

Fly fishing not just for the aristocratic well-off

When anglers think of fly fishing, they immediately think of trout fishing on a pristine stream in the Rocky Mountains or fishing in New England during the fall when the hardwood trees change multi-colors. Most anglers feel that fly fishing is for the aristocratic well-off, considered the purest who would never think of using a barbed hook or live bait — Not the case. True, fly fishers are to active to use live bait, but the long-rod numbers are growing when it comes to bass fishing with a popper. Many fly fishers who can't afford tiring long expensive drives filled with crowded streams and "No Trespassing" signs are joining the legion of the warm-water bass fishermen. For many, it is the rush felt of the violent surface strike of the large-mouth bass which strips off yards of line by its powerful heavy body. Longtime bass anglers like myself who have used various methods of catching ole' bucket mouth have used heavy crank baits, plastic worms, pig-n-jigs and the like. My challenge to you the reader is to find a new thrill doing what you love the most. Bring back fun and excitement to your fishing experience. Bass are the most admired and prolific sport fish in America. Fly fishing is the most entertaining and satisfying way to catch any sport fish on manmade lures. The ability to entice lunker bass to "strike," depends on the equipment anglers need to use to produce a successful adventure. Selecting a practical bass tackle rod involves a few basic decisions for the beginner. First an angler must decide what line weight is necessary to match the rod and the situation. A good rule of thumb for warm-water fishing is use a heavier weight fly line because it is very wind-resistant and because bass flies are larger and heavier than normal trout flies. Purchase a good quality 7-1/2 to 8-1/2 foot rod designed to cast a 7 or 8 weight fly line. This is the most practical outfit for bass bugging. If you feel that you are in an area that you feel might produce bass over 7 pounds, then I would recommend using 9 or 10 weight line tied to a strong 20 pound backing on your reel. Remember reels are single action. Personally, I do not like to use automatic reels, but if you inherit one as I did as a boy, you are stuck with what ever you have. One thing I have learned over the years is that an angler can spend from \$20-\$1,000 on a fly reel, but no matter how much an angler pays the action is the same. They all work alike, anglers usually buy the name for prestige purposes, but the most important thing to remember is make sure it has a strong durable action as fly reels are mainly used to hold line. Some bass fly fishers swear by the automatic reel if they fish from a boat because it is easier to handle the fish because of all the fumbling with the electric trolling motor and net, but with a good foot controlled trolling motor, this is not a big issue. When selecting a line for bass use weight forward, this is the most trouble-free when casting big bugs. It works the best in our windy Kansas and Nebraska lakes because of it weight. The best way to cast it is to use a tight loop cast — You do not need the as many false cast and finesse that trout fishermen use in the clear water streams. If bass are feeding just below the surface on top water lures, keep a spare reel loaded with floating line. The fly can be maneuvered much easier with more accuracy than a spin or bait casting reel which is a positive, and with a hook guard on larger mouse, frog, and minnow imitations, you don't get snagged up as much. If bass aren't are lying deeper go to the weight forward shooting taper line which sinks deeper. The wet tip hi-definition line is easiest to see in murky water if you use polarized glasses and clear leader, you will have no problems. Use a 4X — 6X strength leader when using a popper, a deer hair bug or greased head muddler minnow when first working the surface. The trick is to cast it, then pause to let the sinking tip do its thing by pulling the fly just under the surface, then retrieve it with a strip/pause, crippled minnow action. When the bass are deeper, the shooting taper weight forward line with a wet head hi-speed sinking



The Jayhawker

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line will allow you to work flies as deep as 40 feet. One thing to remember, the deeper you fish, the more work it becomes because of the weight of the line and fishing deeper than 20 foot take away the fun. If I am fishing a 7-1/2 foot rod, I like to use between 12- 24-inches of tippet attached to my leader. If the

bass are spooky longer is better, so you will have to experiment. If they can't see the tippet material or the leader, you are in business, but remember at this point, one of the main secrets is tie a good strong not on new tippet and leader. The leader tip and tippet should test from at least six to 15 lbs. for the majority of bass with heavy butt or

magnum butt taper which is attached to the heavier to weight forward casting line. If you are fishing heavy cover or structure, use stronger tippet material. Remember, bass are prize fighters, they will use every trick in the book to foul you up, you may use etiquette, but they are rude. If you are using a wet tip hi-def line, use three-six-foot leader, it works best. Longer leader tends to plane upward which defeats the purpose of a sinking line. If you are using a full sinking line, use a shorter leader or a two-part taper of butt line and tippet. A good combo is to use a 24-inch butt of flexible.018-inch nylon and a 24-inch tippet tied with a double

surgeon's knot. Leader balance isn't as critical in bass fishing as it is when trout fishing. If you don't want trouble, the best knot to use to attach bass flies to the tippet is a well tied Duncan loop knot. Improved clinch knots are a pain in the neck, they are easy to tie, but will strip themselves with heavier fish. Another thing to remember is bass flies are unique to all other flies, it is important to match the weight, texture, action, and size of natural foods that bass feed on. These flies come in two groups, the attractors and simulators which tease the bass to strike. Specially designed bass flies can be fished anywhere in north and central America, remember if they













aren't hitting on the top, they are either hitting on the bottom or in-between. That is why the weight of your fly line is so important. Bass can be extremely selective on what they eat. Size, shape, color, texture, and action are very important when you are purchasing flies. If you aren't careful, you can break your bank account. Think size, fly action, fly texture, color, sound, and retrieving action. Secondly, purchase a variety of dry flies, topwater bugs, floating/diving flies, swimming flies, bottom hoppers and brush crawling flies. I will talk about casting, line control, fighting, landing, and releasing in a later article. Just remember have fun, days off from work are special. Good fishing and keep tight lines.



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