



President's Message

Greetings,

April has always been my favorite month. For me it signals the beginning of spring, the beginning of warmer weather, the beginning of fishing season and it doesn't hurt that my wife and my birthdays are in April.

I hope everyone is looking forward to this fishing season as much as I am. I think the

club has a nice variety of great outings scheduled for this year. Personally, I hope to fish most of the outings, explore some new water and, if my recovery from minor back surgery continues to go well, spend a night or two sleeping in a tent near a hike-in lake.

I hope you are enjoying your April and thinking about club activities you would like to participate in this year. Happy spring to everyone!

Mike



4CFF Calendar of Events

April 7 - Board Meeting 6:30 PM

Trinity Lutheran Church 119 Texas St. All club members welcome.

April 19 - FFI Fly Casting and Tying Fair

Issaquah, Washington

April 22 - Monthly Meeting 5:30PM-9:00PM: Leaf Little Fox Seaburg - Owner Methow Fishing Adventures in Twisp. Leaf will talk about fishing Methow River , Tributaries and Area Lakes (Note Date Change to Wed. Meeting)

Holiday Inn and Suites by the Airport 4260 Mitchell Way.

April 25-30 Outing: Opening Day at Chopaka Lake and Big Twin Lake in Twisp.

All club members and their registered guests are welcome. Hosts- Mike Riber and Bob Jorgenson

May 5- Board Meeting 6:30 PM

Trinity Lutheran Church 119 Texas St. All club members welcome.

May 20-27 Outing: Roche Lake/Tunkwa Lake

All club members and their registered guest are welcome. Host - Bob Jorgenson

May 28 Monthly Meeting 5:30 PM-9:00 PM: Rick Hafele: Deschutes River Alliance, Impact to Fishery

Holiday Inn and Suites by the Airport 4260 Mitchell Way.

June 2 - Board Meeting 6:30 PM

Trinity Lutheran Church 119 Texas St. All club members welcome.

Social Fly Tying and Final Tying Class *by Bob*

We wrapped up our Fly Tying sessions with two great opportunities for members to get together and sharpen their skills.

The first on Feb 21 was a relaxed, social tying event at Bob Jorgenson's home. Twelve members attended, spending the day tying flies, sharing stories from past trips, and enjoying a hearty chili and cornbread lunch along with the ever-present cookies for dessert.

Much of the tying focused on patterns for local lakes such as Pass and Lone, while also looking ahead to flies needed for upcoming outings. Conversation frequently turned to future trips to British Columbia, building excitement for the season ahead.



Social Fly Tying and Final Class (Cont)

Steve Wimer led our final fly-tying class of the season, held at the Holiday Inn. He demonstrated three effective patterns: Lance Eagan's Red Dart (deal for nymphing or as a dropper) the Vampire Leech, and an ASB (anti-static bag) Chironomid.

It is always a pleasure to learn from such an experienced tier. Steve's instruction was clear, well-paced, and easy to follow, making the session both engaging and highly informative.

For anyone interested in improving their fly-tying skills, these classes are an outstanding resource. The venue adds to the experience, offering food and drink along with excellent video support so everyone can see each step in detail. Consider joining us next year.



ASB (Anti-Static Bag) Chironomid.

Tied by Steve Wimer



Recipe:

Hook: Aqua-talon Chironomid hook size 14-18. Daiichi 1760 in same size works great as well.

Bead: 2.3mm Black nickel tungsten bead. Vary bead size to Chironomid size.

Thread: UTC 70 denier, color to desired body color.

Body: Pre-cut 0.75mm ASB. 0.5mm pre-cut ASB strips can be used for smaller flies.

Rib: UTC small black wire. color can be varied to match the color of hatching Chironomids.

Collar: UTC 70 denier thread in burnt orange.

Gills: Uni-stretch white.

The ASB material is one of the best materials available to imitate the shiny "gassed up" Chironomid pupae. It is tied in an enormous variety of colors. The ASB material can be used as a rib over thread on Chironomids or can be wrapped to create the body and a wire rib added for durability and segmentation. Try both variations. The ASB Chironomid is a must have when fish are keyed in on the shiny emerging Chironomid pupae.

It is generally fished under a strike indicator but can be fished "naked" without an indicator or on the "dangle" via full sinking line for deep water presentations.

Lance Egan's Red Dart

Tied by Steve Wimer



Hook: Hanak 400 or Hanak 450 jiggered nymph hook in size 14-18, or your favorite jiggered nymph hook.

Bead: Slotted gold bead 2.5mm to 3.5mm sized to match hook.

Thread: Red UTC 70 denier.

Tail: Red Glo-Brite #3. The original fly is tied with red hackle fibers, but I like the Glo-Brite material better. It is much more durable and adds just a bit more UV pop to the fly. Use 2 short strands of Glo-Brite and double them over when tying in for added durability.

Body: Peacock Ice Dub in a dubbing noodle.

Rib: Brown or Gold medium wire.

Hackle: Whiting Brahma Hen hackle in natural brown.

Collar: UV shrimp Ice Dub.

Fishing Tips: This is a great attractor style nymph for fishing on a Euro setup or as a dropper on a hopper-dropper setup. This has been a top producer for me in BC, Washington, and Idaho for the last 2 years. I generally fish it as my tag or upper fly on a Euro rod. Size 14 with a 3mm bead or size 16 with a 2.5 mm bead are very effective. While it doesn't imitate any nymph very specifically, it seems to imitate many trout food sources closely enough that it produces well, or maybe it's the "bling factor" this fly has that gets a trout's attention. Either way make sure to have some in your box.

