



Getting to the Bottom

By Steve May

In the heat of the summer fly anglers often complain about the sparse hatches and challenging fishing. There just are not as many opportunities to catch fish on the surface like earlier in the season. The heat of a summer day can certainly have the fish lying low. Well that is the time to go down and get them.

Fly tackle is not all about fishing tiny insect imitating flies on the surface. There are ways to get your fly down to the fishes' level. Subsurface fishing can be incredibly productive for trout, bass, salmon and a wide variety of other fish species especially during the dog days of summer.

The first way to get your fly deep is the most obvious one. Attach an anchor to it! Applying weight to your rig can be done through a variety of methods.

A weighted fly is the easiest way to plunge your fly below the surface. Older fly patterns used metal tinsels and double hooks to make flies heavier. Many nymphs and streamers hide metal wire under fly tying materials for added weight and modern patterns incorporate things like metal beads and weighted hourglass shaped eyes to add a jigging action to a fly. All on their own, weighted flies can often get you down to the fish.

Weighted fly lines are another way to get your presentation deeper. Full sinking lines can be great for probing deep water in lakes or river pools. Sink tip lines, where the tip of the line is sinking and the remaining line floats, allow you to control the line better. These lines can be invaluable in river fishing. A cheaper, yet very efficient alternative is the sinking leader. Through using loop-to-loop connections you can add a leader to the end of your floating line that will instantly turn it into a sink tip! These leaders are affordable, easy to stick in a pocket and come in a variety of densities and lengths.

The other way to add weight is to simply crimp a split shot to your leader. It isn't classic fly fishing, but it is

effective and accepted in most of the country. However, on the east coast and on some "fly fishing only" waters this is not legal so check your local regulations.

There is more that you can do than attaching a weight to your rig to help sink your fly. How you cast and how you control your fly line can also affect the depth of your presentation.

Casting further upstream when in a river allows your rig more time to sink. However, there is often a balancing act here. If you cast too far upstream your rig may settle into the bottom too early and cost you a few flies. It is best to weight your rig so that you are casting perpendicular to the current or slightly downstream.



Another way that your presentation can affect depth is through mending the line. Mending is basically placing controlled slack in your line. This is done by simply flipping a bit of line upstream while it is on the water. Softly moving your rod tip in a "C" shape upstream usually accomplishes this. On a slack line your rig will be able to sink. If the line is tight its ability to sink will be reduced.

Learning how to get your fly down to the level of the fish and animate it in a fish enticing way is a key to becoming a better fly angler. It can also get you into some of the best fishing of the season.



Originally published in Real Fishing Magazine
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