

*Speckled Trout - Fun, Willing and Plentiful*  
by David Lambert

# Flies & Lies

OCTOBER 2003

About this time every year I think of speckled trout, or spotted seatrout as the scientists call them. My Grannie introduced me to specks. She fished from the old Atlantic Beach pier and I fished with her every chance I got. She was old then, rounded by time and temperament, but she loved to walk out on the old wood structure and throw a line over its weather-worn rails.

Grannie loved speckled trout; that they were plentiful and big made her prize them even more.

I love specs because they are eager eaters—and because they've salvaged many fishing trips for me. Late spring a few years ago my friends Joe and Barb Steeg and I fished the small feeder creeks near Chicopit Bay. We'd thrown nets for finger mullet and I was bottom fishing a fairly strong current maybe 15 feet out from the mouth of a barely perceptible creek. The tide was mid-outgoing. I got a strong bite, set the hook, and had a good running fight with what felt like a redfish. What I brought to the boat was a 27-inch seatrout. It was the catch of the day.

I kept the pictures but put the fish back. We hadn't seen that many gator trout for a while back then and I thought maybe she'd be more productive back in the estuaries than on my grill.

A few years later, a group of us kayaked into the lightly fished No Motor Zone of the Banana River. The group included Bob Minke of The Salty Feather fly shop and some novice fly fishers. We were targeting the big reds and black drum that populate this little-pressured fishery. A mile into the paddle we swung into a cove and pulled out the fly rods. The fishing was slow until the trout found us; then it got fun. I took three 20-plus-inch trout in rapid succession. Again, they saved the day.

Thinking about specks sent me back to a book I'd picked up awhile ago titled *Spotted Seatrout: Natural History and Fishing Techniques in South Carolina*, by Dr. Charlie Wenner and John Archambault. Published by the SC Dept. of Natural Resources Marine Resources Research Institute, *Spotted Seatrout* provides some hard info about the eating, growth, and spawning habits of three species of seatrout: spotted seatrout, weakfish, and silver seatrout. South Carolina's estuaries and salt marshes are very similar to our own.

If you love to fish for trout, you'll find *Spotted Seatrout* a very useful resource. Below are some useful conclusions drawn from the research in this book:

-Spotted seatrout are members of the drum family, which includes species like spot, Atlantic croaker, northern kingfish (whiting), black drum, and red drum (redfish).

-These fish spawn from late-April through the first week of September. Cool water temps will delay a spawn until May. Most of the juvenile fish stay in smaller nursery creeks until they reach three or so months old and 6-7 long, at which time they move to larger estuarial creeks to school with similar-sized fish. When the waters cool in fall, the schools find deep water.

**Diet** -A seatrout's eating habits change as it grows. With growth comes speed. Speed allows the fish to catch quicker and larger prey-Juvenile seatrout eat mostly grass shrimp, roughly 65 percent. And small fishes like spot and mud minnows are also eaten.

-A trout 6-12 inches eats less than 50 percent penaeid shrimp (white, brown, and pink shrimp) and grass shrimp, but fish like mud minnows, small spots, and anchovies make up more than half of its diet.

-Seatrout sized 12-18 inches eat 75 percent fish. The main fish eaten are menhaden (pogies),

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# President's Report

We're entering the busy last quarter of the year. Plans are made for trout fishing in various places, especially North Carolina. I think there is still room for a partial week add on for one person during the November 2-9 trip to the

Oconoluftee Lodge. If interested, contact Art deTonnancourt or Terry McCormick. The cost will be about \$65 for three, maybe four, days.

The BFA picnic went well. Excellent food as always. The Brands demonstrated the fine art of fine fly casting. Don Lupone, Skeet, and I were there also. I thought it much better and less hectic and crowded than the Fiesta seafood festival in Bartram park.

October will be busy, with our business meeting on the 7th and the flytying/bull session on the 9th. Casting clinic will be the third Saturday, as usual. Should be cool for a change.

Our fall picnic is Sunday, the 19th and is always fun thanks to the background efforts of many of the board members and others who pitch in make it so. If we have a casting competition, don't be shy or self concious. Enter in to the fray, which entitles you to a belly laugh at the rest of us.

I have a request of each and all of us: if you are among the last to leave the clubhouse at any time, PLEASE take on some personal responsibility to make sure it is left reasonably clean, the lights and A/C are turned off, the garbage is in a plastic bag and taken home by you or someone else, and last but not least, the front door is securely locked.

If that facility were to be vandalized and/or burned, I don't know where we could find an alternative place to meet, much less for the mere \$250/year that we pay in rent. You can reasonably assume that this request is prompted and made urgent by an

## *October Quick Ties - The San Juan Worm Tom Regina*

At our Saturday October 18 casting and tying clinic we will tie San Juan Worms. This is another easily dressed fly and quick to tie. The tools needed are a vice, bobbin, scissors, and a cigarette lighter. We will tie four different San Juan Worms, a



standard, a palmered body, a beaded and twisted San Juan Worm. The materials used for these four flies are a curved caddis hook, 6/0 thread, standard ultra chenille and beads. Your club will provide all tools and materials.

