

ALAMO FLY FISHERS

NEWSLETTER

Issue XVII, No. 10

October 2002

Just One More Cast



By Clay Gill
President – Alamo Fly Fishers

Don't you just love it! It is that time of year when you can feel the hint of fall in the air after the fronts pass. Now we must decide where to go, and what to do. It is easy. Just go outside and enjoy. When it comes to fishing, I am like a compass seeking north. There is no denying the urge to wet a line.

Storms have prevented two club outings the month of September. Now another is heading for Texas. This hurricane stuff is cutting into our fishing time. Enough already! The weather people now say this storm named Lili will probably hit our Texas coastline in a few days. This better squelch before the Big Shell beach trip later in October. We need that typical October calm and tranquility in the surf.

Jon King will give a run-down on what you need for the Big Shell trip at the next meeting. Maps and info will be available. We will also have an outstanding presentation. See Jay's article for the announcement of this event. The best beach ammo is a Clouser in light colors. Circle hooks help in quick and harmless releases. Fishing can be fast and furious. Intermediate sink line is best in the surf. It cuts through the waves, and float line gets too much wave action to feel the strikes. Poppers are also good.

I want to thank all the local shops listed in the advertisement of this newsletter. They contribute to, and support our efforts and have been a great friend to the club. Thanks also to individuals who generously contribute. Make your Christmas lists and shop at all these fine tackle stores to show our support for them. Their products and advice are the very best! Be sure to tell them you are a member and thank them for their support as we return the favor.

Don't forget the raffle tickets are ready and the prizes are super this year. We have more coming and the ticket lists the first ten. It may be twenty prizes by party time on December 07. Also sign up at the meetings for the Christmas party at Tommy Wilson's BBQ. John Marfin will be controlling these aspects as the Christmas Chairman this year. Members are ten dollars, and children are five. We will need the count by November 22. This will be a great family atmosphere. Don't miss this party, raffle

and slide show. The food will be the best in town.

We would like to give a huge thanks to Bill Childs and the Shonto Ranch for the wonderful outing and Texas hospitality. We had a good crowd there and everyone enjoyed the trip. The Bass fishing was great, and the tours and hospitality first class. The trout will be back in November to add to the variety available at this wonderful family venue. I wish I could have seen the whopper that pulled off my favorite Dahlberg hair bug. But there will be another day.

We are shooting for one more skills and casting session on October 29 at the Cambridge Elementary, Townsend and Broadway. If there is enough interest or need, we will decide at the October meeting. If scheduled, it should also be in the Express News Outdoor Calendar that Tuesday should any members need or require this session. Please bring any ideas or requests to the next meeting.

A new member inquired at the last skills about cleaning your lines for better casting. It is recommended highly and increases the ability to shoot through the guides on your rod significantly. See our local shops for inexpensive preparations to do this quickly and preserve those expensive specialty lines that do so much for us. The salt guys need this the most, and thanks to that new member for reminding me.

We are assembling photos now for the Christmas Slide show and year-end re-cap. If you have a disk or slide that has club outing photos we would like to borrow them for the show and newsletter use. Any help would be greatly appreciated. See Jay Forrest, Mike Richards, or myself at the meeting.

A special thanks for all those who volunteered for the TPWD Expo this month. Many young people will be sent on a noble path and lifetime adventure. No better past-time than a day fishing with family and friends. You see it in their eyes as they begin the journey at our tying tables and casting fields. It is hard to say who has more fun!

Take care, and be safe. Show a young person the outdoors and pass the word on conservation. We need the future generations to carry the torch some day.

Tight lines to you! ■

October Meeting (Oct. 15)

Program

Fishing for White Bass

By Jay Forrest
Vice President, Alamo Fly Fishers

The white bass run in February and March is one of the great events of the Hill Country year. One of my goals for this year was to have a presentation on white bass fishing BEFORE the run begins in February. I looked around and talked to different people to see who could do the program and the name Charlie Cypert kept coming up. While I had hoped to have Charlie talk to us in February, the only time available happened to be in October. So...here is a chance for everyone to get the story from one of the best white bass fishermen around.

