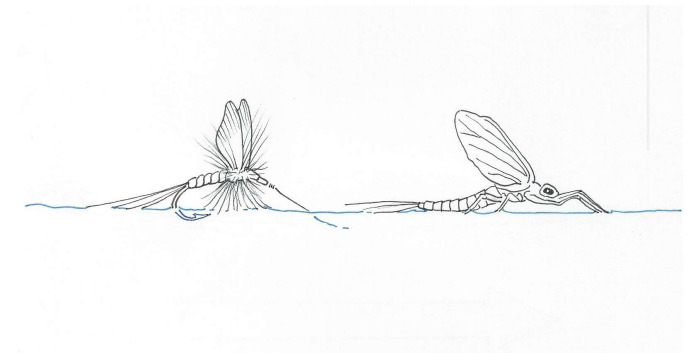




## Dry Fly Fishing

- Presentation by Chris Bobby
- Illustrations by Stuart Stenning-White





# What is Dry Fly fishing?

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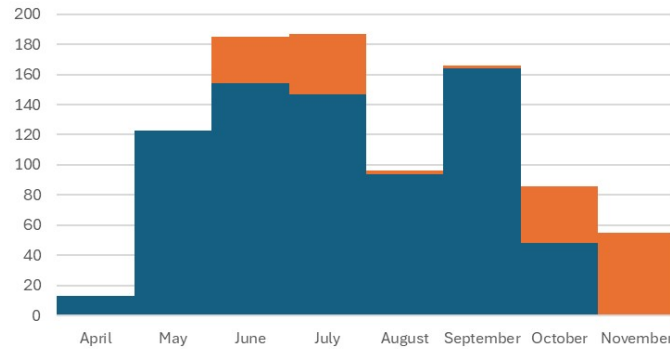
Fishing a fly that floats on or in the surface  
– where the fly is an imitation of a natural food source!

“The most exciting way of fishing as you see the fish rise and take the fly.”



Duffers Fortnight – massive hatches of mayfly on chalkstreams. Fish get preoccupied on the floating insects

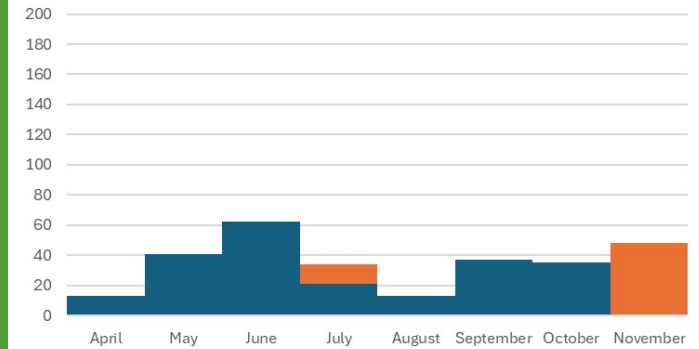
Dry Fly catch by month 2020-2024



If insects are hatching then trout will look up anytime of year.

But fish are lazy and so will focus on the easiest food – if present daphnia & snails are easy to catch

Dry Fly catch by month 2024



2024 was a great year for dry fly on the boats and later on from the bank.

When does it work?

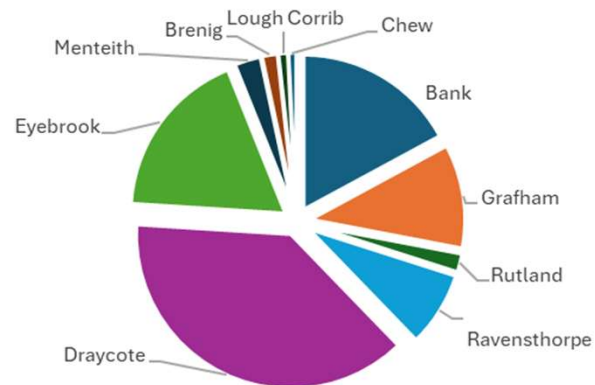
# Surely it only works at Ravensthorpe

Draycote, Eyebrook and Ravensthorpe are historically very good dry fly waters because of prolific insect hatches.

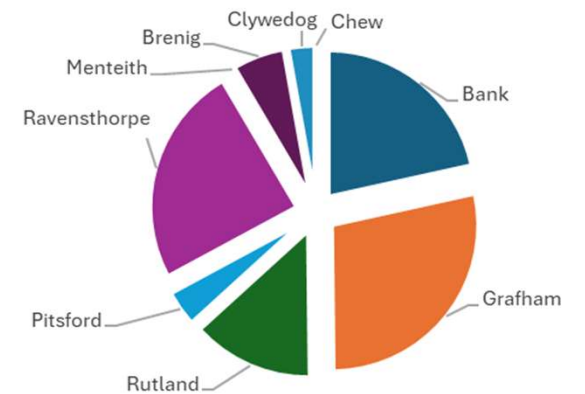
Clear water at Rutland and Grafham has improved dry fly fishing and made nymph fishing more difficult.