Vampire Leech

Tied by Steve Wimer



Recipe

Hook: Hanak 400 jig hook in size 10-16, or your favorite jig hook.

Bead: The original version used a chartreuse 3mm slotted bead. Most are tied now using a Head Turner or Insta-Jig bead to allow the fly to ride horizontally under an indicator.

Thread: UTC 70 denier black

Tail: Black marabou. A single strand of red or root beer colored Krystal Flash can be added.

Body: Hareline Micro UV Polar Chenille Black.

Fishing Tips: This is a very easy to tie fly that originated in BC. It remains a staple fly year after year for many BC stillwater anglers. The vampire leech is primarily fished under an indicator. It is most effective when fished near the bottom or along drop-offs or weed beds. Don't let the simplicity of this fly fool you, it has produced many, many fish.

March 26 Meeting Report

Phil Rowley “The Power of Attractor Patterns”

by Jeff “Flashabou” Taylor

At our most recent 4th Corners Fly Fishers monthly meeting, programs director John Sanders arranged a special Zoom presentation with internationally renowned stillwater fly fishing expert Phil Rowley. His topic—*The Power of Attractor Patterns*—delivered an hour packed with valuable insights, truly like drinking from a fire hose.

Phil explored when and why to use attractor patterns, what triggers fish to react, and how factors like pattern, size, and color come into play. He highlighted a range of effective flies, including Daphnia “Blobs,” Chaoborus, Boobies, FABs (foam-arsed blobs), Wotsits (“jelly mops”), Apps worms, Ecstatic worms, and Candy Corn flies.

Once he covered fly selection, Phil shifted focus to presentation techniques. He discussed various retrieve styles—from static presentations to long, slow strips, with or without pauses, as well as maintaining a steady pace. He also introduced the “washing line” method, which uses a floating line with two flies spaced about three to five feet apart. A buoyant fly, like a booby fly, is attached to the end of the tippet, and a nymph then is suspended just a few inches below the surface. This is an especially effective setup when fish are feeding near the surface.

Another technique he shared was the Loch Style “underwater parachute,” which allows anglers to control drift speed on windy days by using a drogue to manage boat movement. He wrapped up with a simple but highly effective tip known as “the hang.” At the end of your retrieve, bring the fly close to the surface, then let it sink back down a foot or so before casting again. This pause often triggers a last-second strike from fish driven by FOMO—fear of missing out.



Phil Rowley cont.

For those interested in learning more about stillwater fishing, Phil recommended his book *The Orvis Guide to Stillwater Trout Fishing*, his *The Littoral Zone* podcast, and participating in his hosted outings, and stillwater schools, all available through his website. He also offers support via email and provides gear through his and Brian Chan's online store.



John Sanders Fishing while Phil Relaxes.....Manitoba 2014

In my opinion, this was one of the most educational and engaging seminars I've attended. I strongly encourage all members to take advantage of our monthly meetings. They offer a fantastic opportunity to learn from guest speakers and fellow anglers, enjoy some food, and spend a fun evening connecting with the fly fishing community.

There's a wealth of knowledge in the room each month, along with outstanding free casting clinics often held at Cornwall Park. These sessions are led by certified Fly Fishers International instructors Frank Koterba and Steve and Marion Hiller. Their willingness to share their expertise at no cost is an incredible gift—one we should all appreciate and make the most of.

Informal Activities:

Join Frank, Steve and Marion for Casting Instruction at Cornwall Park. Instructors will post invitations on Zeffy when they are available.

Join us for a Beer Night on Tuesday April 14 at Wander Brewing! 1807 Dean Avenue starting at around 5:00PM

WEDNESDAY April 22, 2026 Meeting

Note: Due to a scheduling conflict with the Holiday Inn, we will be meeting on **Wednesday** this month instead of our usual Thursday meeting.

Leaf Little Fox Seaburg

Leaf was born and raised in the Methow Valley where he grew up fishing the nearby rivers and lakes in a drift boat with his father. He later attended school for fisheries and stream management at Bellingham Technical College. He then worked 10 years with WDFW in Winthrop focusing on spring Chinook salmon management. They also partnered with the Omak fish hatchery, which gave Leaf the valuable opportunity to stock and learn about every lake in WDFW Region Two.

For the past 14 years he has worked with the Yakama Nation managing their Steelhead Kelt reconditioning facility in Winthrop. This facility specializes in live spawn of wild brood stock as well as trapping and reconditioning for re-release wild female Steelhead. After release they monitor and record spawning success for the entire Upper Columbia region.

For 15 years Leaf has owned and operated Methow Fishing Adventures. He specializes in guiding the rivers and lakes of the region. He also manages a private lake which consists of mostly wild trout. He produces a periodical podcast and fishing report that is released on the local Winthrop radio station (97.5 FM) and also in podcast form. These podcasts, along with other information, can be heard on Leaf's webpage at www.flyfishersproshop.com.

In our April meeting Leaf will be presenting on the topic **12 months of Fishing in the Methow and Surrounding Area**.

Following is a picture of Leaf with one of the incredible reconditioned wild female Steelhead destined for release.



Lone Lake Outing Report Monday, March 2 *by Bob*

An outing in the first week of March can seem like a gamble. Water temperatures linger in the 40s, and the weather is often unpredictable. Even so, eight dedicated anglers turned out. After coffee and homemade scones, the group pushed off into the fog for a day on the water.