Charlie has fished and guided the area around Lake Whitney for stripers, largemouth, smallmouth, and white bass for years and is a highly respected fly tier and innovator. Many of you know Charlie and will welcome him back to San Antonio. For those of you who are new to flyfishing and don't know Charlie, be sure to come. It promises to be a great evening. ■

October Outing

Big Shell

By Jon King
Outings Chairman, Alamo Fly Fishers

Additional planning is necessary for the trip to Big Shell on the Texas Coast. This surf fishing trip will take place on October 26th – 27th. Anyone who has a four wheel drive vehicle or anyone who wants to catch a ride to Big Shell may come to the October general meeting to help complete the planning of the Big Shell trip. ■

Pan Fishing in Hill Country Rivers

By Jay Forrest, Vice President, Alamo Fly Fishers

Our local panfisherman extraordinaire, Kent Rush, shared images, stories, and information on fishing for panfish on the Hill Country rivers at our September meeting. The show featured slides and stories from the Blanco, Perdenales, Llano, Medina, Frio, Sabinal, Nueces, and more. We sincerely thank Kent for providing an overview of fishing the Hill Country! ■

Fly Fishing Fundamentals

By Jay Forrest
Vice President – Alamo Fly Fishers

With Charlie Cypert coming I am going to pass on fundamentals this month so that you can talk to Charlie about his flies. Charlie is a very innovative fly tier and has designs that are superb for white bass and hill country fishing, in general. You will want to see his flies and hear more about how he fishes them. ■

Calendar of Events

October 26-27 -- Big Shell Trip
November -- No Outing
December 7 -- AFF Christmas Party
May 17 -- Bud Priddy One Fly Contest

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Big Fish

By Jay Forrest
Vice President – Alamo Fly Fishers

About two months ago I received a copy of Big Trout: How and Where to Target Trophies by Bernie Taylor. This is a pretty good book. Bernie's definition of a "big trout" is a brown or rainbow over eight pounds, a cutthroat over five, and a brookie over four. Fish this large definitely qualify as big trout. And fishing for them is different – they generally didn't get that big by behaving like smaller trout and they are usually piscivorous – meaning they eat fish. If big trout are your thing, this book is definitely worth looking into. It will give you a great deal of insight into when, where, and how to fish for large trout.

Looking through the book raised a broader topic for me though – that of large fish...in general. I don't really think I have met a fisherman yet who doesn't enjoy catching a big fish. For beginners a "big fish" often becomes a sort of "holy grail." Whether it be a bass or a sunfish, a trout or a tarpon, the fisherman begins trying to catch a fish that qualifies as BIG. Several observations may be helpful to those who are still pursuing their first BIG fish.

First and foremost, to catch big fish you need to fish where there are big fish – and preferably a good number of big fish. If you have set a target of catching a ten pound rainbow, you need to go where there is a reasonable population of ten pound rainbows. While there may be ten pound rainbows in the Guadalupe, it simply doesn't offer good odds. So the first step is to do some research and find out where fish of the size you desire are found – in reasonable numbers.

Next you need to know what fish of that size and species eat and where they are found in the water you intend to fish. Big fish often feed on larger bait than their smaller kin. And they may be found deeper and be less likely to come to the surface. And they may be more cautious and spooky. To catch big fish you usually need to present them with a suitable fly at an appropriate depth, with proper action. Anything else and you probably might as well be fishing in a swimming pool.

If you are sight fishing, you will probably take the fly away from the fish. Or strike too late, or too early,

or...too hard – and break the tippet. But finally you get it right and hook a big fish and now is when things really get interesting. All those bad habits you have picked up come to haunt you. The loose line you drop at your feet tangles. You step on the fly line. The fly line loops around the base of the rod. The fly line slips out of your hand and the line goes free. Your reel overspins and backlashes (yes it CAN happen with fly reels and it is personal experience). Your two year old 6X tippet that was rated at 2.5 pounds is only good for 1.2, 0.6 with the wind knot you had in it.

Almost no one lands their first big fish – at least not gracefully. Even if your bad habits don't get to you, big fish simply don't fight like small fish. They are much more likely to move to cover and obstacles to cut you off, or rub the hook on bottom trying to get it out. Or simple leave in such a rush that your drag, and finger pressure are too much and the leader breaks. Or, if it is a REALLY BIG FISH, it may not even act like it is hooked at all. And convincing a really big fish that he IS hooked can be a very interesting fishing experience.

The key, I think, is to follow the advice I first heard from Gary Berger, "Treat all fish as though they are big fish." Get every fish on the reel. Don't just haul them in by stripping with your line hand. Get used to handling the line and keeping it clear. And try to get some experience with larger fish so you will have some idea how much stress you can put on a 5X tippet. I vividly recall fishing for trout and losing several "large" fish in the two to three pound range. The hook kept either pulling out or the leader broke. I did not know if the hooks were not being set well, were too small, or were dull, or if the leader was bad or I was pulling too hard.... I was very confused.