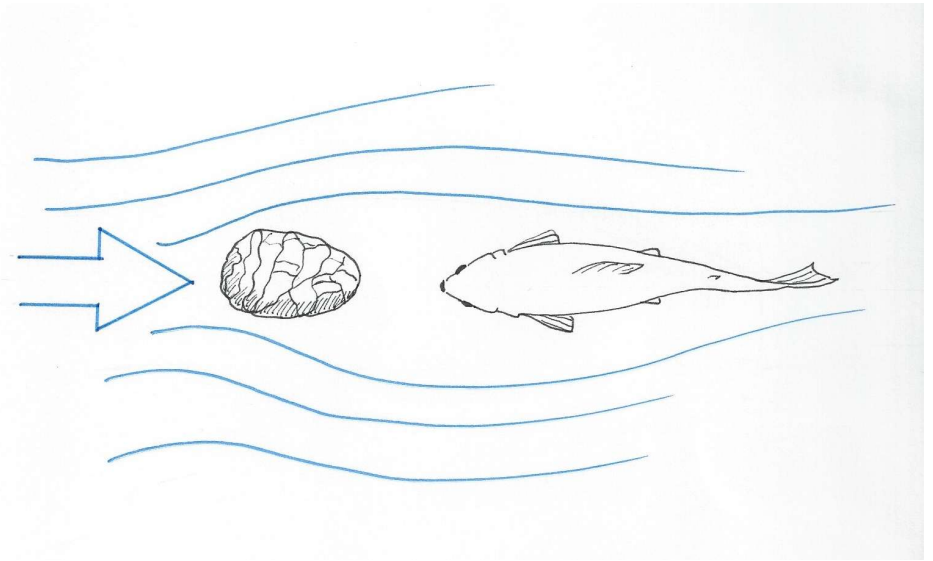


Dry fly catch by water 2020-2023



Dry fly catch by water - 2024

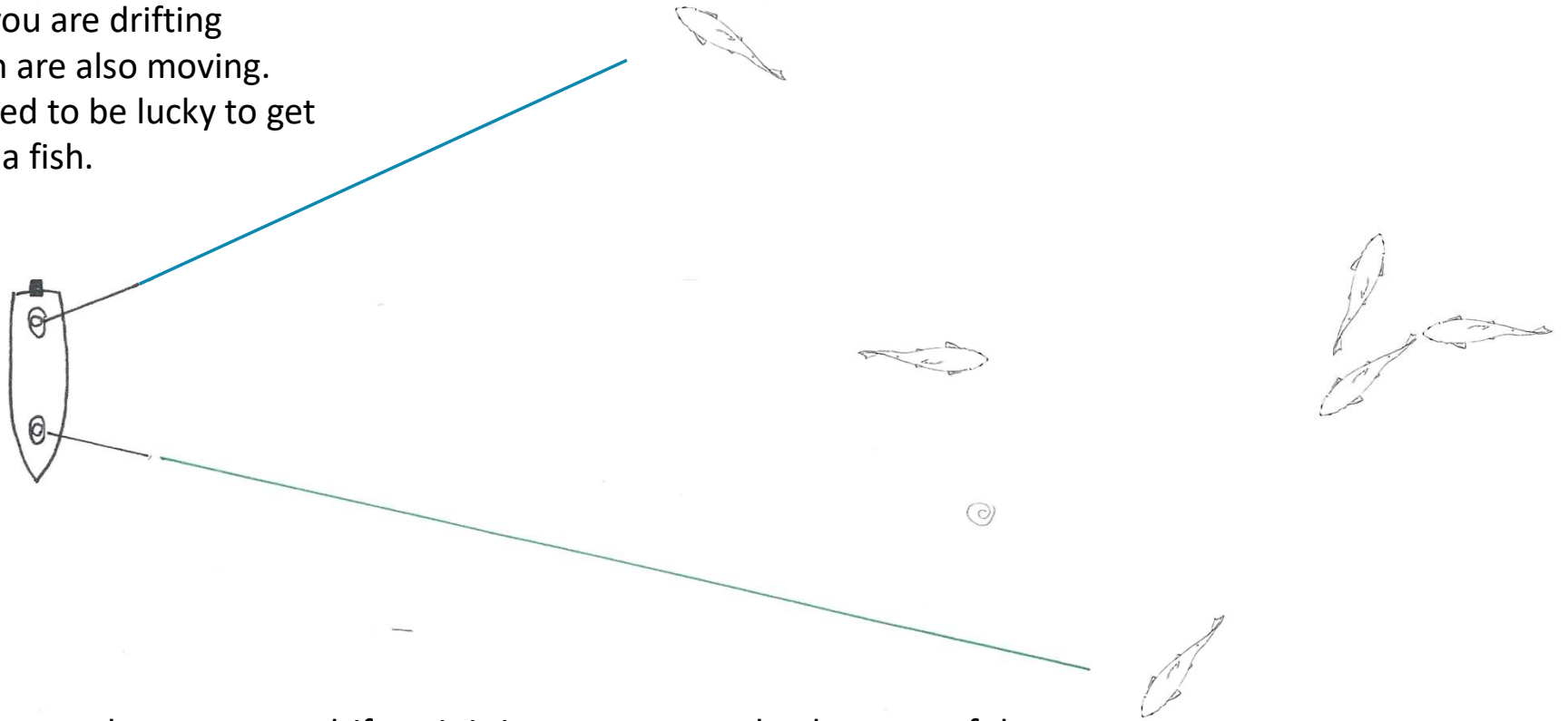




In a river you locate a fish holding in a lie and cast a fly accurately in front of the fish. Skill is required to get the fly to drift past the fish in a natural way with no drag.

Dry fly on a river

Fishing lochstyle you are drifting downwind and fish are also moving. Sometimes you need to be lucky to get your fly in front of a fish.



You might get one or two chances every drift so it is important to make the most of them

## Lochstyle Fishing

# My dry fly set up – Rods

... Is it important to fish a lighter rod for dries?



## Sage R8

- 10' 7wt – weight 3.9 oz
- 10' 5wt – weight 3.5 oz
- 9' 6" 5wt – weight 3.25 oz
- 9' 5wt – weight 2.7 oz

Vision Onki 10' 6wt 4.3oz

Snowbee Prestige 10' 7 wt 3.8oz

Snowbee Spectre Pro

- 10' 7wt 4.3oz
- 9' 5wt 3.6oz

Hardy Marksman 10' 7wt 3.4oz

There is less than 1oz difference between normal reservoir rods and a lightweight set up

Less experienced anglers should not chop and change between different rods with different actions.

# My dry fly set up – Reels

I use a lighter reel for dry flies as most of line stays on reel

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## Ross LTX

- #7/8 wt – weight 4.9 oz

## Hardy

- ASR 7000 – weight 7.2oz
- ASR 5000 – weight 6.6oz

Snowbee Spectre #7/8 – weight 5.1oz

Greys Fin #7/8 – weight 7.9oz

Airflo Switch Black – weight 7.3oz

Reel weight is more significant as it is all at the bottom end of the rod.

Heavy cassette style reels below the hand are normally balanced by hauling a long line.

Balance of rod, reel and line is more important than the simple weight of the rod.



# My dry fly set up - Lines



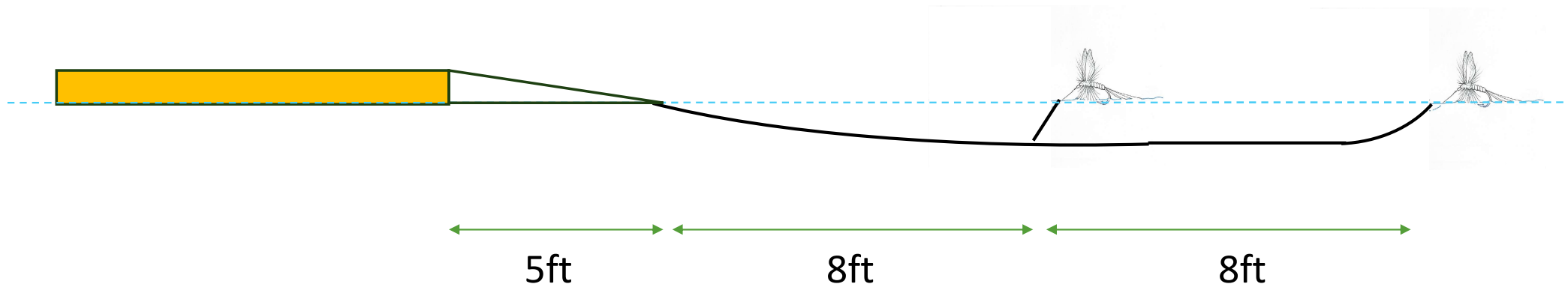
## Airflo #7 Universal Taper – weight 1oz

		Front Taper	Belly	Rear Taper	Haul	Running	Total
Airflo	Universal Taper	8	19	12	12	39	90
	Tactical Taper	20	16	10	10	34	90
	Power	6	19.5	11.5	12	41	90
Snowbee	XS	8.5	23	11		47.5	90
	XS Plus Xstra	8.5	23	8.5		80	120
Cortland	444 Classic	8	20	4		58	90
Rio	Gold	5.5	22.5	7	12	43	90

All modern manufacturers make good floating lines. A longer front taper is good for delicate presentation of a dry fly.