The gamble paid off. Everyone landed at least one fish, while the usual suspects managed four or five. Fishing was slow through the morning, but things came to life around noon when the first Chironomid shucks began to appear.

In the end, it was a fine day to be out—an ideal chance for many to fine-tune their stillwater gear ahead of the season. As always, the photos tell the story best.



Steve works his favorite foggy spot



Dean in his latest addition to his Navy



Pass Lake Outing Report Tuesday, March 17 *by Bob*

The March Pass Lake outing is a long-standing 4CFF tradition. Although many plan to attend each year, the weather often gives reason for pause and this year was no exception. The forecast called for 30 mph winds and just a narrow, two-hour window of dry weather in the middle of the day.

Even so, ten determined anglers decided to take their chances. Their willingness to brave the elements paid off, as the day turned out far better than expected with little rain and winds, much lighter than forecast, that made for a surprisingly enjoyable time on the water.

Host Steve Wimer changed things up this year, replacing the traditional chili lunch with a Spanish tapas-inspired breakfast prepared by Frank. The shift allowed anglers to stay on the water through the typical afternoon Chironomid hatch and as it turned out, the bite didn't really get going until around noon. Frank was rewarded by winning the fly box drawing.

Everyone managed to land at least one fish, and those who stayed into the late afternoon were especially well rewarded. While the fish proved somewhat elusive, they were noticeably larger than in many past years.



Opening Day Outing April 24-30 at Chopaka Lake and Big Twin Lake Preview

This year we have scheduled the spring Lake Chopaka and Big Twin outings as one back to back event, but obviously you can do them independently. This change was made in part due to limited availability at the Big Twin Campground during May.

Chopaka is open for fishing starting April 25th and some members are going over on the 24th. Hopefully, Hwy 20 will be open, otherwise this becomes a longer, but still very worthwhile trip. If the pass is not open consider going through BC as it can be shorter. The plan for some members is to fish Chopaka Saturday through Monday and then move to Big Twin on Tuesday on the way home. If you plan on staying at the Big Twin Resort, you will very likely need reservations.

I've fished Chopaka for a number of years at this time of year. The weather will likely be crisp and I've heard that some years have even seen snow, but the fishing has been worth whatever the weather and the road closures (Hwy 20) might bring.

Additional specifics on the outing will be part of the Zeffy notice. If you have questions, please reach out to me or Bob Jorgenson, the outing hosts. - Mike Riber



Lake Fishing with Leech Flies *by John Egbert*

Ed Note: *In this article John kindly gives members a window into the techniques that make some of our members so very adept at fishing leeches in stillwater.*

Preface

Many of us keep searching for hints to unlock the mystery of interesting a bored trout at Chopaka or Tunkwa when the wind dies and the bite slows. How could rainbow nap when we make it so easy for them? Some folks head to the shore while others stick it out. On the lake, even the best of us may wonder what to do. We all know about the need to feel confident in how we start the day's fishing and to carry forth with ideas on what to do if we aren't getting results. While we may be tempted to temper or lower expectations, arguably the most successful fishermen maintain high expectations because

they like the challenge and accept the need to change as part of the day. The question for all of us becomes, "OK, now what?"

We change from a black leech to purple, a longer pause on the retrieve, a switch to a full sinking line. How fortunate we are to be able to reflect on the generous offerings of Dennis Duncan, Mike Riber, and Steve Wimer. Their basic tool kits and strategies may reinforce what works for you, but also open up new pathways. We can expand our options.

As we know, the essence of any thoughtful lake fisherman means much more than engineering strikes. We have to believe in our approach. We apply what we know and invent on the fly. As usual, each of us prepare and return to the water responsible for our own choices.

Introduction

But before detailing interviews with Dennis, Mike, and Steve, why not mention what other authors have shared? My library opens to leech fishing strategies by Morris and Chan in *Fly Fishing Trout Lakes*, 1999, page 58: Fish a "Well-weighted imitation leech in 6 feet or less on a floating line. Two seconds for a full hand-twist retrieve, mixed with quick strips. For night fishing, triple the speed of the retrieve. Imitation leech on a type I or II full sinking line (25-35 feet deep. Let the line settle straight down: then count 3-4 seconds for each full hand-twist, occasional short, quick strips."

Or, from Cordes and Kaufmann, *Lake Fishing with a Fly*, 1984, pages 92-93: " Duplicate the waving action of a natural leech. A long rhythmic retrieve is appropriate. On short strikes, continue your retrieve. Wind drift technique under a " floating device" (no mention of bobber/indicator), using quick succession of four inch strips. Over a silty or muddy bottom, let the fly rest on the bottom, then give it a short, sharp jerk."



Notes from Dennis:

Habitat: Look for drop-offs and weed beds.

Rod and Line: Paddling a Hobie fishing kayak, Dennis uses a Type 6 fast sink line unless in shallow water where an intermediate comes into play.

Most of the time he fishes with two rods with one rod in the holder and the other one in hand, fishing with both.

Methods: The Duncan rule: Mark your sinking fly line every ten feet so you can track how much line you have out. That way you can return to that length when you catch a fish. A good starting place is to cast/play out two times the line length to the water depth. A depth sounder helps you know the depth of the water. Thus, in 16 feet, 32 feet of extended line.



Cast and then wait until the line sinks to a 45 degree angle then start then using a kick, kick, pause to create a rising and falling of the leech through the water column. Most hits come at the end of the pause or when the fly moves again.

