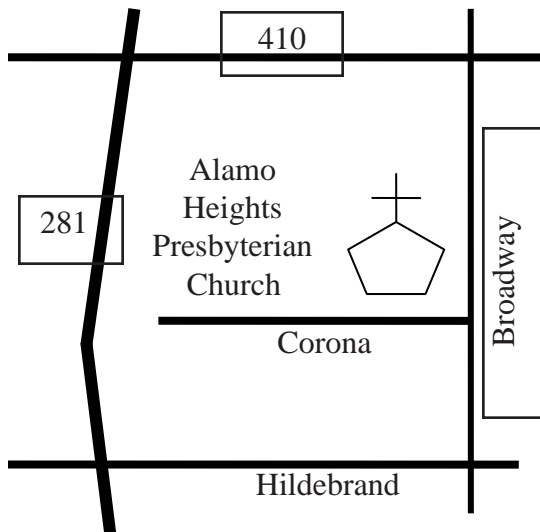


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REGULAR ACTIVITIES

- Meetings are held the third Tuesday of every month, 7 p.m. at Alamo Heights Presbyterian Church, 6201 Broadway.
- Fly tying sessions are held every Tuesday at 7 p.m., with the exception of meeting night. Bring your vise and tying gear or just come and share in the discussion.



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JUST ONE MORE FISH FROM PAGE 1

just “too much work” to be fun. After several later attempts to teach her to cast and get her excited about the sport, the result had not changed. This may be a familiar observation for many of you.

With that in mind, you can picture Anna at this event armed with her favorite rod and Zebco 33, loaded with a casting bubble tipped with a fly. I will be the first to say that this set up works very well! Really, I was just glad to have her come along and share the adventure. Thankfully, Bruce Young stepped in to save the day. During a lunch time fly tying session to kill time and replace a lost arsenal, Bruce silently assembled his extra rod and set it aside. He then asked Anna to follow him out to the field and gave her a fine casting lesson. Working through her intimidation, she quickly began shooting line like a pro! After a quick thanks, she returned to the picnic table and Bruce subtly mentioned that she was welcome to use his spare rod for that afternoon’s adventure.



Hesitant at first, I suggested that she leave the Zebco at camp and at least try the fly rod. After a few fish that afternoon, she did not want to put the rod down. In fact, as she began to pull in one fish after another just before dark, she quickly out fished me that evening (and often still does!). I clearly remember her child like enthusiasm as the darkness swept the river and I could not get her to leave! I kept hearing...”Just one more fish!” From that day forward, she has been addicted to fly fishing nearly as much as me!

As simple as that story is, it gave great lessons to



Raising Ghosts

BY DAVID MCWILLIAMS

It is born on the Lake Fork Gunnison River, in the shadow of the Black Canyon, with a tan elk hair caddis. With a \$40 dollar 5 weight and a fistful of rabbit pellets I approach the rivers edge. On the inside of a ninety degree bend in the river on a shallow gravel bar opposite the overhanging canyon wall I toss the pellets into the stagnant chasm air and they descend on the water like a micro burst of heavy rain. The surface erupts. What had been a slow pocket is now boiling and furious. Like ghosts disturbed from slumber giant trout burst from the depths of the far bank into the shallow water at my feet and disappear with a swirl and a splash. I slam a tan caddis down in the center of the chaos. My rod bends double and the fish hits the current and the tippet breaks.



I am 12, and I'll never throw a Mepp's Spinner again. There are witnesses. One, the land owner, is equally as upset his fish have been molested as has his sport. As he lectures me own both he is undoubtedly wondering why he showed me the trout chum in the first place. Meanwhile I watch two other 12 year olds struggle to drag the 50 gallon drum of rabbit pellets to the water with rods in hand. It is the scene of a call

to the aisle at a Southern Baptist Church – the Spirit has moved, emotions are high, and everyone wants to partake.

We should be escorted off of the property, but one of the 12 year olds is the landowner's grandson. Instead, the rest of the afternoon's activity is induced the same way, with pellet-form-trout-speed and an amorphous brown mass of fuzz for a fly.