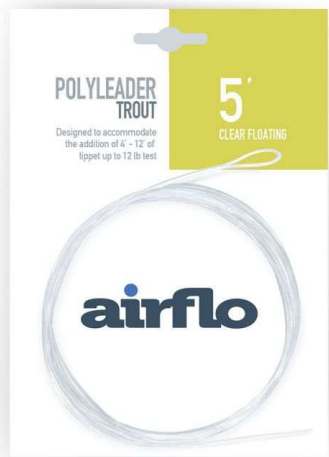
# Leader set up

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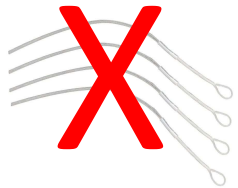


Keep the flies as far apart as you can manage. Droppers 6-8". Trust your flies float and dry then out before applying floatant

# My dry fly set up - Leader

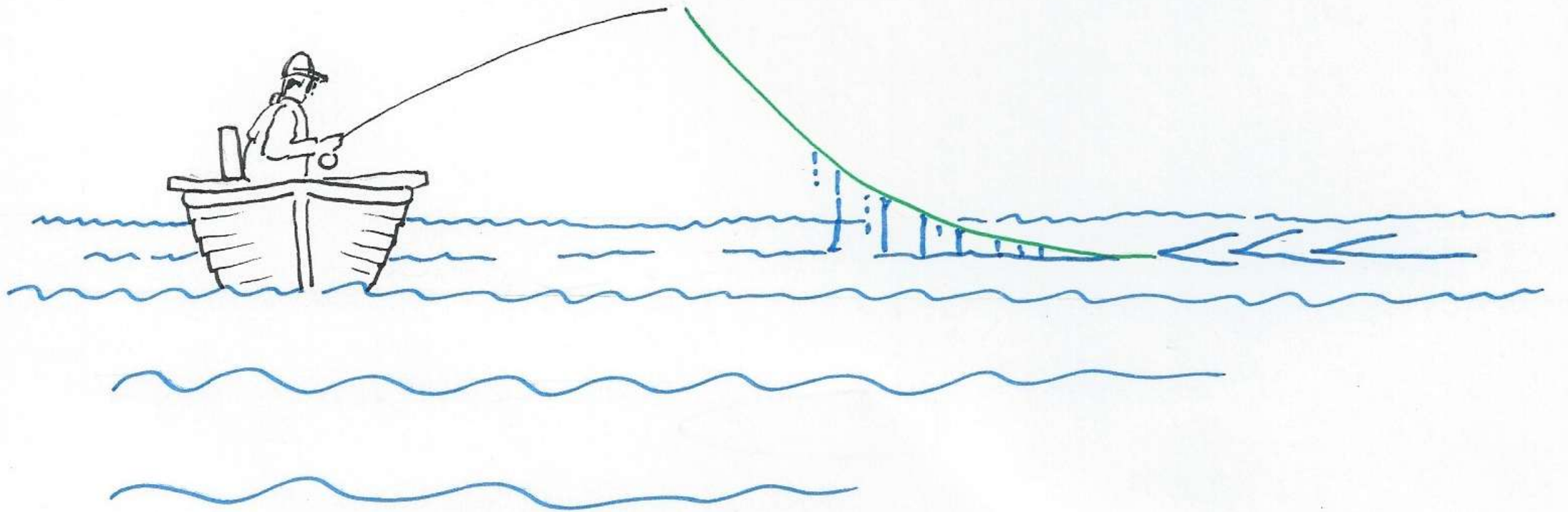


+



Brand	Model		Breaking Strain	Diameter
Rio	Strong	3x	8.8lb	0.203mm
		4x	7.3lb	0.178mm
		4.5x	6.1lb	0.165mm
Seaguar	Grand Max FX	3x	9.5lb	0.21mm
		4x	7.5lb	0.185mm
Xline	Carp Mainline	3x	8lb	0.218mm
Fulling Mill	Masterclass	3x	7.12lb	0.196mm
Airflo	Sightfree G3	3x	8lb	0.205mm
		4x	7lb	0.185mm

Leader must sink – so fluorocarbon easier to manage. A polyleader helps with fly turnover and presentation.

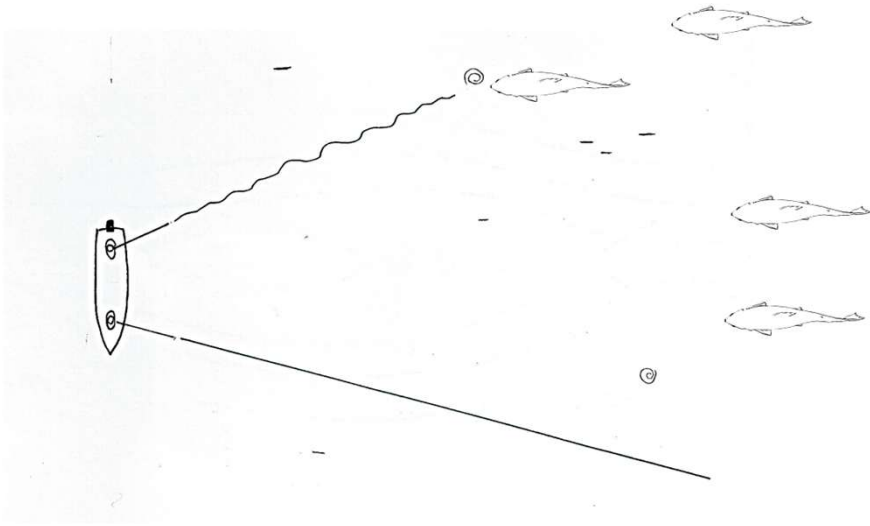


## A floater must float ... all of it !

Water droplets coming from your line as you cast is a sign that your line is not actually floating – this will create a lot of water disturbance and put off fish. Avoid a braided loop on your fly line as this holds water.

Dry fly fishing is very active – you should constantly be looking:

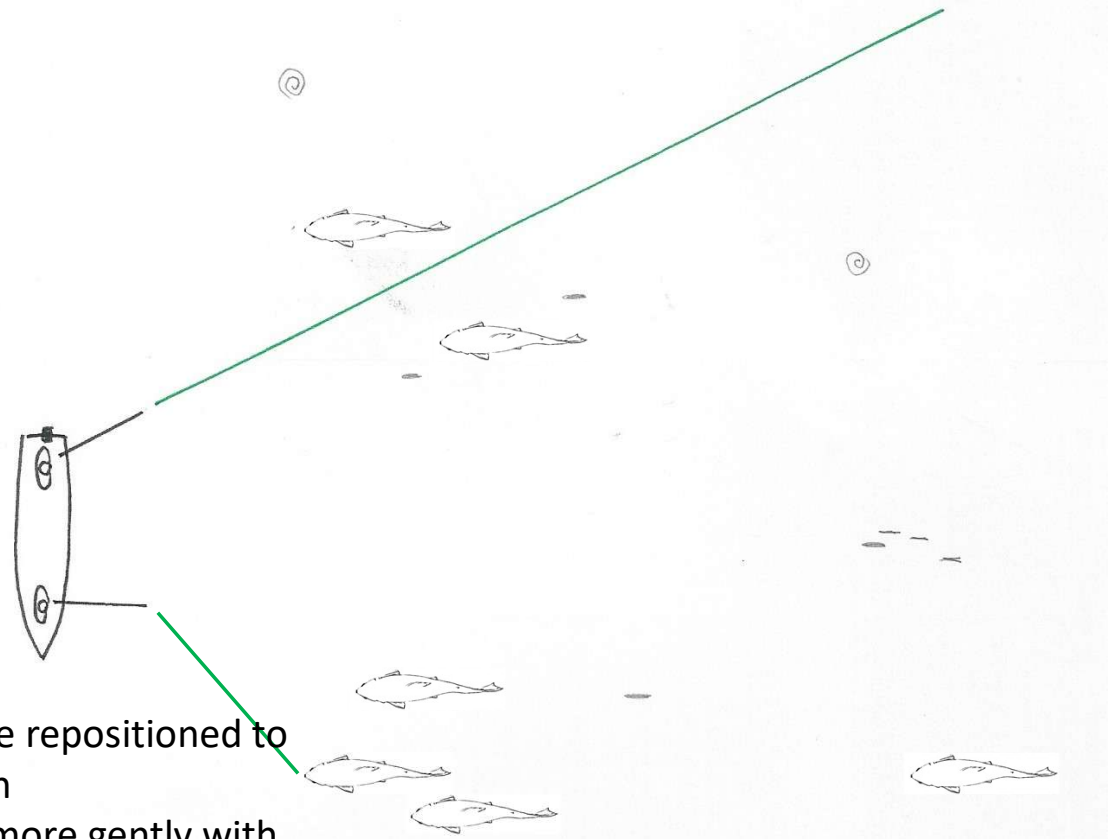
- At your flies so you see when a fish takes your flies
- Ahead 10 yards so you can cover a rising fish
- Further ahead 20-50 yards to prepare to cover a fish that is moving towards you



Step 1 Where should I be looking

## Step 2 Make a cast

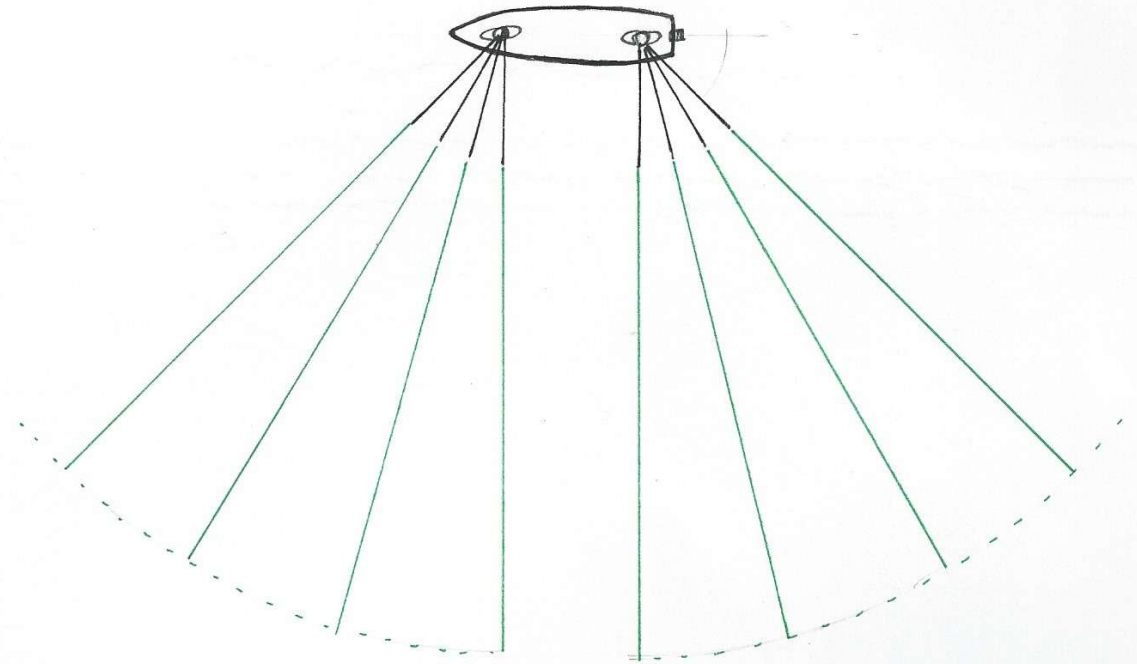
This angler has cast too far ... his flies are way past the fish in front of him



Keep it short:

- Flies can be repositioned to cover a fish
- Flies land more gently with less line splashing around
- Easier to see a fish take

# Casting

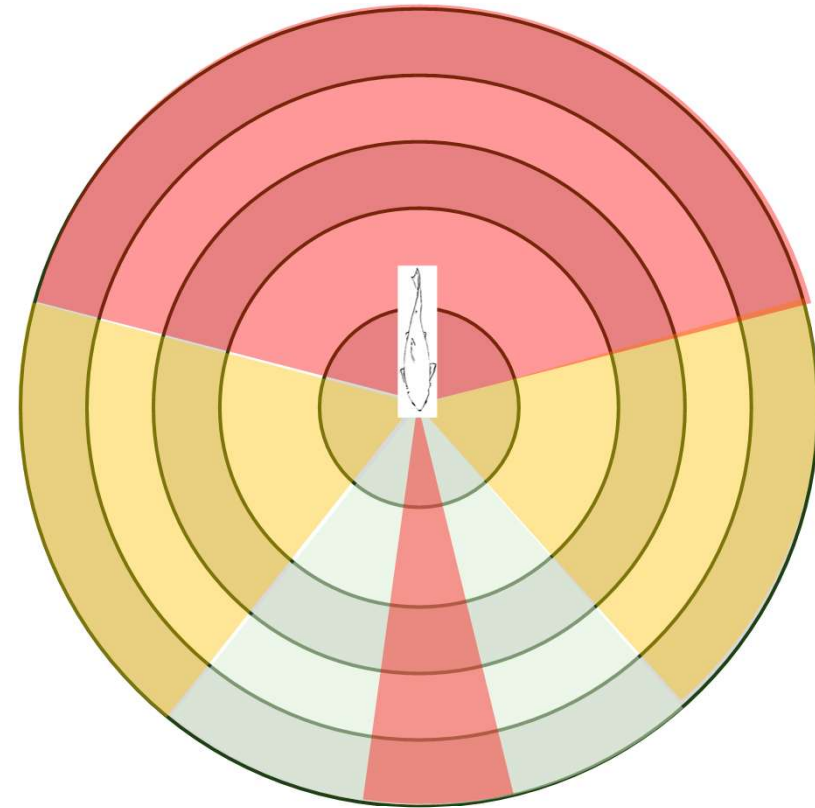


“Bristol method” – fan cast with very short line. Leave fly only 5 secs then recast. Works well when fish close to the surface are moving upwind. Fish often take as flies land.

“Midlands method” – flies cast out and left for a while for the fish to find them. Clearer water means fish can see flies at a greater distance. Works well for deeper lying fish. Presentation of flies is more important.

