

Windknots

A Monthly Publication of the Texas Flyfishers

Vol. 23 / Issue 1 January 2004

UNDERGUNNED

by Scott Fossum

It started last year and now continues the passion of pursuing offshore fishing with a fly rod. The stakes are high weather, big waves and of course, big fish. All are a problem if you have a flats boat and flats tackle. The first can be minimized by the weather forecast, a watchful eye and avoiding the late afternoon. The second can be minimized by the offshore buoy report – look for less than two foot seas with a greater than seven second period. For the third, who wants to minimize big fish? Not me!

Fellow TFFer Ed Hogan and I ventured offshore in August in search of sea monsters using BB guns (known to us FFers as eight-weights). The weather was nearly perfect for a small boat, which means brutal on fishermen. Mid-nineties and calm – heat-exhaustion-type hot.

We exit San Louis Pass and head offshore about eight miles. Things look grim with no visible anything. No birds, no bait,



Scott Fossum with the one that didn't get away, a 25-pound jack

no fish. We shut down and get out the fish caller, otherwise known as a Chum Churn. Within a minute, sea monsters – four- to six-foot sharks everywhere. I'm rethinking my next adventure of extreme float tubing an offshore weed line as they come within arm's reach of the boat. But we see occasional catchable fish under three feet long (never had this problem chasing reds).

After a few small fish and a few cutoffs, I hook a sea monster. My reel only has 125 yards of backing and it is fast disappearing. I tell Ed: "Start the boat!" He says, "One more cast" as he wants some action. It's getting desperate as I yell "NOW!" We're in pursuit at 1100 r.p.m. with full drag applied. The boat slows and the sea monster speeds up. After ten minutes I still don't see the fly

line and the fish hasn't slowed a bit on its cruise to Cuba. I give up and lock up the reel and the tippet breaks. What the sea monster was I'll never know. We're half a mile from where he was hooked and return to our chum line for more action.

We're very hot now and my T-top is out. I have a fifteen-dollar beach umbrella stuck in a rod holder that the two of

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President's Corner

by Jerry "Buggywhip" Loring, President, Texas Flyfishers



The New Year for the Texas Flyfishers is already out of the starting gate and in the first turn. Tom Lyons (VP Programs) is scheduling the speakers for the meetings. Rick Rawls (Treasurer) is balancing our books. Mark Jones (Secretary) is organizing our member list. I am working on the auction and marveling at the good works the various committee chairmen (Corey Rich, Greg Rhodes, Clarke Thornton, Frank Schlicht, David Simms, Mike Willis, and Troy Miller).

TFF programs and activities start each New Year with a rush. First, there are the fly tying classes, beginning in January and going through March. The next major event is the Fly Tying Festival, scheduled for February 7. Shortly thereafter is the annual auction, tentatively scheduled on March 13 at the Bethany Christian Church. Later in the year come the Sunfish Spectacular in May and the Redfish Rodeo on August 14. These activities and programs have standing committees that are always open for volunteers, so step right up and join if one tickles your fancy.

In addition, there are numerous club outings that need leaders to coordinate things. Pay attention here: The leader gets to spend money budgeted for these outings to pay for expenses and food. It's a pretty good deal. You select the outing you want to lead and the club

pays for food and some of the expenses. The budget for each outing is \$50 to \$100. We want the outings to be fun and enjoyable for all.

Changing gears, Barbara and I express our sincere thanks to those fifty or so members who attended the Christmas party at our home. Everyone seemed to have a wonderful time. As usual, the food was outstanding. Frank Schlicht delivered again on scheduling the side dishes brought by each attendee, while he provided the turkey and ham entrees. Many of those who prepared side dishes wrote down the recipes for future use in a TFF cookbook. The recipe for "Mead of the Great Flood" came in second place. Certainly first place must be Gary Evans for his Sweet Yeasty Dinner Rolls recipe. His recipe follows:

- Enter Target Super Store and go directly to bakery section

- Select freshest rolls using key "sell by" dates
- Purchase with one of many options (credit, check, cash, or barter)
- Remove metal closure tie before nuking

Two awards to members for meritorious service were presented. First award was to Frank Schlicht for his efforts at the Christmas party and fly tying events. Second award was to Clarke Thornton for the fun freshwater outings he has organized. Actually, Clarke shared the award with his beautiful daughter, Claine Thornton. Claine was presented a framed original print of a ruby-throated hummingbird by Larry Haines of Port Isabel. As previously stated, the night was wonderful. Thanks to the many friends of TFF for making it so. 🐟

Coming Events

Tuesday, January 27. Regular club meeting featuring guide Scott Graham. Scott guides on both fresh and salt waters – the Hill Country for trout in the winter and the coast in the warmer months for reds, specks, and tarpon. His timely topic for this meeting is trout fishing on the Guadalupe, but he may spend a few minutes talking about the 200-pound tarpon he caught in Port O'Connor last summer. Holiday Inn, I-10 at Antoine, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, February 7. Fly Tying Festival featuring A.K. Best and 50 other excellent tiers. Details elsewhere in this issue.