As the afternoon passes so too does the false high. I find myself wandering alone upstream, following a curious inclination into a haze of inexperience for a purer form of my new religion. I am mostly unsuccessful. I break off a few, miss a couple, and more often than not ruin lies with bad casts, dreadful drifts, and naïve presentations. But with each mistake I see deeper into a mystical new world, but only in glimpses and my perception of the space is murky and shallow.



Over the years this world comes to entertain ghosts of another form as well - the ghosts of people past on, the ghosts of rivers lost to civil progress. Perhaps I am too bold, but I think I relate to Maclean and how he is "haunted by waters", because all these stay with me. My ghost was born on The Lake Fork Gunnison River, in the shadow of the Black Canyon, with a tan elk haired caddis.





Outings Outlook – March 2009

Every year at this same time we seem to be anxious to jump start the new fishing season. We're ready to get going - ready to get back outside. We're looking for a cure for our cabin fever. The weather can make this a difficult time of year to plan a successful outing, but we work at it all the same. Winters in Texas are often dry, have crazy temperatures swings, and have winds that seem to blow constantly from all directions. Droughts in Texas are as common as flies at a picnic – and just as annoying. Some say Texas is in a continuous drought that is only interrupted from time-to-time with brief flooding conditions. Whatever it is, the last 18 months are reported to be the driest on record, and mandatory water restrictions will soon be enacted. Nearly every county in the state has a burn ban, and our lakes and rivers are painfully low and slow. We need widespread sustained rainfall to try to get back to "normal". Those forecasts, unfortunately, are not in sight yet, but we are getting closer every day.

So you ask, "How's the fishin'?" Honestly, it's been tough. It's been slow, and it will be an off-year in most places until we get some significant rain. But that doesn't mean we haven't been catching fish during these conditions. We will still find and catch fish on most any given day, but they may be fewer in number and in some cases different species than we usually target. Our outings are thankfully, not just about the fish. Our fishing outings are full of intangible rewarding experiences, and they are the mechanism we use to get away from our normal routines to experience something fantastic – our world and the things Mother Nature provides! I believe every landscape has inherent beauty – even a landscape suffering through an extended period of dry weather can have beauty to behold. My suggestion is not to cancel outing plans just based on the fishing forecast. Yes, it may be off compared to normal year conditions. It may not be what we prefer, fishing-wise, but there may be an opportunity for other rewarding experiences that could only be revealed under these conditions.

The David Young Memorial White Bass club outing to Colorado Bend S.P. is still on for March 11th-15th. This is usually a very popular and well attended outing because the fishing and the catching is second-to-none! This year though, will be different. There will be fewer fish and more difficult fishing conditions because the low water levels have created an extensive sand bar that blocks fish in the lake from getting up river to spawn. Still, there are some

white bass and other fish to catch in the river – just not the numbers we have been accustomed to with the normally very prolific white bass spring runs. The outing and the location still make this a worthwhile event for participants to meet and develop relationships with other club members that will lead to more and better outings throughout the year. If you will participate in this one outing, you will find common interest with others in the club. There is no better way to become involved in fly fishing and the life of our club. The Bend outing is kind of a mini training camp for veterans and rookies to become successful fly fisherman. Even in an off year, you don't want to miss this one. If you need directions or more information, contact any club officer to sign up.

As a follow-up outing to the Bend outing, Clay Gill may have location information for an active white bass run in the Frio River or Nueces River south of San Antonio. That outing could happen Saturday March 21st. More information on the location of this possible outing will be available at the AFF club meeting on March 17th.

The next major club outing will be to the S. Llano River near Junction on Saturday April 18th. This will be a river float trip outing. Overnight camping for Friday and Saturday is available at the S. Llano River S.P. There are multiple float trips available above and below the State Park. Kevin Hutchison loves this river so much, he is going to join us on this outing, and will be floating and fishing the day with us. Kevin's presence at this outing is guaranteed to be memorable for everyone who attends. If you enjoyed listening to Kevin speak at our club meetings, just wait till you get him near the water. Kevin's on water excitement and energy level will make the Energizer Bunny appear to be on Valium. I'm personally excited by Kevin's offer to join us on this outing.