# Step 3

## Cast in front of the Trout



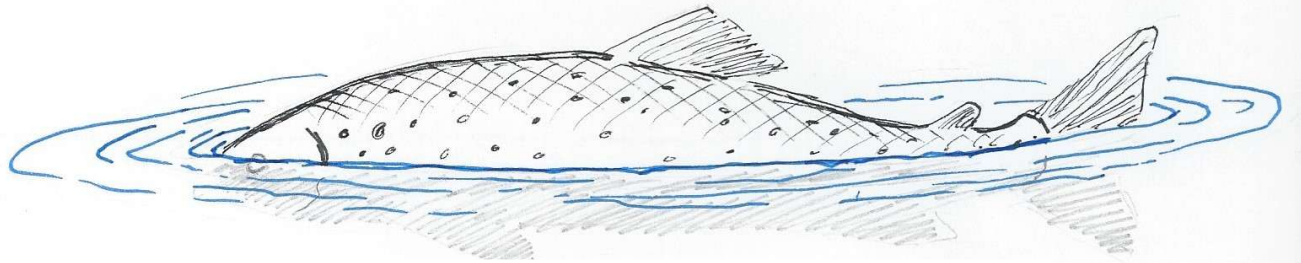
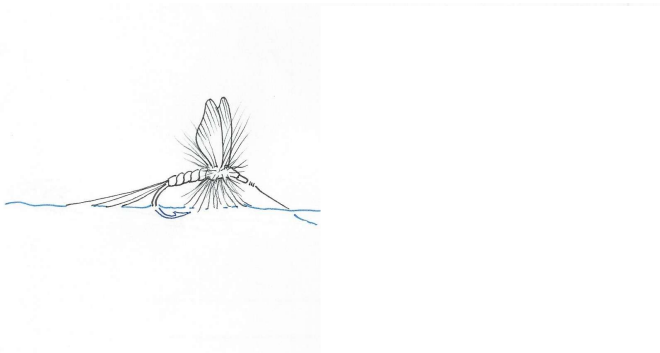
**TOP TIP:** It is very important to cast in front of a fish not behind it.

So you need to recognise different rise forms ...



# Rise Forms Head & Tail

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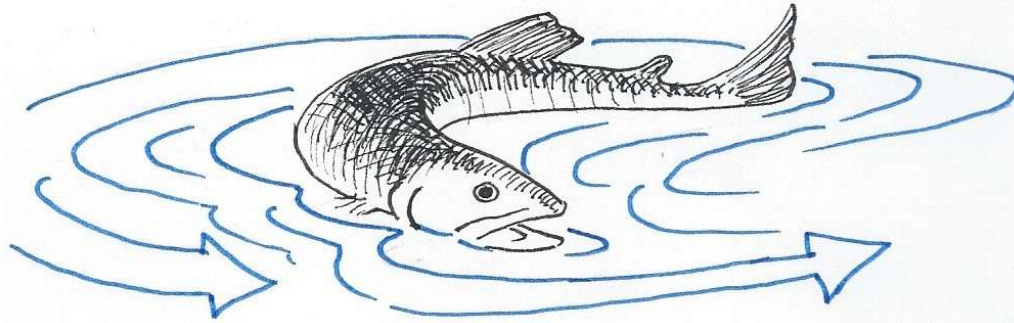
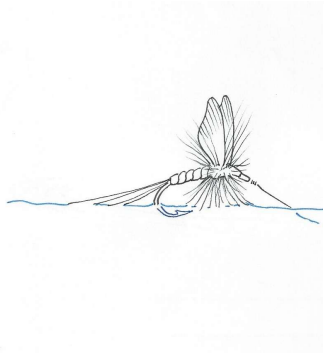


The easiest sort of rise to spot. You see head then dorsal fin then tail. This clearly indicates direction of travel

# Rise Forms

## Swirl

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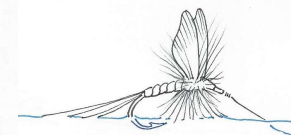
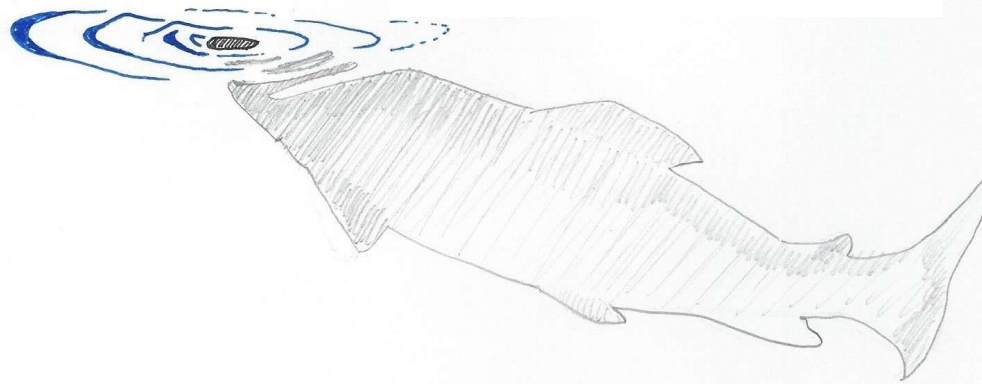
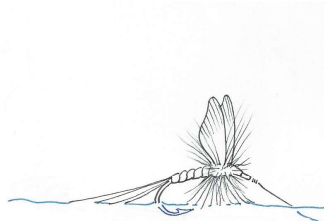


Often a quick rise so you tend to spot the rise after it has happened.  
The fish turns on a fly and will revert back to original direction of travel having eaten.

# Rise Forms

## Sip

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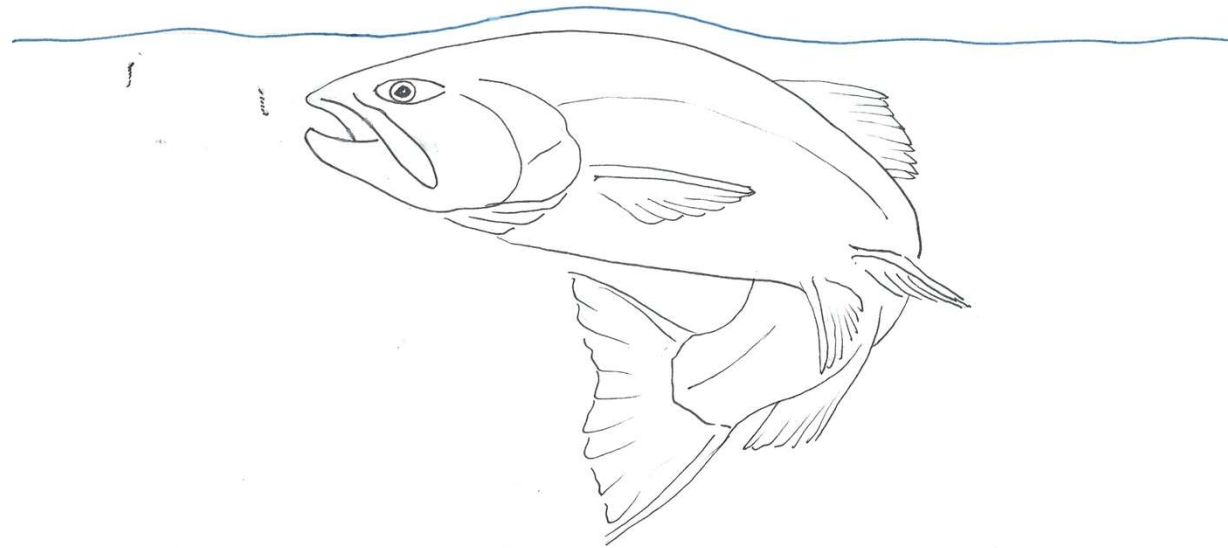


Rise is subtle but slow – watch for the height of the ripples. The bigger ripples will show the direction of travel.