Friday through Sunday, February 6, 7, 8. Houston Sportsman's Show at Reliant Center, Exhibit Hall D. If you'd like to help man TFF's booth to tie flies or just talk up the club, contact Mike Willis at 713-721-4755 (home) or 713-223-7041 (office).

Tuesday, February 24. Regular club meeting featuring Rockport-area guide Chuck Naiser. Chuck is one of the most experienced and knowledgeable guides on the Texas coast. You're sure to be entertained and educated at this meeting. Holiday Inn, I-10 at Antoine, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, March 13 (date tentative). Annual TFF Auction. This is our club's major fundraiser, and a great source for fishing tackle and gear, art, guided fishing trips, and much, much more. Don't miss this chance to bid on fantastic items and help the club at the same time.

Tuesday, March 30. Regular club meeting featuring Bill Gammel. Bill is the only master fly casting instructor in our area sanctioned by the Federation of Fly Fishers. His topic will be "Essential Elements of Fly Casting." We plan to rent the large meeting room so Bill can show his stuff. If you've never seen Bill cast before, you'll be amazed. Holiday Inn, I-10 at Antoine, 7:30 p.m.



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for all TFF Members.

UNDERGUNNED

Continued from Page 1

us can sit under and cast. Ed catches a seven pounder and then another sea monster bites. One hundred ten of my 125 yards of backing are gone in four seconds and it jumps. The umbrella blocks my view and I only see a big splash. It takes off again and I lock up the reel to break it off to save my fly line.

I get bit again and the reel screams but stops after seventy-five yards and I know that this fish is catchable. After twenty-five minutes of max drag Ed tails a fine twenty-five pound jack crevalle. I'm exhausted and set the rod down, draping the end of the rod over the edge of the boat with the fly in the water. A big mistake. I hear a commotion and see Ed moving very fast. I see my rod going overboard, then just slowly sinking among about twenty sharks. Ed manages to hook the rod and retrieve it, thus saving the day. Luckily, the sixty-pound bite tippet is bitten clean through.

Next, my boat gets its largest scratch/ding to date, but it's one I'm proud of. I catch a

three-foot shark and Ed tails it and forgets rule number two. My lecture has only two points: Start the boat and follow big fish and NO SHARKS IN THE BOAT. It's now flopping and snapping on the deck with its mouth inches away from two rods in the under-gunwale rod holders. As Ed lifts it up, it bites my gunwale and takes a hunk out of it on its way overboard. We call it a day, and as we return, the sea monsters get to me. How to catch them?

The game is different "out there" but easy to learn. Even doing it the hard way of teaching yourself, it is much easier than catching redfish on the flats. This is the place for a beginner to learn and get hooked on fly fishing. Casting distance is not important and three-foot-plus fish aren't scared of being lined. A four-foot ling six inches under water is much easier to spot than a two-foot red in six inches of water and grass. You do learn the importance of leaders. You're not worried about the perfect turnover of the fly, or a dead drift, or the length, but of bite resistance and having a weak spot. Yes, a weak spot – you don't want your twenty-seven-pound breaking

strength fly line or twenty-pound backing to break or your arbor knot, but a fifteen-pound tippet, thereby saving you seventy dollars.

After each trip you think of what went wrong and how to make life easier. Having no flies with wire leaders can be a disaster. If the toothy guys are biting and crashing within ten feet of the boat, my experience is that it is impossible to tie any kind of knot, let alone a haywire twist followed by two Bimini twists followed by an Albright, in less than an hour, so you get your fly ready just in time to crank up and go home. Pre-tying leaders and flies at home works for me with wire, sixty-pound and thirty-pound fluorocarbon bite tippets, all strung with fifteen-pound double-Bimini weak spots. A homemade leader stretcher mounted under a hatch lid on the boat holds eighteen flies ready to go. A simple loop to loop to a thirty-five-pound hard Mason butt enables a change in less than a minute.

Lots of backing is needed. Two hundred fifty yards of fifty-pound PowerPro has replaced 125 yards of twenty-pound

Dacron for my eight-weight reels. Sure, I had to cut fifteen feet of fly line off the floater. It just means the hundred-foot casts are a little more difficult.