Also scheduled for April is a day trip to tour the state saltwater fish hatchery at Sea Center Texas near Lake Jackson on the coast. This outing will be Saturday April 25th. More information and a sign-up list for the hatchery tour and the Llano River float trips will be available at the AFF meeting on Tuesday March 17th. Dates for scheduled outings throughout the year are also available on-line at the club website calendar.

Good luck and I look forward to seeing you on the water!
Todd Fleming
AFF Outings Director - 2009



Capt. Eric Glass...

BY JAVIER TREVINO, AFF VICE PRESIDENT

We know of Eric Glass via various sources. Some of us have been guided by him, others have read about or read his articles, but the story I remember best comes from an article I read probably 6 or more years ago. In that article, Eric is described swimming across a channel with his rod in his mouth. Why did he do this? Well, to get to the other side of course (please chuckle – that was supposed to be a joke). He did this of course to fish the flats on the other side. This exemplifies Eric's demeanor when fishing – Whatever it takes! To add to this, he is known to have guided people on blustery windy days (most guides cancel the trip) and found fish – again – Whatever it takes!

Eric's history puts him as one of the first guides to



target our flats fish with a fly rod. He has been fishing and/or guiding the salt flats since 1986 and in 23 years – one can learn a lot about– if not master the local waters. I can picture Eric in the 1980's, gazing across windy flats in the Lower Laguna Madre, fly rod in hand – and hunting down his quarry before Sage, Scott, and other rod companies began producing Salt-water specialty rods. Imagine casting in 20 mph gales using a bass-tapered rod meant for huge hair bugs. Eric has no trouble powering flies through these conditions and he is happy to help clients learn a few tricks before heading to the areas he carefully plans for.

Eric's domain puts him in prime fly fishing waters where florida style flats fishing can be found. The Lower Laguna holds mauraading flats quarry such as Reds, Specks, Snook, and Tarpon which find comfort

in the balmy weather the Laguna brings. Speaking of Florida Style fishing, Eric adopted the poling platform long before most Texas salts even heard of this technique.

There are few true "Skiff Guides" in Texas but he is definitely one of the best. Skiff guides tend to be hunters rather than Grinders. Grinding is the act of casting into fishy water until a strike happens – usually standing waist deep in the brine. Skiff guides use the elevated poling platform to hunt the clear water for active fish – then call out "Fish at 11:00, forty feet heading to 1:00". This short phrase tells the fly fisher where to look, and in which direction the fish is headed. If the fly fisher can't see the fish immediately, the

next command might be – "fish is now at 1:00 at 30 ft headed toward the boat". If the fly fisher has been at the bow before – he/she is already looking at 1:00 because the previous command indicated in which direction the fish was headed in the first place. By now, things happen fast because the fish is within 3 rod lengths. Experience at the bow can only happen with repeated trips with good guides. Eric has the patience to teach the art of seeing the fish and simply move on

to the next one if the present opportunity falters.

Eric currently poles a Maverick skiff and when conditions or the season calls for it – targets Snook in the deeper waters near Port Isabel. If Tarpon happen to be in the shallows (this is intermittent as south Texas Tarpon usually stay in the jetty channel), Eric will not be shy about indicating that Tarpon might be better than Redfish for the given day – Whatever it takes!!

Please welcome Eric as our March Speaker. One of our members will be fishing with him when he/she wins the raffle – a guided trip with Captain Eric Glass.

Bonus!! Raffle tickets for a trip with Eric will be sold at \$20 per ticket.

Fish on.....