# Rise Forms

## Hump

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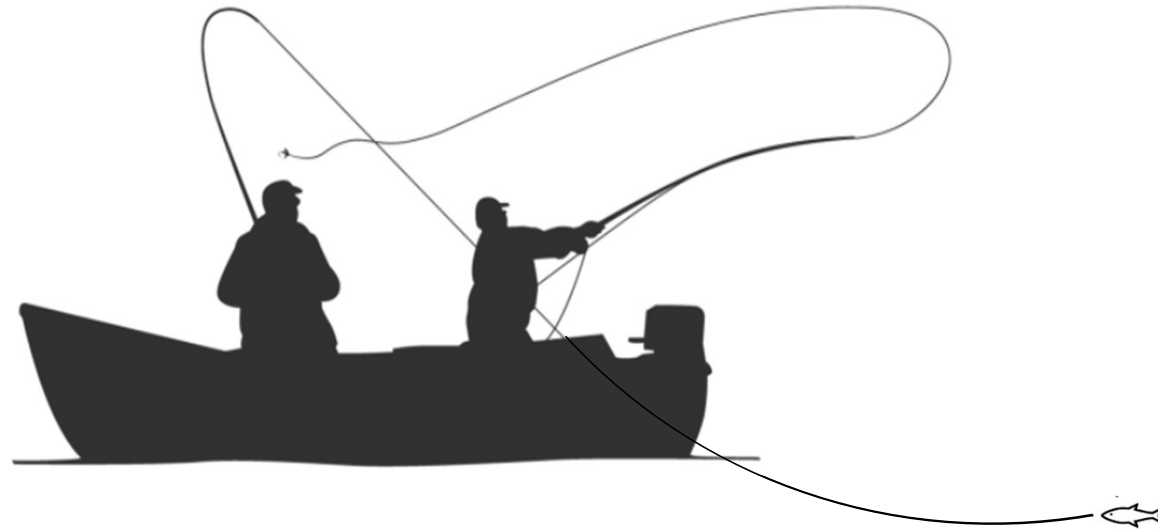


The most difficult to spot as fish does not break surface

Cast at any suspicious movement in the water – it might be a fish!

## Step 4 :A fish takes your fly – don't panic

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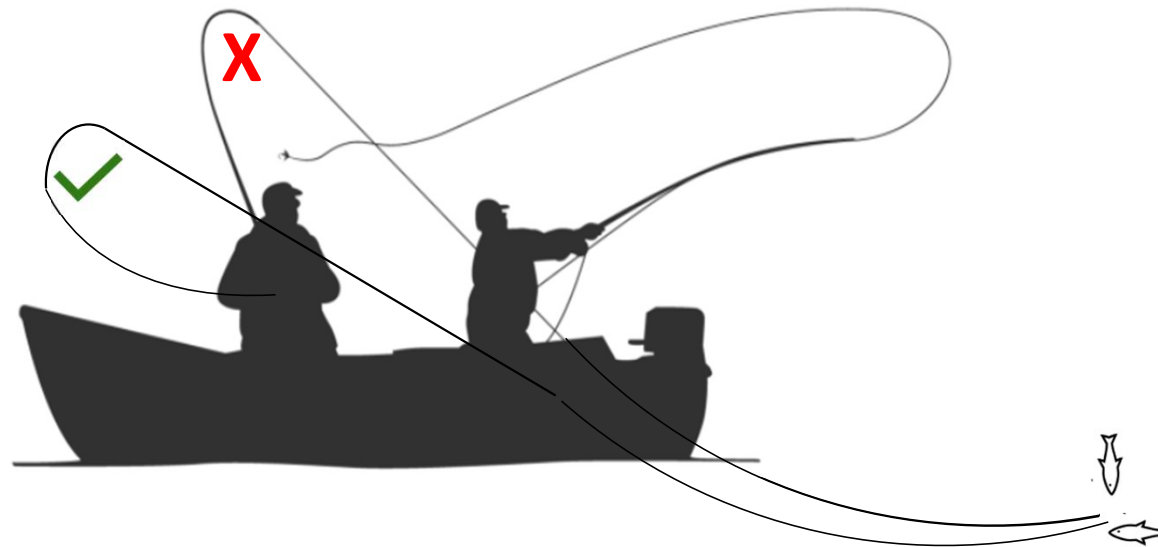


When you see a rise – wait for the fish to turn then lift the rod positively but not violently!

General rule: The slower the fish takes the longer you should pause before lifting the rod

# Step 5 Don't lose the fish in play

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1. Keep a tight line – your rod should have a good bend at all times.
2. Never point the rod at the fish – a bent rod acts as a shock absorber so give it a chance.
3. Keep the rod tip low if the fish is near the surface. A high rod tip will encourage the fish to jump out of the water
4. Don't change the direction of the rod too much as this can work the hook hold loose.

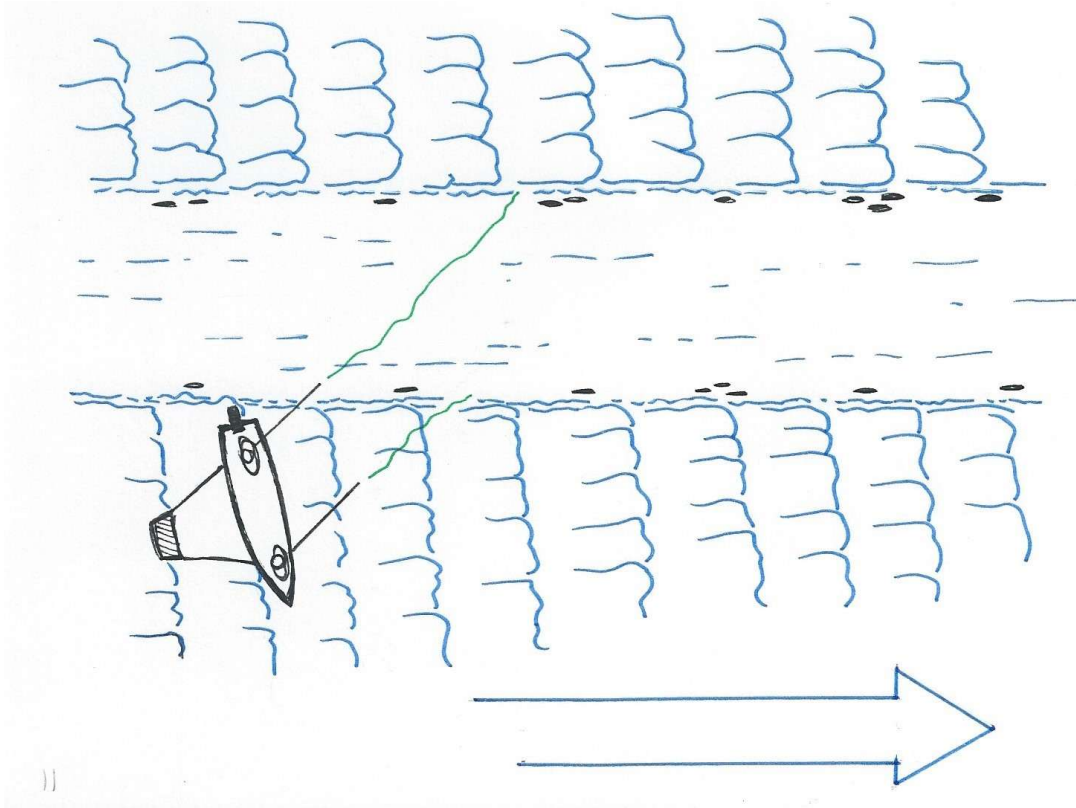


Flat Calm – easy to see fish. Don't get sucked into casting further to cover a fish out of reach. Wait for it to come to you.