Putting the maximum amount of heat on a fish is a skill worth learning. A fifteen-minute fight turned into forty minutes earlier this summer when a friend just held on to the rod and fought it with the tip.

I'm sold on circle hooks for offshore. I've only had one fish that wasn't hooked in the corner of the mouth. It does take conscious thought when using one because you don't set the hook as you do with a conventional hook. I cast to a five-pound ling and he bit and continued straight towards me and the boat. I knew enough not to set the hook and pull it out of his mouth, but I started panicking the closer he approached. I finally had to stomp on the deck to spook him into turning away and instantly he was hooked.

My next goal is to find the limits of my new ten-weight outfit. I've always thought I needed a twelve-weight. 🐟

HOUSTON SPORTSMAN'S SHOW

The Houston Sportsman's Show will be held on February 6, 7, and 8 at the Reliant Center, Exhibit Hall D. We need volunteers. We have a booth where we'll tie flies and promote the club, and there will be a casting pond where we'll provide instruction and give show-goers a chance to try their hands at casting. If you'd like to help, please contact Mike Willis at 713-721-4755 (home) or 713-223-7041 (work).

This is a great show, and you'll have fun participating.

Outings Schedule

The 2004 outings schedule is under development. Rest assured, there will be a lot of trips to both fresh and salt water hot spots. Right now, though, we have only two to list:

- **February 15, 2004.** "Guadalupe One Fly" trout tournament. Contact Clarke Thornton at cthorton@ehshouston.org or 713-641-0022 (home) for information or to sign up.
- **May, 2004.** TFF's annual "Sunfish Spectacular" will take place at a date and location to be disclosed later.

We expect saltwater outings to resume in April. Keep your eye on this space in future issues, and on our web site.

Norfolk River Outing Report (Part I)

Perspective from an old salt returning to his freshwater roots

by Gary "The Kid" Evans

Troy Miller prepared us well for the trip to Arkansas with email of intricate detail; fly pattern instructions; important considerations to ensure a successful outing; info sheet and bios on each outing participant and descriptions of their vehicles; directions and alternative directions (one full page in six-point type); the ever-necessary Indemnity and Hold Harmless Agreement to ward off the evil litigators; where to stay and who is staying where; where to eat; where to get your license; and even free flies for just showing up: scuds, sow bugs, midges, soft-hackles in partridge and orange/green/yellow, and San Juan worms in two sizes and colors. He gave us a list of what flies "everyone must have in his/her fly box": traditional dry flies (BWO, caddis, Adams 14-20), olive wooly-buggers (14-2/0),

turbo-leeches (8-16), glo-bugs (8 and 10), and shad patterns (2-6). I brought every fly I owned, and bought and tied more. I was a walking fly shop. Thank God he insisted that we have felt-bottomed boots, with studs if possible, and a wading staff (mine made from the butt of a broken 12-weight rod). I needed both when we arrived, wading across a river I had never seen, and could not see, at 3:30 a.m. We were prepared.

Well, in Troy Miller, I found someone who likes to fish as much as I. You've heard the old adage, "Eat, Sleep, and Fish." Well, Troy doesn't eat and he doesn't go to Arkansas to sleep. In my first adventure onto the water with Troy, I did not sleep for 36 hours (including the drive from Houston). We didn't pitch our tents until our second night in Quarry Park.

Our companions began showing up. Each time we

returned to camp, more excited fly fishers were encamped. There is great camping at Quarry Park below the Norfolk Dam with beautiful new shower and bathroom facilities.

Jo Schauf was likely the first to arrive after us. She brought everything but the kitchen sink. Great neighbor. She had floodlights, electric coffee pot, electric can opener, electric fry pans, everything any good camper would need. Jo does not fear leaving her Houston home – she brings it with her. If you needed anything, Jo had it in one of her many giant plastic boxes. Every morning, Jo had the coffee ready. Thank you, Jo.

John Funderburk and Steve Brackmann slipped into camp and put up their tents without a lot of fanfare. Both tents were covered with tarps to fend off the pending weather predicted for Friday night or Saturday. John kept saying, "We

need another tarp." Saturday, those guys were there for me when I hitchhiked back from McClellan's on the Norfolk just before dark. A norther had blown in before noon accompanied by the rain predicted to be 0.1 inch that turned out to be 2.0 inches. The campsite was still intact, but several travel trailers in the campground had their awnings blown off. We stood around the fire in the rain. Steve noticed that I couldn't talk clearly because my teeth were chattering, so he started up his Suburban and we jumped inside. I must have been nearly hypothermic, because it took a long time for my core temperature to come up. John, who was reading a book under his favorite tarp finally joined us. I think he just ran out of light. Thanks, John and Steve, I might have had to get in my sleeping bag before dinner, or spend a few hours in the new, warm, campground shower.