SCOUTING REPORT

BY CLAY GILL

Howdy and welcome to the Alamo Fly fishers. All are welcome and if you are looking to learn about fly fishing or a place to join others in some fun outdoors this is a great place. Our club provides on-going skills sessions for casting, fly tying and the knots/rigging necessary for productive fishing. If you have any specific needs please contact a club officer to coordinate the efforts to get you up to speed. Outings, meetings, and the tying Tuesday sessions will have these sessions on a need basis. We can create a group class a needs arise. Please let us know for help.

The David Young Memorial White Bass outing is approaching soon. The river is down and the action there is bleak at best. Be sure to check the web for changes in this event or it's venue. Sand bars block the river and spawning fish cannot make it to the park. Club officers will make a decision soon on this scheduled activity and location. *Be sure to check the web for updates.



We hope to have the knots and rigging sessions an hour before regular meetings again this year. We have had an entire meeting presentation on rigging and complicated but necessary knots and leader composition such as Tarpon/Shark leaders. We may do this again if the interest is there.

Please advise on needs so they can be addressed.

Check the web for casting and skill sessions.

Eric Glass will come soon for the March meeting. Don't miss this one. He is "The Man" when it comes to South Padre Island. His reputation as a legendary "Laguna" guide will make this March presentation one you should not miss! Eric can provide a wide variety on his trips. Eric offers species we don't have in quantity like Snook and also near shore/offshore fish like Jacks!

We are now coming off one of the best presentations we have ever had on Trout fishing the Guadalupe River. People are still talking about it! Guide Chris Baumbach, -(redflyguides.com-830/8320084), who runs a drift boat on the Guad had everyone taking notes like it was a college class you had to pass. His knowledge and skills were evident and he gave away almost all of the secrets he keeps in his fly boxes. We thank him and highly recommend his skills for anyone-beginner to pro for a great day on the Cypress lined beauty we call the Guad. It might take a whole day to soak up all the skills he possesses. Along with his humor and patience he is a go-to guy for a fun day catching Rainbows while you learn a lot! His new boat is perfect for a two man trip.

The February meeting was a well attended book signing (Fly Fishing the Texas Hill Country), for our friend and guide Kevin Hutchison-(hillcountryflyfishers.com)-512/5893474, who is one of the paramount Hill Country guides in the central Texas rivers. His collector book was acquired by most and signed by Kevin and Pat Priddy who visited that evening. Dr. Bud Priddy was proud and smiling down on us. I hope we make him proud too. His spirit was truly there. Kevin's new re-write is just marvelous and is a must-have book for Texans. Good to see you Pat-and best wishes! We love ya!

The fresh water scene is dismal and dragging boats will be order of the day this summer if rain fails again this year. Check before you head for the usual haunts for drift trips we enjoy like the Llano or the Nueces.



Just One More Cast



By Clay Gill

EXAGGERATION-IT'S NO LIE!

The Bill of Rights had an extra page that was lost. There was an amendment intending the virtual and basic right for all fishermen to exaggerate. Not lie,-- just exaggerate. It is all fishermen's basic fundamental right to expand fishing stories. For centuries loyal fishing fans have honed the fine art of embellishment recounting their day outdoors. It takes time, skill, and practice to develop this prowess. All it takes is a little imagination and you too can conjure up some adventure.

I remember the great masters of olden days. By a campfire they could spin marvelous tales. You could almost smell the salt air and feel the fish slime on your hands. The truly great story tellers could conjure up a depiction so real and exciting that it was like a dream, and you were part of that dream. A large fish became behemoth and slight risk became grave danger. Calm weather evolved to life threatening proportions and each saga was a tale of Moby Dick. Electric excitement was thick in the air! You hear the drag scream-the line stretch! --You were on the edge of the seat!

I have been fortunate enough to have known some of these tale spinners and they all have one thing in common. It is the ability to stretch truth and common story telling to immense and outlandish dimensions. The ability to make the listener believe this concoction is a badge of validation for those who practice the art. It is even more fun under the stars by campfires.

You are truly good when young and old fall spell to the fiction, -take the bait and run. The one thing you must never do is admit the stretch. Captivated the recipient must look into your eyes and know it really happened. No wavering on facts. It happened, --you should have been there!