If Dennis gets a hit, hooked fish or not, he circles back to that likely spot. Dennis pays attention to shoreline markers such as trees, fence lines, bushes, boulders, or whatever landmark provides memory and guidance to return to that spot. Short strike? Hand twist retrieve the fly and twitch the rod tip to entice the fish to strike again.

Fly concept: a Balanced Leech equals more hits but fewer hookups than a standard leech. Pay attention to leech profile, slender or bulky, beadhead or no beadhead. Try different patterns until you find what the fish want. For example, last fall the Chopaka fish preferred skinnier leeches and no beadhead, while fish at Long Lake (same zip code) wanted bulkier leeches.

In general Dennis prefers large gap hooks as opposed to jig hooks because he gets more successful hookups. He believes the angle of a jig hook may impede a trout from fully taking the fly. However, Dennis will use jig hooks for nymphs over weed beds because they ride point up and are less likely to snag.

Notes from Steve:

Habitat: Drop offs and weed beds.

Rod and Line: In his anchored pram, Steve carries 5 rods with different lines: floater, clear intermediate, sink type 5 and 7. When permissible, Steve uses two rods.

Using Both Rods: "If fishing a leech on one rod, I'll probably start with something else on the other rod. Maybe a blob and blood worm or Callibaetis nymph, or scud. It varies depending on what I expect to happen that day. If I expect Chironomids to hatch, it may be a Chironomid and a blood worm. If it's late fall and I don't expect any hatches, it may be a scud."

Multiple Methods: Using the wind: Once anchored bow and stern, Steve fishes a tungsten bead-head balanced leech with an improved clinch knot on a floating line below a slip-indicator. He prefers casting leeches close to the bottom using a 20-foot, no-taper, 8 pound leader, a barrel swivel, connecting to a 6 lb tippet to the fly. Water depth may be 8, 10, 12, or even 18 feet of water. He adjusts the indicator so the fly hangs off the bottom. Using the countdown method by starting with a 10 second count; if no action, try 15 seconds, then 30. Example: anchor in 6 feet, then cast upwind and let the fly drift over the drop-off or weeds. Steve: "Generally, 90 degrees across the wind as that tends to give you the longest drift. Otherwise in the direction that gives you the longest drift across your target area." Be prepared to change boat position and angles. Without wind, fan cast using the 10, 12, 2 o'clock rule to cover water. Use a hand-twist retrieve, a one-foot pull, a pause with a naked or slim-bodied leech.

As for the second rod without the indicator, Steve notes: "I fish leeches on a full sinking line or a floating line and long leader without an indicator. Try to mix it up until you find the retrieve that triggers the bite that day. Try to make your fly swim like a real leech in short twitches.

Other Insights: Ice off - fish warmer shallows where food is most available during the pre-Chironomid period. If fishing dies during a Chironomid hatch, tie on a leech, especially in the afternoon.

Flies: These vary by lake but generally opt for small, slender one inch or less micro-leeches. With a jig hook, use an improved clinch knot so the fly rides upside down and parallel to the bottom, which imitates the undulating swimming leech. Colors vary: black: 75 % of time, also brown, olive, purple, red (bloodworm color and may imitate it, too.)



Notes from Mike:

Habitat Weed beds and drop offs.

Rod and Line:

While finning a U-Boat, Mike has three rods available with uniform sinking lines:

intermediate (type 2), type 3, plus a slime line which barely sinks. (If fishing Chironomids, Mike uses a floating line.) Lines are chosen based on water depth. Note water color changes, light contrasting with dark.



Fish either deep to shallow or shallow to deep. Tips: 1. If targeting shallow water such as the shore area or an island, strip immediately. 2. A good plan is to fish the boat parallel to shore at your chosen distance. 3. Prep for a lake by studying bathometric maps. The emphasis here is the kick-pause retrieve using a rabbit leech in either black or brown, with a darker color used during lower light.

Methods: Mike employs an unweighted (no bead) leech which he activates with a strip-kick retrieve. "Let the fly sink to your desired depth. Now that the line is out, keep it out. Try 10 to 20 strips, about three inches each, so the fly rises up, then pause so the fly drops. With a short strike release 2 feet of line, then pause. Fish often come back."

As for variation, sometimes let the fly hit bottom before retrieving. You are continuously experimenting through an active method, the fly rising and falling. No need to cast again in your moving path. When the line has risen high enough, feed or wiggle line out and keep finning. "

The U-boat slows with pauses and speeds up with kicks; together the fly moves up and down through the water column. Mike will often use a butterfly, two-fin kick to accelerate. What are trout sensing? A fly (leech) that appears to escape on the rise and relax, which excites trout to bite. Arguably, the fly is moving faster than a natural, but with intermittent action, the leech stimulates interest and strikes. Mike's efficiency is partly due to keeping the fly in the water and working it up and down without lots of casting. This rhythmic repetition allows him to at once fish and enjoy surrounding nature.

FFI CONSERVATION (Reprinted with permission from Fly Fishers International)

Handle Fish Safely for Soft Release



Fly Fishers International was formed more than 65 years ago by some of the most noted fly fishers of that time. Those founders strongly believed that conservation of fisheries and their aquatic habitats was of utmost importance. They further recognized that fly fishers must organize to speak with one powerful conservation voice to ensure these natural resources and fly fishing opportunities endure.

"Catch and Release" was recognized by those early leaders as a conservation practice that every fly fisher could use to reduce fishing-related mortality and sustain healthy fish populations. Fly Fishers International continues to strongly advocate the safe release of fish. Management agencies commonly regulate the release of caught fish to reduce "take" in specific cases where "over harvest" of fisheries has been documented. They also require release to assist in restoration of sensitive fish populations and to optimize recreational opportunities in selected areas.