Dick Kauth and Nicolas "Nick" Lestrer moved in on Thursday. Dick slept in his new Honda Pilot with the comforts of home. Nick pitched his tent and readied his camp. Then, they both readied their fishing gear. Both were eager to help around the campsite with any task. Nick offered up a cold Shiner Bock to anyone in need Thursday night. Thank you both.

Troy fulfilled his commitments to the Southern Rodmakers Gathering. On Friday, he gave a presentation, instructing about eighty rod builders how to evaluate, better cast, and fish with their split-bamboo products.



TFFers encamped



John Funderburk and Steve Brackmann

Some of them have made over five hundred rods, many over a hundred. I attended the presentation and was very impressed with the talent and skills of our FFF Certified Casting Instructor. Saturday afternoon, he returned to give individual casting lessons in exchange for donations to a fund supporting a bamboo rodmaker who lost nearly everything in a recent house fire. The rodmakers group raised over \$800 to help his family through their time of crisis.

Larry Pitts was the only TFF member who didn't camp. He stayed in the Brass Door Motel.

He drove a Nissan Pathfinder. I was in it once. Larry came to the campground each day. He told my-guide-can-beat-up-your-guide stories.

Our final arrivals to the campground were friends of Troy's, Tomboy Toni and her boyfriend, Khalil, from Little Rock. Just when you thought Jo had everything a camp would ever need, Toni does her one better. Tomboy Toni brings a freezer filled with already prepared foods and a microwave. Khalil is a hotel chef and gourmand. Need a bowl of hot vichyssoise? Voila! (it is not



Troy and a nice 'bow

always served cold). Cake and coffee, anyone? Hot tea? Thank you. Nice people. Khalil caught his first trout on a fly on one of Troy's San Juan worms. Tomboy Toni is already an accomplished fly tier and can produce quality miniatures, size 20 and smaller.

When you come to fish Arkansas, you need to put on your smiling face and hunker down among the bait fishermen and women. When SWPA is generating and the water is up, there are few good places to fish, so the competition is serious. The limit on trout is five fish per angler. There are more

bait fishermen and women than I would like to see on the river. Troy was fighting a fish below the dam near the handicapped fishing area, and a woman bait-fisher came in behind him and took his spot nearly knocking him over with a butt check. He released the fish and she remained with him, sharing "their spot" until she got her five fish and left. 🐟

[Don't miss the rest of this great adventure in the next issue of Windknots. Ed.]

FLY TYING FESTIVAL 2004

Our 12th Annual Fly Tying Festival will be Saturday, February 7th at the Holiday Inn on I-10 at Antoine. We have nearly 50 tiers scheduled for this event, including A.K. Best, our featured tier. We have tiers coming from all over Texas, one from New Mexico, one from Kansas, and possibly a couple from Louisiana and Arkansas. We also have several vendors selling everything from artwork to tying materials. Barkley Souders has promised to clean out his garage, and should have some real equipment bargains, as he has in the past.

Special presentations are as follows:

11:00-12:00 a.m.	Steve Flanagan	Saltwater Flies
1:00-2:00 p.m.	A.K. Best	Matching Naturals
2:00-3:00 p.m.	Dave Lewis	Midges
3:00-4:00 p.m.	Mark Petrie	Deer Hair Flies
4:00-5:00 p.m.	Wally VanZandt & Billy Oxley	Making Your Own Fly Plate (shadow box)

The drawing for the raffle items will be held at 4:30 p.m. As usual, Tom Lyons has a Sage rod and several other great items for this year's raffle. You do not have to be present to win.

Fishing Trip Books

by Mike Willis

I have always enjoyed reading books with fishing themes or coastal settings and I have assembled a list of a few of my favorites. My choice of books likely reflects my preference for fishing in saltwater and my background as a native of the Gulf Coast (born in Port Arthur with boyhood summers spent in Gilchrist on the Bolivar Peninsula).

These books are not how-to books, but are books to enjoy on fishing trips or between fishing trips. My son Marcus and I always take books, cards and dominos on our fishing trips and we try to avoid the television. If possible, we take books that contain stories of the local people and history of the area we are visiting.

I hope that you find a book to enjoy from my favorites.