Now you know the best victim for a culprit of this inclination is the fledging fisherman interested in catching large fish but not sure what a monumental fishing battle might be like. They are gullible enough to have been fishing, but not yet pulled out of the boat by tight drag and monster fish. The refined skill to remove all doubt and make the audience believe the story teller is a polished product. You graduate with honors as they believe you hands down. It really happened!

A four pound Bass becomes seven, and surely the fish jumped dozens of times. Probably just a product of wishful thinking, a story is the by-product of an expanded imagination and propensity to stretch the limits of truth. All in fun, it is not a lie! It becomes the exciting adventure that brings so many back for more. As common as sunshine, fish tales are the grass roots of a post-fishing assembly to recount the adventures of the day. It is a chance to do it all again-vicariously.

People love a story. Accurate or not, a good story is worth a million bucks. You gotta love it! We all love to lean into a good tale spellbound and immersed in a saga so monumental and captivating you hope it never ends! That is really fun!

Who wants to sit by a camp fire silently watching it burn out. How can you waste it without a great story or tale. Kids need to learn to imagine. That is why it is ok to exaggerate. It really is good to teach them to dream and expound. Some day they will be in your shoes. A young sportsman will be enchanted by the amazing and embellished saga of the day. He may develop his own ability to enthrall others. That is how it starts and expands. They know the truth.

Truth and justice is the American way. But colorful outlandish fishing stories are an inalienable right. Everyone deserves the chance to tumble into an outrageous story of Academy Award proportions. A fishing story so outlandish it might spawn dreams or nightmares. Who needs mediocrity. People want to hear tall tales. Just ask them. You know it when they ask Pappy for more, --when it is way past bedtime! Nobody is sleepy and they say just one more story-please!

So-once upon a time, next time you have a young captive audience of fisher persons and a nice fire under

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March 2009



Shuttle outfitters we use can advise on flows and conditions. Ranch lakes are drying up and Raccoons are eating remaining fish from mud holes. Canyon lake is just gone. It cannot be dumped again for any reason. Boat ramps are high and dry now. We hope changes soon?



The coast is in transition. The Reds we love to chase are there now and will soon be stuffed with baby Crabs. The Del Brown Merkin, Kwan, and the epoxy spoon will be weapons of choice. A six weight is fine but the seven to eight weight is better to combat the spring winds. If you are wading remember hot water is best to dull pain from a hit by Mr. Stingray. Slide your feet!!

Trout will be in the outflow ditches and will spawn in a few months. May is great in clear surf gut #2 on St Joseph Island. Big Trout will be prowling guts from

North Jetty all the way to Cedar Bayou mouth. If you have never done this it is wild in late spring. You actually see these large fish hit in clear water guts. You must go by boat -early in the day to beat the wind. It is wild and fast!



If you are new to this game you are not alone. Many new members have come to us lately and everyone is welcome. Please join us soon. Let us know how we can help you. If you have any special needs be sure to contact a club officer. Sign ups for classes will occur often so check the web site for info. Mention any needs at meetings to start the pre-meeting classes you might need.

As always be cautious outdoors. Mother nature will humble you quickly should you test her! Never play with lightening or frontal passes. Check on the quick changes weather throws at you and don't risk isolation when these dynamic wind and rain events occur. *Be in the truck saying-WOW!

Join us soon--you will never meet a stranger and help is there for you in the form of classes and mentors who can help you during outings. Safety in numbers is a good thing and you can get up to speed quickly in this group setting. This may be your year for some exciting adventure!

Good luck fishing and don't miss Eric Glass in March! This will presentation will be good!!



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JUST ONE MORE CAST FROM PAGE 7

the full moon, seize the moment. Remember the first rule of story telling. Never--ever--admit the stretch. Deny it to your death! That is the true mark of a professional. Fishing stories--must be so much larger than life! You know the magic is working. You see it in their eyes!