Soft Release (cont.)

Research has shown that native game fish that occur in cold, warm and salt waters can be safely returned to the water with an expectation that they will not only survive but also reproduce. Still, post-release mortality can be as high as 18 percent, depending upon the species, differing environmental circumstances but especially how the fish is handled prior to release.

Fly Fishers International continues to lead efforts to increase fish survival by advocating a new Conservation Initiative, "Handle Fish Safely for Soft Release" when the fly fisher does not intend to "keep" the fish. This is especially important as the sport of fly fishing continues to expand and fishing pressures increase. Moreover, some fish species are declining due to both overharvest and habitat loss. The fact that photographing our catch for posting on social media has become so prevalent also makes proper fish handling increasingly more important.

Fly Fishers International believes that conservation of fishes and wetland habitats remains more critical today than ever. Therefore, we urge our members and the fly fishing community to embrace "Handle Fish Safely for Soft Release" as a personal commitment to conservation of our valuable fishery resources.

Handle Fish Safely

- Fish with barbless "Single Hooks", or hooks with barbs bent down, to minimize tissue damage during removal.
- Land fish quickly in a rubber net.
- Wet your hands before handling a fish, don't squeeze the fish and keep them in the water and wet to the extent possible.
- Do not support fish by the jaw for any reason.
- Use hemostats or dehooking devices to remove hooks while the fish remains in water or net.
- Never lay fish on rocks, bank or boat or keep out of water for an extended period to photograph.
- Watch for predators that may take a fish on your line and stop fishing or move from the area if necessary.

Soft Release of Fish

- Minimize the time your fish is out of the water.
- Wet your hands when handling your fish.
- Keep fingers away from gills and eyes and never support fish horizontally by jaw.

Soft Release (cont.)

- Never squeeze your fish.
- Cradle fish gently in hand or net and hold in the water until the fish swims away freely.
- Fish native to cold and/or moving water may need to be held with their nose upstream to sufficiently recover before release.



Photograph Safely to Improve Survival

The high-quality digital cameras in our smart phones are excellent for taking photographs of fish, other wildlife and the wetlands where we fish. They allow taking multiple photographs quickly for review, cropping and discarding later. Be sure to secure your camera with a lanyard when over water.

Soft Release (cont.)

Excellent photographs can be created safely of fish in several ways, dependent upon size and species of fish, whether standing in water with the fish or photographing from a boat. Smaller fish can be easier to compose for photographs, whereas, photographing larger fish safely can be more challenging.

"Safe Handling for Soft Release" of the larger and often heavily harvested trophy species is especially important to post-release survival. The popular practice of photographing fish in hand adds additional reason for handling fish safely and releasing them softly to improve their survive and possible capture another time. The following practices will help ensure the fish you release survive.

FFI Fly Tying and Casting Fair with Guest Presenter Maxine McCormack April 19, Issaquah WA

Registration is open. Pacific Northwest tying and casting instructors offer an opportunity to improve your fly fishing skills. 4CFF casting instructors are hosting the Fly Casting Skills Development Program.

[Register Here](#)



Musings of a Knot Nut – Part 2

By John Sanders

In this edition of the newsletter, I will continue this series on knots focusing on two very important knots to know. The first is used in connecting leader and tippet sections and also in creating dropper loops and tags. The second knot is a non-loop knot used for attaching flies to tippet. I am repeating the short *Introduction* section immediately below in case you missed Part 1 in our December 2025 newsletter, which you can download and read from our the 4CFF website [here](#).

INTRODUCTION

There are hundreds of different knots to tie just about anything together. In this series we are going to focus on knots used in fly fishing applications. These can be categorized into the following types of knots, starting at the fly and ending at the reel:

1. Connecting Flies to Tippet
2. Connecting Tippet to Tippet or to Leader
3. Connecting Leader to Fly Line
4. Connecting Fly Line to Backing
5. Attaching Backing to Reel

I like to think of everything involved in fly fishing (water, weather, flotation device, fly fisherman, rod and reel, casting motions, line, leader, and tippet) as a “fly delivery system.” That system is very complicated, but it only exists to deliver a fly or flies where and when you want them in the manner you intend. Once you have dealt with the details and aggravation of that complex system it is really a simple proposition – you are trying to deliver a fly someplace where you think fish are. Knots are a very important part of that system.

Parts of a Knot

There are three common descriptive terms for the parts of any knot. The rope/line/string/monofilament you are working with is called the “Standing Line / Standing End / Main Line.” The very end of the line that you are manipulating to create the knot is called the “Tag End.” And finally, there is the resulting “Knot.”

Connecting Flies to Tippet

Connecting Flies to Tippet is the most interesting category of knots and in my opinion and is certainly where fly fishermen spend most of their knot tying time. There are two broad types of knots for attaching a fly: those that *jam* themselves against the eye of the hook or the shaft of the hook (jam-type knots), and those that *clinch* themselves to the tippet rather than the hook (clinch-type knots).

Connecting Tippet to Tippet or Leader

The next type of knot that is used most frequently by fly fisherman is in connecting sections of leader together, connecting leader to tippet, or connecting sections of tippet together. Not only is knot strength critically important, but so is the knot size, effect of the knot(s) on casting, retrieving the leader through rod guides, and collecting algae and other debris in the water.