Tarpon Quest, Away All Boats, Fishing Came First, and Fish of My Years by John Cole - Mr. Cole passed away recently but I can tell from his books that he lived life well. In *Away All Boats,*

Mr. Cole is a man working six days a week on a limited salary. However, he builds his fleet to nine boats: a Boston Whaler, a Hobie Cat, a pram, a rowing dory, an inflatable, a sharpie clamming skiff, a johnboat, a Swampscott dory, and an Old Town sailing canoe. I doubt that we have any club members with such obsessive behavior.

They Made Their Own Law: Stories of the Bolivar Peninsula by Melanie Wiggins - Although this book provides a serviceable history of the Bolivar Peninsula, the interviews with long-time residents are where this book really shines. If you ever wondered where the term goat-roper came from, here is your answer.

King of the Moon by Gene Kira - Set in the Baja of past years, this is a tale of how a sportfishing business is built to save a community. Gene also has a website on Baja, www.bajadestinations.com.

Far Tortuga by Peter Mathiessen - Considered by many to be an equal to Hemingway's *Old Man and the*

Sea, Far Tortuga depicts life for nine men on an old turtle-fishing boat in the Caribbean. In addition, Mathiessen's Mr. Watson trilogy, *Killing Mr. Watson, Lost Man's River,* and *Bone to Bone*, is a stark view of life in and around the Everglades in the early twentieth century. These books are not light reads.

The Doc Ford series by Randy Wayne White - This mystery series features Doc Ford, a marine biologist and ex U.S. intelligence operative, and his hippie philosopher friend, Tomlinson, as well as the quirky characters inhabiting Dinkin's Bay Marina. The series, in order, is *Sanibel Flats, The Heat Islands, The Man Who Invented Florida, Captiva, North of Havana, The Mangrove Coast, Ten Thousand Islands, Shark River, Twelve Mile Limit,* and *Everglades*. Marcus especially enjoyed *The Man Who Invented Florida* and I found it to be a very funny book.

Randy White also wrote for *Outside Magazine* and has published a series of non-fiction

books about his travels and adventures: *Batfishing in the Rainforest, Last Flight Out, The Sharks of Lake Nicaragua,* and *An American Traveler*. "How to Be a Competent Southern Waterperson" alone is worth the price of *Batfishing in the Rainforest*. White spent 13 years as a light-tackle guide on Sanibel Island with over 3,000 charters.

Big Fish by Ken Grissom - Ken was a writer for the Houston Post. This mystery novel sets one-eyed Cajun diver John Rodrigue in a high stakes Galveston fishing tournament. Ken's other Rodrigue novels include *Drop-Off* and *Drowned Man's Key*. *Drowned Man's Key* provides a rather sobering vision of Clear Lake after a direct hit from a Category V hurricane.

Other recommendations include the Belizean Writers Series, *How to Be a True-True Bahamian* by Patricia Ginton-Meicholas, *Easy in the Islands* by Bob Shacochis; the Dave Robicheaux novels by James Lee Burke; *A Pirate Looks at Fifty* by Jimmy Buffett; and *The Moon Pulled Up an Acre of Bass: A Flyrodder's Odyssey at Montauk Point* by Peter Kaminsky. 🐟



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FRUGAL FRANK'S TIPS

by Frank Schlicht

Those of you into tying "buggy" nymphs are often confronted with the task of teasing out the dubbing to create that "buggy" look. This can be a slow process if you use your bodkin. You can make a simple, inexpensive dubbing teaser from a .22 caliber brass bore cleaning brush or a piece of Velcro (hook side) glued to a popsicle stick or pencil. For those who want the ultimate, try a dental broach. Dental broaches are used in the root canal procedure, and they come in several different sizes. My box had twelve in it in four or five different sizes. It cost about six dollars. Next time you pay your dentist a visit, ask about them. Mine gladly ordered a box for me. 🐟



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WINDKNOTS INFO

The Texas Flyfishers monthly newsletter needs your help. Otherwise, we'll run out of material to print.

Please send your photos, artwork and graphic materials to publisher Greg Rhodes at gregrhodes@houston.rr.com Send articles to editor Corey Rich, email: corey.rich@aya.yale.edu or fax at 713-864-7488.

All articles, photographs and newsworthy events are appreciated. Information and articles should be submitted before the 10th of each month.

Previous issues of the *Windknots* publication are now posted online in PDF format for downloading and viewing. Each new *Windknots* will be posted immediately following its release. Please keep this in mind if you don't receive an issue!

WEBSITE INFO

Please send your pictures, ideas, links, etc... to the TFF webmaster e-mail address listed on the web page at:

www.texasflyfishers.org

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 Membership in the FFF is encouraged and benefits the club, but is not required.
 Membership applications are available through the FFF website at: <http://www.fedflyfishers.org>