Shortly thereafter I went to the San Juan and caught thirty fish over two pounds in two days on size 22 to 26 nymphs and 6X tippet. I learned that I could put reasonable pressure on a well-hooked fish on good tippet – much more pressure than I had put on many similar fish that I had lost. Thereafter when I have lost fish, I knew it was not the hook size or that I was pulling too hard. The lesson was important and has served me well since.

And finally, when you catch a big fish...treat him well. Give him a chance to live by handling him carefully with wet hands – if at all. And don't keep him out of the water any longer than necessary. And remember where you caught him so you can visit him next time you pass through! ■

Fishing the Shonto Ranch

By Mike Richards

About ten members of the Alamo Fly Fishers arrived at the Shonto Ranch slightly after noon on Saturday the 14th of September. We registered our presence, paid our fees, and had lunch at a comfortable, well shaded pavilion which overlooked the creek. After lunch we were given a tour of the ranch by David Greenlee and Bill Childs – the owner of the ranch. They made us feel welcome and comfortable on the ranch. The 1000 acre ranch contained a four mile long, spring fed creek. Ten dams produced pools or lakes within the creek. These pools provided good holding areas for various kinds of fish. In most places, the creek was too deep to wade. However, fishing the creek would be easy because the banks in most locations were free of trees and brush; thus, allowing room for long back casts. Roll casting was necessary in only a few locations. The creek was not clear enough to see far beneath the surface of the water, but it was clear enough to do some sight fishing.

When the fishing began, the most impressive fish that were caught were bluegills. They were large. Not only were they long, but also they were thick. They were most likely stocked to feed the bass, but grew into substantial fish themselves. Large and small catfish were seen throughout the creek. Some were caught on weighted wooly buggers which were dragged along the bottom of the creek. Bass were also caught. Perry Mitchell caught bass on a grasshopper pattern. Other bass were caught on poppers, but most were caught on subsurface flies – wooly buggers, clousers, leech patterns. I do not know who caught the largest bass. I don't even know what size the largest bass caught was. Penn Jackson caught a good size one – 15 or 16 inches long.

It was an easy day of fishing. At the Shonto Ranch, one does not have to work too hard to get to a good fishing spot. Kayaks are not necessary. Long walks upstream are not necessary. There is a road along the creek. One can reach almost any spot along the creek by car.

We fished until dark. We packed up and drove to The Cracker Barrel for dinner.

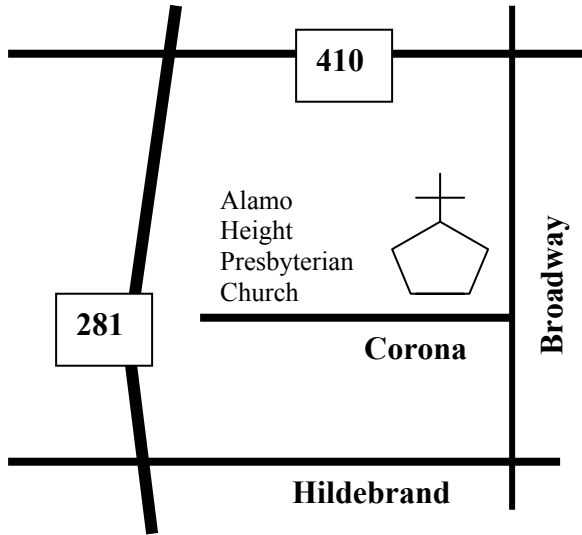
Over dinner, the day's fishing was discussed along with passed and future trips.

After the food and conversation ran out, we called it a good day and drove home. ■



For additional photographs see
www.alamoflyfishers.org.

Where to Find Us



**Alamo Heights Presbyterian Church
6102 Broadway**

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.

Alamo Fly Fishers club officers

Clay Gill	President	491-0555
Jay Forrest	Vice-Pres.	490-3732
Todd Fleming	Treasurer	497-3062
Jon King	Outings	378-7414
Buddy Robichaux	Education	492-7125
Mike Richards	Newsletter	641-7268

AFF Web Site--<http://www.alamoflyfishers.org>

Local Fly Shops

Tackle Box Outfitters

6330 N. New Braunfels
San Antonio, TX 78209
210-821-5806
Fax 210-821-5807
tackleboxoutfitters.com

One Shot Outdoors

18720 Stone Oak Parkway Suit 105
San Antonio, TX 78258
210-402-5344
Fax 210-402-5365
oneshotoutdoors.com

Gruene Outfitters

1629 Hunter Road
New Braunfels, TX 78130
830-625-4440

Northwest Tackle Center

6850 Bandera Road
San Antonio, TX 78238
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Fax 210-681-0067

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