Illustrations

Throughout this series, for each knot I will include a snapshot of tying instructions for the knot, and if appropriate, a photograph of the knot taken with my digital microscope. I am using 8# Berkley Trilene XT Solar because it has a high visibility green color that makes it easy to see each knot's features.

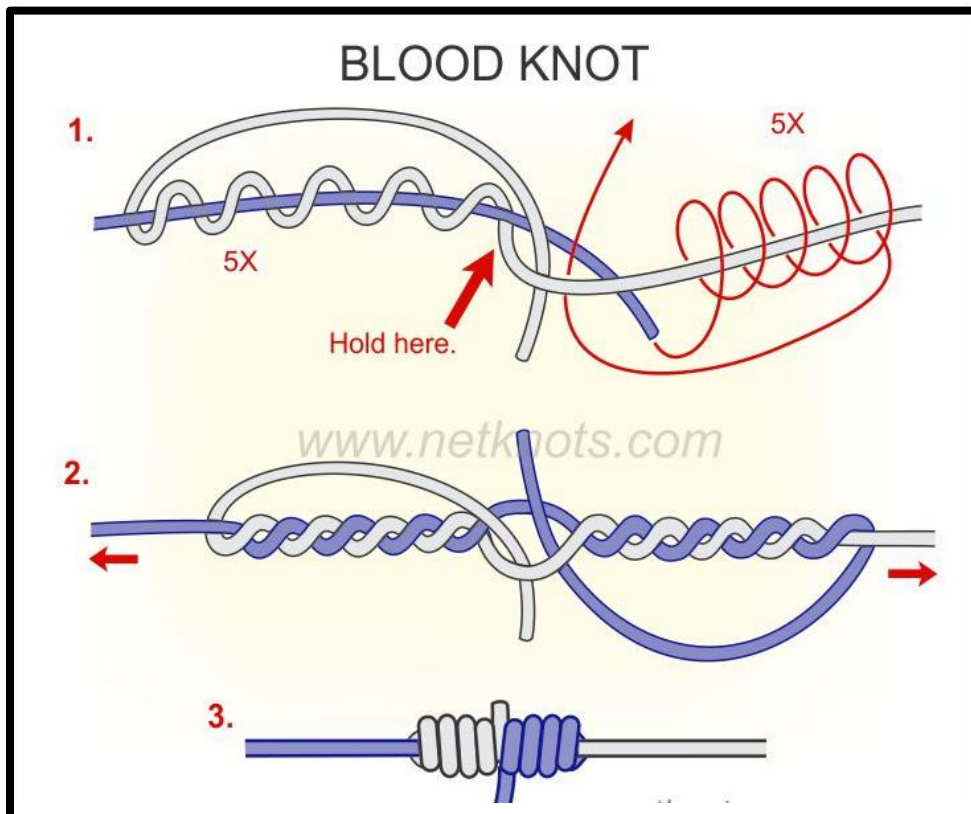
EASE OF TYING

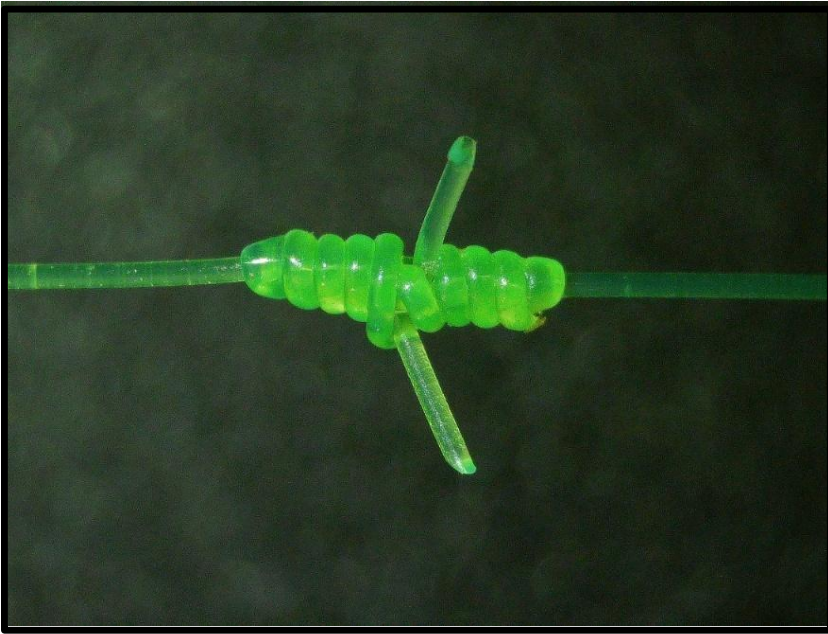
A critical factor in whether to use any knot is the ease with which you can tie it. You can have a knot with 100% knot strength, but if you can't physically tie it then it is of no value. Ease of tying is as important as knot strength or knot size. Both of the knots featured in this article excel not only because they are strong and small, but because they can be tied with almost any line in almost any circumstance.

THE "BLOOD KNOT"

The **Blood Knot** is simply a magnificent knot – as long as you are tying it with fishing line that is about 10# or larger. The line is then easy to handle and will cooperate with your fingers when tying. The Blood Knot is very strong, compact, symmetrically bullet shaped so it slides through rod guides easily, and doesn't change the angle of the line from one end to the other. It is *the* knot for tying sections of leader material together. If you buy a commercially tied segmented leader (as opposed to tapered leader) it will always be tied with Blood Knots.