## The Fly Fishers of Northwest Florida

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### COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

**AUCTION - Travis Akins**

**CONSERVATION - Terry McCormick**

**DIRECTORY - Jerry Aldridge**

**EDUCATION - Jerry Aldridge**

**FACILITIES - Jon Williams**

**FFF REPRESENTATIVE - Larry Goodman**

**FISHING TRIPS - David Bernard**

**LIBRARY - Kevin Cohenour**

**MEMBERSHIP - Karen Brand**

**DIRECTORS AT LARGE - John Brand  
Bill Locher Tom Regina**

### MONTHLY MEETING SCHEDULE

**BUSINESS MEETING - 1ST TUESDAY, 7 PM**  
**BULL SESSION - 2ND THURSDAY, 6:30 PM**  
**CLINIC - 3RD SATURDAY, 9 AM**  
**BOARD MEETING-4TH TUESDAY, 6:30PM**  
**FISHING TRIPS - AS SCHEDULED**

**Meetings at Miraflores Park, 17th Avenue between Belmont and LaRua St**

**Newsletter Editor - Jerry Aldridge**

finger mullet, and mud minnows, although small grass shrimp were eaten in large number. (Grass shrimp are smaller than the fish and they contribute little to the total volume of food eaten.)

-Larger seatrout, 18-inch and above consume 90 percent fishes, including mostly mud minnows, mullet, pogies, and spots.

**Size and Age** - Females reach a larger ultimate size and grow faster during the first three years than males.

-A 15 inch female and a 13 inch male are just over two years old. A 22-inch females is five years old, yet her five year old boyfriend may only reach 18 inches.

-Length growth tapers down from age four to 9 or 10. A five year old female may be 22 inches but a 9 year old may only reach 24 inches in length. A nine-year-old male grows to about 20 inches.

-Old age may not lengthen trout much, but they get fat as they get older. A 15-inch seatrout may tip the scales at less than 1 ½ pounds, while a 20-inch fish will double that. A 27-inch trout weighs in at a healthy 7+ pounds while a 30-inch fish will weight 10 pounds.

## **Where**

Fully half of *Spotted Seatrout* provides conclusions garnered from research about the best times, locations, and rigging for trout. Below are some of the authors' suggestions:

-Small fish and crustaceans collect in or around oyster bas in flooded marches to feed and to avoid predators. Points of land interrupt traveling bait and cause them to stack up at times. Creek mouths form natural bottlenecks for prey moving in and out with the tides. Points of land and creek mouths also form stronger currents which disorient smaller prey.

- Given the above information, search for feeding trout near oyster beds, along points of land and around interruptions in water flow, at creek mouths and drop-offs, and in or near faster currents or rips. Your chances improve when you find two or more feeding features in a localized area; for instance, the mouth of a creek with oyster bars and a nearby drop-off.

-March edge sheltered from current and wind will hold bait fish. The mouth of the largest marsh creek or the point of land that sticks most into a river or bay will produce the most fish.

-The ends of islands that point into the current (either up- or downstream) can form some of the best current rips. Points and drop-offs adjacent to these island points provide strong rips, but also eddies where trout can wait in ambush.

## **When**

-During winter, fish the sheltered flats two to six feet deep with grassy edges. Flats with deep holes close hold the most and biggest fish. Traditionally, winter trout fishing is better in the upper areas of tidal rivers. On warmer days you'll find them feeding on warming shallow flats and at grassy edges. As spring comes, trout start migrate to their preferred reproductive arenas, deep water with structure that is exposed to strong currents (to carry their eggs). These can be bridges, piers, points, or inlet holes. Hydrophone studies suggest that trout spawn from dusk to midnight, then they move to shallower areas to feed from midnight until dawn.

-Fall provides the year's best trout fishing. Trout feed heavily without concern for the time of day when the winter months loom. Cooling temperatures inspire feeding binges and the baitfish and shrimp are big and abundant.....**continued next page**

-The South Carolina DNR-MRRI research suggests that seatrout catches are best when the water is clearer or clearing.

Spotted Seatrout: Natural History and Fishing Techniques in South Carolina is truly valuable to those of us who love speckled trout. It is available free and online from the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, POB 12559, Charleston, SC 298422. Or visit them online at <http://www.dnr.state.sc.us/marine/mrri/mrri.htm>

### *Around the Bay... And Further Away*

Well, it's great to be back after 7 weeks or so out west. This was one of our best ever fishing trips (we say that after every trip) with fine weather, cooperative fish for the most part, no mishaps other than the comical kind, superb comradeship and finally, safe arrival home. Everyone caught and released lots of fish and each of us caught several in the 20-23" range. My comrades would not consider my 28", 10 pound rainbow a "real fish" since I caught it at a play-for-pay lake in northern California. They said it wasn't a wild fish although it seemed plenty wild to me when it came 5' out of the water on its first leap.

The Green River in Utah was once again superb although it fished much differently than in the past. The abundant rise rings of recent years were few and far between. When one could finally cast to a rising fish it was a real treat. It was almost enough (but not quite) to drive us to "chucking and ducking" with sinkers and bobbers. In fact, Tom Finkle succumbed to the temptation and henceforth will be known as "Bobber Man". He did catch quite a few fish, though.