Blarney!-it matters not the quantity, quality or style of our travels. What really matters is we had big fun along the way. Should I give up this Fibber McGee role for Lent, spinning Loch Ness tales to our youth, -I think not! They depend on me! I'll just slight a little Irish Whiskey a few weeks.

The kids will take these tall tales to the sleeping bags to re-run them over in their dreams. And this, --is where it all comes true! Just watch and see. They always come back for more. It keeps the expeditions very much alive and jumping! These little guys and gals deserve this!

Life is too short not to!

Top of the day to you all!



JUST ONE MORE FISH FROM PAGE 2

me. First, sometimes the best way for someone to learn something is from someone else! Regardless of your casting skills or fishing experience, many times it takes someone else's style to break through. Second, if someone is new to the sport, try to teach them in a setting that has a high potential for reward. What better reward than to catch a lot of fish with their new found skills! Take them to a white bass run or a farm pond full of blue gills. These simple rewards will pay huge dividends. Last, take your fishing a trip at a time and enjoy every minute you have on the water. Find that enthusiasm you had catching your first fish on a fly and share it with those around you!

Keep these simple lessons in mind as you plan your next fishing adventure. Take a friend, a spouse or a kid with you to share the sport we all enjoy so much. What better time is there than this month's White Bass Extravaganza?!?

See you on the river.

Tight lines...



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FISHING STRESSED WATERS

BY KEVIN HUTCHINSON

Here in central Texas, it's that magic time of year. The Trout are still active on the lower Guadalupe, the White Bass are running and Black Bass are coming on strong. What could be better? Rain, rain could be better! As of March 1st the Hill Country area is 24" below the normal rain fall for the area. This leads to much lower flows and stressed water. With this stressed water naturally comes stressed fish, not to mention stressed fishing guides. The latter group is usually beyond help, so let's concentrate on the former.

In an effort to be the responsible anglers we all strive to be, we need to educate ourselves before we head down to (what's left of) the river. Once we understand the stresses that fish are now under, we can adjust our fishing techniques to do as little harm as possible during these fragile times.

First let's look at the environmental stresses that the fish are under. With lower water levels, slower flows and the unseasonably warm weather we have been having, the water temperatures are on the rise. This is good news for the Black Bass, but a problem for the Whites and Trout. These fish are much more affected by higher temperatures so they will naturally seek out deeper, cooler, pools. You know the ones; the only deep spots left in the river. Along with higher water temperatures comes lower dissolved oxygen levels. Warmer, slower moving water will hold less oxygen adding to the double whammy we are experiencing now. Once again, the fish seek deeper hide-outs.

Another environmental factor we are now seeing is simply that the rivers have shrunk: there is less water area for the fish to hide and those deep pools come into play again. Fish will always hold riffles, but as water levels drop those

disappear and again, we are left with those alluring deep pools.

This tendency to seek out the only deep water left is their downfall. Look for the deep pools and you can bet your last Zebra Midge that the fish will be there. The problem is that EVERYONE can find the fish now. These fish will be assaulted with Velveeta, Power Bait and even our impeccably tied flies. The question we need to ask is, "what cost to the fish?" The answer is obvious: these fish are at risk and should be hooked, landed and released as quickly as possible. Holes should be fished but not *over fished*. Catch a fish or two and move along. That's easy to say but much harder to do. I understand that, but taking the long view will help protect the fishery.

So where does all this lead? Right back to what your parents told you all those years ago...."No one ever said life is fair!" Although fly fishers, as a group, are much more responsible anglers, we have to take the initiative and *not* catch fish, at least not as many fish as we *can* catch. We need to wade and float with an eye towards protecting habitat and most of all we need to lessen the stress on these fish in any way we can. That might be using larger tippets and not breaking fish off as frequently. It might mean leaving a hole when you're sure there's *one more* fish in there, or it might just be as simple as ending your fishing day early.

All are hard choices, but this drought will pass and we will all be happy that the fish have survived to fight another day. I have never been one for "delayed gratification", but in this case I am willing to sit on the tailgate of my pick-up with a Moon Pie and a cold RC Cola and watch the river flow by.



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