The following illustration and photo show a 5-turn Blood Knot, meaning there are 5 turns of each line being joined together.





However, as fly fisherman we are commonly using line that is 4-8# in strength and very small in diameter. The ease of tying the Blood Knot is inversely related to the X size of the line you are tying together. The higher the X designation, the harder it is to tie a Blood Knot. If you have ever tried to tie a Blood Knot with 5X tippet you know exactly what I am talking about!

Note: Fly fishermen use the “X” system to designate line diameter, where the X designation is equal to .011” minus the line diameter. So, 4X tippet is $.011” - .004” = .007”$ in diameter, or 2X tippet is $.011” - .002” = .009”$ and so on. This is one of the many interesting quirks about fly fishing (another is that we call bobbers “controlled depth suspension and strike indication devices” and charge four times more for them).

THE “ONE-SIDED BLOOD KNOT” OR “DROPPER LOOP”

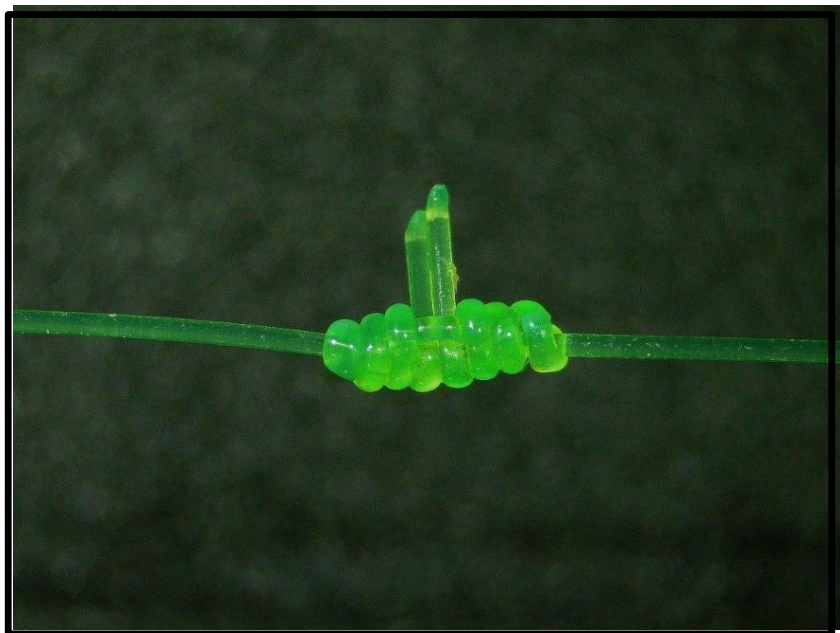
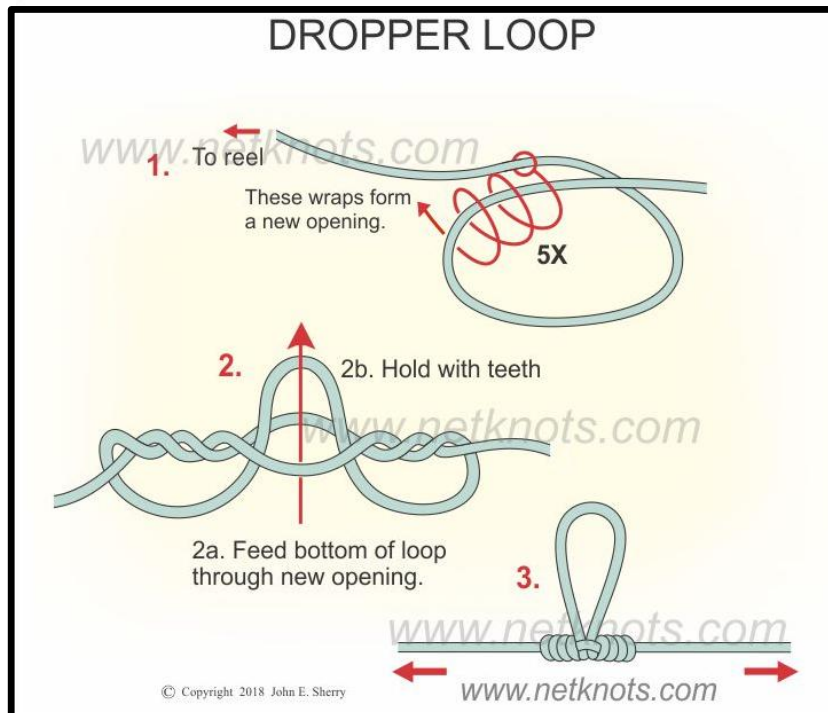
So, what does a fly fisherman with frozen fingers do to tie two sections of 5X tippet together? Most people will use a Double Surgeon’s Knot - but you are smarter than most people because you are reading this newsletter! The answer is to use the wonderful **One-Sided Blood Knot**, also known as the **Dropper Loop**. It actually has *three* distinctly different purposes, determined by how you trim, or don’t trim, the tag ends after tying the knot.

Dropper Loop

If you want to create a loop somewhere in your leader this is by far the best solution. The result is a Blood Knot where both tag ends of the line (the loop) exit from the knot on *one* side instead of on *opposite* sides like the traditional Blood Knot. It is just as compact and strong, doesn’t change line direction, but is not as symmetrical. However, the great thing about this knot is that you can very easily tie it – even with frozen fingers and tying 5X or 6X line. It is a truly great and useful knot for this reason.