Big wind – more difficult to see rises or your flies. Keep the cast short and lift rod if anything suspicious near where you think your flies are

## Weather



Fish will move up the sides of wind lanes. Focus on landing your flies on these edges.

Boat needs to be controlled with drogue to drift down wind not across the wind lanes

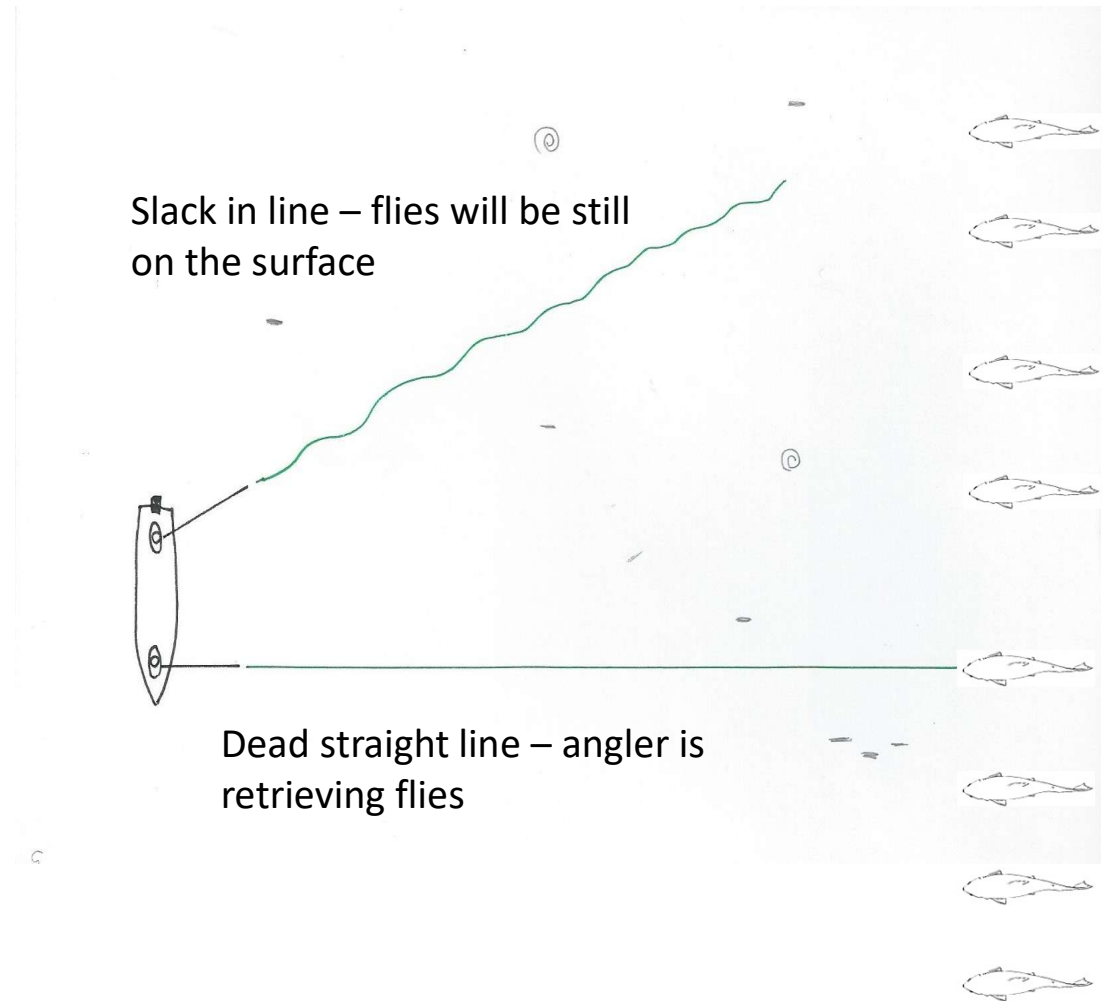
Improving our  
chances:  
Use the Wind





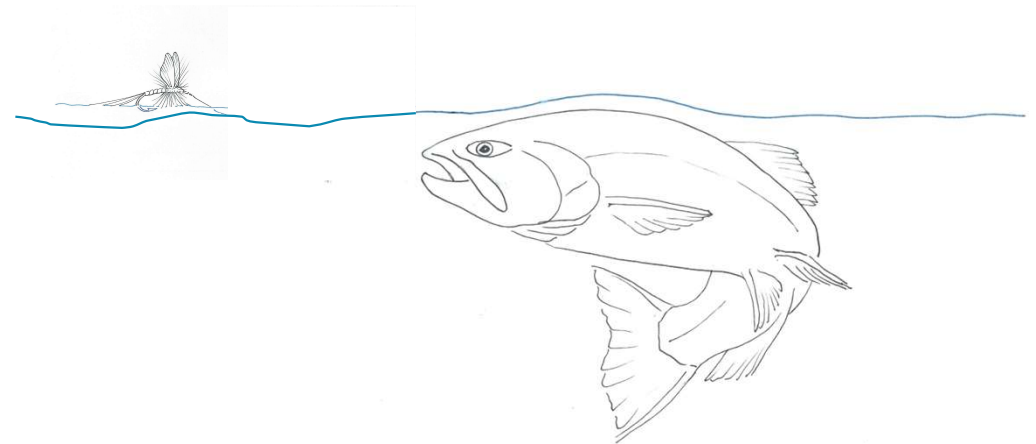
Improving our chances:  
Don't move the flies

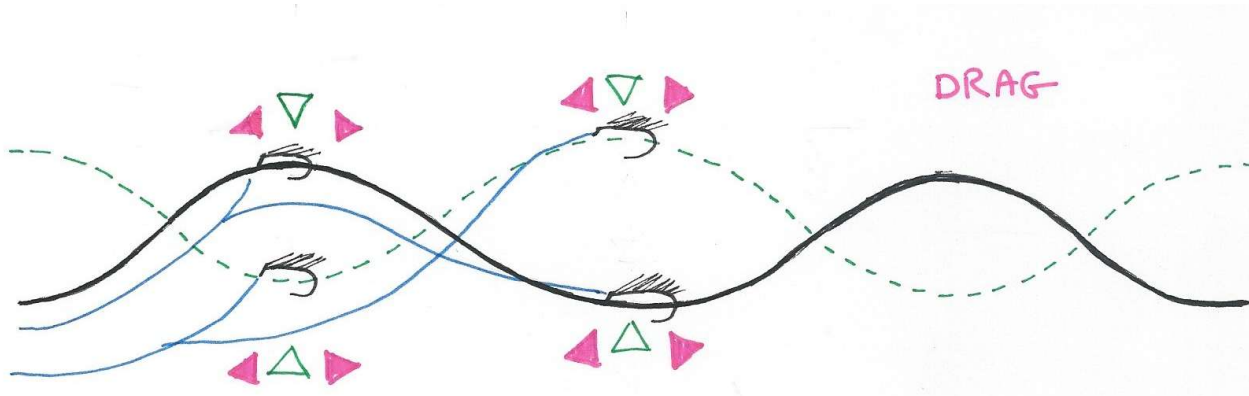
Fish expect flies to be static



# Why fish don't take our flies

1. Fish is high in the water
2. Fish is not feeding
3. It's a stockie so hasn't learned yet
4. Poor cast splashed the water
5. Leader is floating
6. Dropper has wrapped around leader
7. Dropper knot is kinked so fly is lying twisted
8. Fly is wrong
9. Drag (see next slide)



