



# Go Big or Go Home!

By Steve May

While it is true that when fly fishing it is possible to catch huge fish on tiny flies, day in and day out meaty offerings attract more large fish. Bigger brown trout, bass, musky and northern pike will usually take a super-sized bite over a tiny morsel.

As a fly angler this is a blessing and a curse. It means that you don't have to try and thread one microscopic flies on to spider web tippet. But, chucking a half chicken dinner at a fish with the wrong type of equipment can be equally frustrating and tiring.

You may say well then "Why don't I just use a baitcaster?" Well, there are a few reasons why "flies" are an excellent option.

Feathers and fur give you the option of building your baits to your own specifications. Size, color and profile can all be controlled at the tying bench. You can match the exact size and profile of local baitfish with your flies. Your baits don't have to be purchased at your local tackle shop and be imported from Finland or Arkansas. There is also the added pride of building the bait that fools a trophy fish.

Baits made from painted hard plastic or balsa wood has some limitations. Once a fish touches it they know it is a fake. Why else do you think there are three sets of treble hooks dangling from bigger crankbaits and stick-baits!

With soft flowing natural materials you only need one or two hooks to get solidly hooked up because the fish hold on to a natural feeling bait longer. The movement of soft materials is also impossible to imitate with hard baits or even soft plastics. These light natural materials just come alive in the water with the slightest current. It is this action that makes getting out heavy duty fly rods worthwhile.

With big flies you do have to beef up with the right equipment. The right equipment depends on "how big is big". For brook trout fishing on a small stream, going

"giant" might mean using a three inch fly and a 5 weight outfit. For musky a full 12weight tarpon rod might be in order to fire out flies in the eight to twelve inch range. Generally, when you are throwing big stuff, an 8 weight rod and matching reel and line will handle the job. This type of equipment is well suited to larger flies and the bigger fish that eat them. But, a heavier rod can make things even easier.

Many people are surprised when they ask how big is big for brown trout. I commonly throw six to eight inch flies for these fish on my local river. The reason for this is that they work!

A couple of years ago I was fishing for pike with six to seven inch minnow-imitating flies. The pike we were



looking for had eaten brown trout up to 14" long off of our clients lines in previous days. After fishing for a while the person I was fishing with had a "bump" and he thought the fish missed the fly. Finishing his retrieve there was an 8 inch brown trout on his 7 inch fly! What a greedy little fish. So a fly really can't be too big in my opinion.

Smallmouth bass are another aggressive species. When musky fishing with 10 inch flies I commonly have bass take a run at the fly. Some of these smallmouth are pretty impressive specimens.

So the next time working tiny flies gets you down, tie on the biggest fly in your box and who knows you may end up hooked on big flies and the biggest fish in the river.

Building Big flies that will cast.....



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