One dry fly that brought lots of trout up from the depths was the Crackleback, Feathercraft owner Ed Story's creation. In Karen Brand's hand casting her trusty 0 weight rod, the crackleback is a fearsome weapon. One day when hardly anyone on the river was catching anything, Karen drew an audience of seasoned, envious anglers and conducted a clinic on how to catch trout on the Green when nobody else can. Fish after fish fell victim to Karen's crackleback, first fished as a dry fly until the end of the drift and then stripped back under the surface. One way or the other, it worked! Karen earned the new name of "Killer Karen, the Crackleback Queen". The crackleback worked just as well on the lakes of Idaho and almost as well on New Mexico's San Juan River.

Another unlikely fly that worked wonders was the flesh fly. Tied originally in Alaska to represent chunks of decaying salmon, the flesh fly has a heavily weighted underbody and an overbody of cream to ginger cross-cut rabbit strip hackled around the shank. Fished dead drift in Alaska it "matches the hatch" of carcass bits. The lowly flesh fly takes on an entirely different identity when stripped erratically resembling a fleeing, wounded minnow. All of us caught trout with it, but it became Tom's "go to" fly.

John Brand's favorite fly when he did find a rising fish was the size 32 parachute Adams that only he has the patience to tie. A fly that small has to be fished with 7 or 8X tippet - anything larger barely fits through the eye and makes the fly stand at attention. That 32 was the closest match to the tiny midges hatching and several trout 20" and larger could not resist.

More on the Green and other western spots in future issues. Around the bay, fishing is still very good for specks on the grass although they may head for their fall and winter haunts any day now, especially if temps continue to fall. A few mornings ago, I got a dozen specks mostly keeper-sized plus a couple of bonus keeper reds on the grass near the EPA.

Don't miss the club outing on Oct. 29th at Jim's Fish Camp. Russ Shields at 936-4625 has the details.

We will tie the Foxee Red Clouser Minnow at the bull session on October 9th. Bob Clouser designed this fly to catch smallmouths but the Green River rainbows and browns loved it! May all your drifts be drag free....Jerry Aldridge

## *The Foxee Red Clouser Minnow... Original Recipe by Bob Clouser*

HOOK	3-4X Streamer, Mustad 9674 or equivalent
THREAD	Tan 3/0 or 6/0
EYES	Lead or brass hourglass, decal or painted red or orange
THROAT	Cream guard hair from red fox tail (The ginger colored hair from a natural red squirrel tail also works well)
WING	Gold crystal flash and bronze flashabout plus black-tipped red hair from foptail (The ginger and black hair from a natural red squirrel tail also works well)



1. Place hook in vise, attach thread, lay thread base over front 2/3 of shank and return thread to point 1/3 shank length behind eye of hook. Attach eyes with a dozen figure 8 wraps around shank and eyes. Take 6 or 8 horizontal wraps under the eyes but over the shank to lock the eyes in place. Lightly coat the thread wraps around eyes with head cement.

2. Cut half a dozen strands each of crystal flash and flashabout. The strands should be 2-3 hook lengths long. Tie in behind the hourglass eyes with the flash extending to the rear. Take several thread wraps over the flash to lock in place. Cut a large matchstick-sized swath of cream or ginger-colored hair from the tail of the fox or squirrel. Tie in the hair with the butts just behind the hook eye. Continue wrapping rearward over the butts to the hourglass eyes and then pass the thread under the shank and make several wraps behind the eyes. Squirrel hair is very slick so wrap first with soft loops and apply thread pressure from the bottom up. If the hair turns anyway, put it back in place with your non-tying hand and cover with additional wraps. When the hair is firmly in place, coat your wraps lightly with head cement. Trim the flash 1/2" longer than the hair.




3. Turn the fly upside down in the vise and bring thread in front of eyes. Cut a like sized swath of black tipped reddish hair from the fox, or ginger and black hair from the squirrel. Tie in just behind hook eye and continue wrapping rearward over the butts to the hour glass eyes. Turn the fly right side up in the vise, wrap a neat head, whip finish and coat with head cement. After the cement is dry, paint or apply decal eyes. After the


paint is dry, cover the entire head and eye area with head cement or a light coat of epoxy.



**PO BOX 1041  
PENSACOLA, FL 32591**



# October



2003

<i>S</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>S</i>
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7 <b>Business Meeting</b> 7 PM	8	9 <b>Bull Session Tying &amp; Tall Tales</b> 6:30 PM	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18 <b>Casting Clinic</b> Casting, tying, more tall tales, lunch. 9 AM-Noon
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
<b>Fall Picnic - October 19, Lunch at 11 AM, Shoreline Park in GulfBreeze, \$7 per person, fish and shrimp provided, bring pot luck dish, casting games. Fishing before and after.</b>						
26	27	28	29	30	31	
<b>October 29 - Fish the mouth of Escambia River and surrounds. Launch 7AM at Jim's Fish Camp (\$3 fee).</b>						