

Pay particular attention to the length of your leader when fishing a wet fly with floating line. If the leader is too short, it may not allow the fly to reach the desired depth. If it's too long the possibility of becoming entangled in weeds or brush is increased. Constantly adjust your leader to suit the conditions you're fishing.

Fly color is very important to warmwater species. It's not that they prefer one color or find it tastier than any other, but that one color is more visible to the fish at that time and under those specific conditions. Water clarity, or the lack of it, and sunlight penetration or lack of it, are the primary factors which affect the ability of gamefish to see their potential meal. To maximize the fish's ability to see the fly, choose light colors in bright environments (clear water, bright light) and dark colors in dark conditions (stained water, cloudy or low light). In bright conditions the light colored fly reflects more light and is, therefore, capable of being seen for longer distances while dark colors are more visible because they provide stark silhouettes against the background provided by the sky.

When delivering weighted flies abandon the tight loops so prized by the casting instructors. By slowing your forearm on the forward cast the loop opens thereby providing a softer splashdown that spooks far fewer fish. The open loop cast is not the most visually pleasing cast, but it's a practical delivery that will enable the fly to enter the water in a more natural manner.

Many fly fishers hold their rod tips too high when retrieving their flies. While there are exceptions, it's usually far better to point the rod tip directly at the fly. This removes the slack line and enables more consistent fly manipulation as well as dramatically improving the hook set. When fishing poppers where there's a bit of a chop on the water, it's often helpful to stick the rod tip a few inches under the water. The strip will angle the popper downward and create the desired surface disturbance, whereas angling the popper upward may cause the stripped fly to simply skip ineffectively from one wave peak to the next.

Pond bank-stalkers should survey the landscape and visible structure before beginning to fish. Choose areas that afford casts to several different pieces of structure without moving casting positions. Quietly approach the selected area and fish it thoroughly with different flies fished at a variety of depths before moving to the next location. Then back away from the area when you've finished and proceed to the next location instead of walking along the shoreline. Far fewer fish will be spooked with this approach.

When casting heavy or bulky flies, slow your arm on the forward cast. That will open the loop and enable a softer splashdown. In shallow water a gentle landing of the fly on the water is often the difference between catching fish and going fishless.

When fishing on or near the bottom first analyze how you want the fly to behave upon retrieve. If a hopping action is desired a floating line will suffice in shallow water and a sink-tip line will achieve the same results in deeper water, but if it's best to keep the fly in contact with the bottom (as with a crayfish pattern) only a full-sinking line will do the job.

Studies have shown that smallmouth bass are home bodies in the summer and winter often confined to a single pool, but in spring and autumn the smallies often move great distances. Anglers should

imitate their movements by fishing the best pools very thoroughly in summer and winter but stay on the move to locate migrating fish in spring and fall.