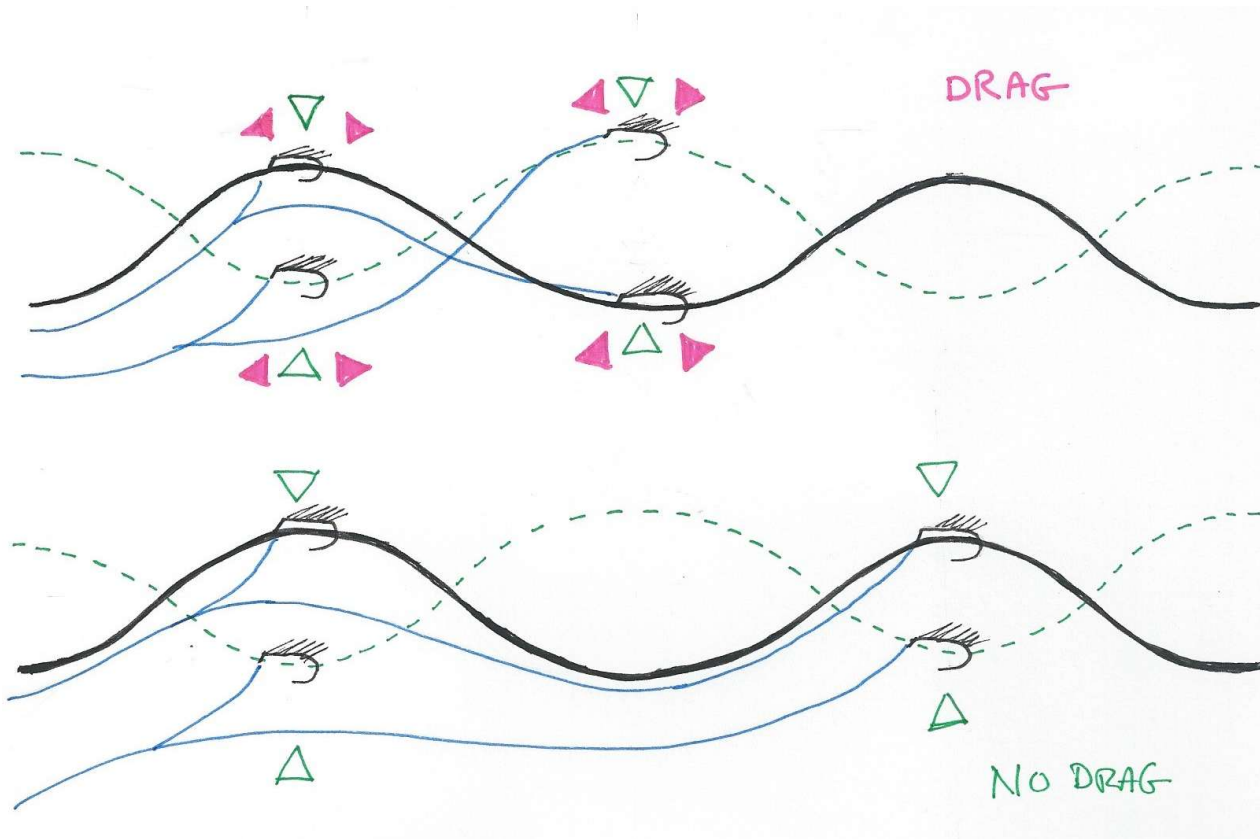


Here an angler is fishing 2 flies – one is on top of wave and the other at the bottom.

As the waves move the flies move up and down but will be closer together when in the middle than when one is on the crest of a wave. The effect is a tiny vibration as the leader tightens.

# What is drag?

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Avoid micro  
movements  
in your flies

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- Try to get all flies on top of a wave by casting at an angle to the boat
- Try a single fly only

# Flies that work

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**THESE ARE NOT DRY FLIES**

# Flies that work



Emerging insects hang down from the surface. A CDC or suspender type pattern will imitate the pre-emerging for of the insect.

If there is no obvious hatch then I use this style of pattern to search the water.

When tying keep the body short and use plenty of CDC (I use 7 feathers on these which are on short shank size 14's)



Hare's Ear



Black



Fiery Brown

A CDC pattern on your cast is useful as it is easy to see

# Flies that work

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Chironomids can emerge at any time from March onwards. Trout focus on buzzers in cold water but emergers more important in summer.

Big Red (buzzers) hatch late in the season in September. Usually found at western end of Grafham.

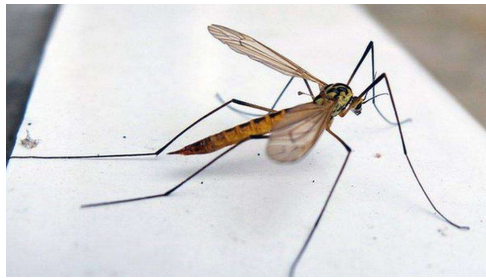


Hogweed Bonking Beetle appears June – September.



Size 14 Fiery Brown Crippled midge worked really well in 2024

# Flies that work



Yellow Crane flies (aka Daddies) appear at Grafham in late June.

Brown daddies from Harvest time usually after rain or combining.



Killer shrimp breed prolifically from July and fish can get obsessed on them September - November



Brown/Black daddies provide a profile for a deep lying fish to see easily

Shrimpy daddies provide or Ghimps work well when fish are feeding on killer shrimps



# A few final random hints

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Try CDC's first then switch to Bits later

... Early in the day fish will be feeding on nymphs then emergers when CDC works better. Midges / Bits work better once the hatch is in full swing

When driving the boat don't dangle a CDC dry up in the air behind the boat

... CDC's act like little helicopters if trailed behind a moving boat – guaranteeing a tangle in your leader

After catching a fish take 2-3 quick casts before drying and (if necessary) reapplying floatant

... Fish goo needs to be rinsed off before the fly will float properly

# Summary

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Dry fly fishing is important and may become more so in future ...

- Gin clear water in Grafham and Rutland is changing the ecology ... and fish behaviour
- Current nymph techniques with size 10/12 Diawl bachs & Crunchers may be less effective
- Keep it short, watch carefully and smile when the fish turns over your fly

However, as I always remind my teams - you must fish the conditions on the day ... if the fish want to chase a booby pulled through the waves then give it to them!