



# Get Down With Nymphs

By Steve May

Nymph fishing is a mystery for many anglers. Because they cannot see their fly they struggle with this technique. But nymphing is a great method to consistently hook up with trout, steelhead, bass and many more species of fish.

Nymph fishing really isn't that hard. You just need to determine where you think the fish should be holding, find out what they might be eating and then get your fly to them naturally.

To find fish in a river you are looking for areas where they are protected from predators and strong current and where there is a good food supply. If you find this combination you should be looking at fishy water.

To determine what the fish could be eating the best way is to get into the river in a shallow riffle area and pick up a few rocks or kicking up the bottom with a fine mesh net held in the current below you to collect some bugs. You will be surprised at what you will find that is available to the fish. Then it is a matter of matching the hatch and pulling out a fly that is similar in size and color to the naturals you encounter.

The next step is to get your fly to the fish in a natural drift. This is the most intimidating part of nymphing. Don't fear because by sheer accident many people catch trout with poorly presented nymphs. But, even with a little knowledge you can become quite proficient with a nymph.

*The best way to start nymph fishing is with a strike indicator and some weight.*

Weight to get your fly down to the bottom where the fish are can take the form of split shot, moldable putty or a bead headed fly. Try to use just enough weight to get your fly to the bottom efficiently without snagging on the bottom too often.

A strike indicator made of foam, cork, wood or yarn helps suspend your fly off of the bottom and allows you to easily detect strikes. Strike indicators are really just floats or bobbers for fly fishermen.

A good starting point is to attach the indicator up your leader around one and a half times the water depth from your fly. For example if I am fishing water that is about two feet deep I will place my indicator about three feet up the leader. You go with the extra length because your fly will never be directly below your indicator. Due to different current speeds your tippet will always float down the river at an angle unless you use an awful lot of weight!



*This Grand River beauty, the fish of course, was fooled by a well presented nymph.*

I then can adjust the weight or the distance from the indicator so that I have contact with the bottom, but am not losing flies every couple of drifts. Having a flexible system that can be adjusted easily to adapt to different water conditions is a key to success.

Two other tips to help your presentation are to avoid casting a nymph rig with a traditional backcast and instead try to lob the rig into position. Roll casts also work well. A lot fewer tangles will result. Also, if you "check" your float you will get a better drift. Remember that the water at the bottom of the stream is moving slower than the surface water. Holding your indicator back with a high rod tip will improve your presentation and your success.

Perhaps the best thing to do to get better with nymphs is to go out and practice. Before long you will be surprised at how easy and effective it is to fool fish with nymphs.



Originally published in Real Fishing Magazine  
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