The key to tying this knot is to use both hands symmetrically when tying it. Create a large loop in your leader by doubling the line on itself. Then hold each side with the small, ring, and middle fingers on each hand. Then use the thumb and index finger on each hand to rotate the line around itself about 5 times. When you are doing this, it is actually easier to count 10 half-turns. You then continue holding the newly formed opening in the middle with one of your hands and then reach through the opening with the other hand and pull the larger loop through. Moisten and slowly pull each line to tighten the turns and finish the knot. It is much more difficult to describe it

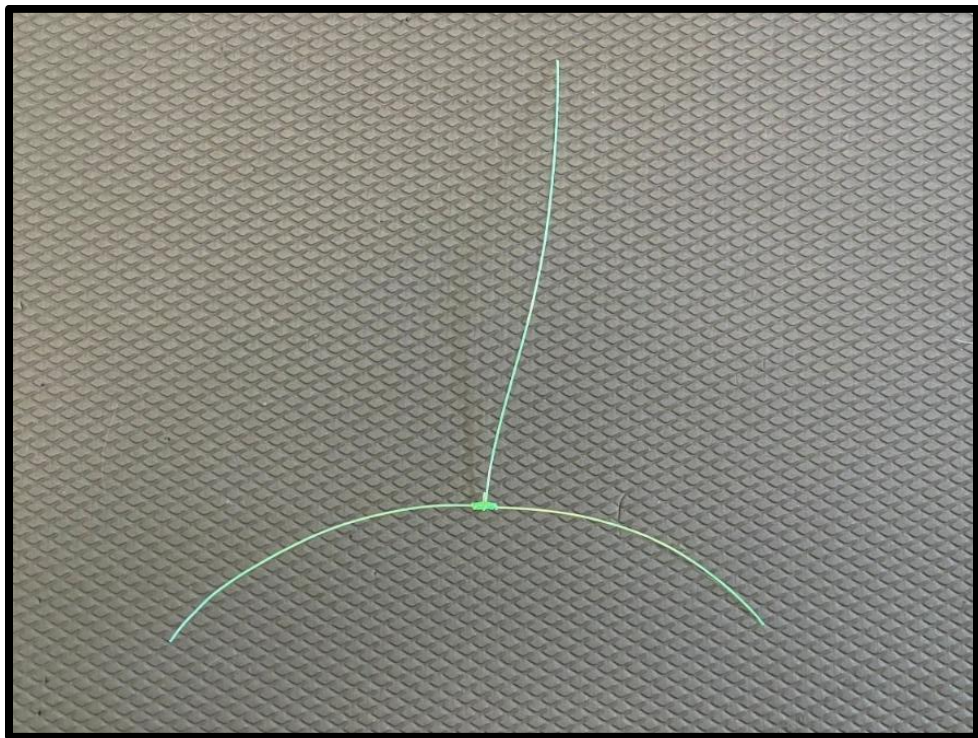
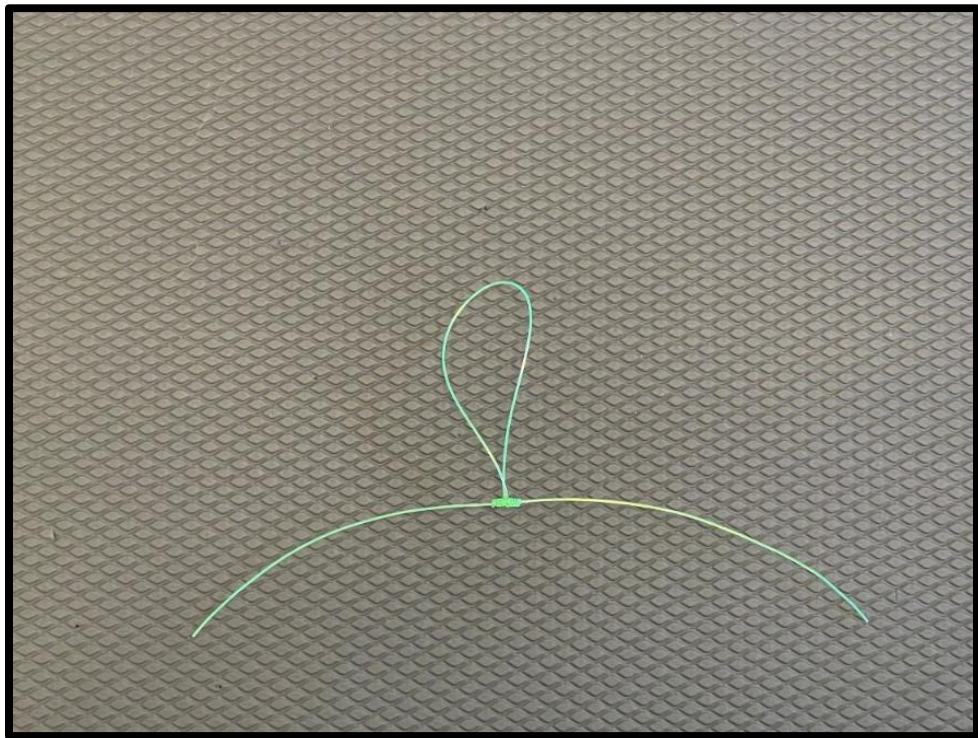
than to do it! Click on the link [here](#) to watch an animated illustration and click on the link [here](#) to watch a YouTube video of a person tying it. With practice you can easily determine the size of the resulting loop when the knot is done.



Dropper Tag in the Middle of a Leader Segment

A Dropper Loop is useful but not needed that often. However, as fly fishermen we very frequently need to create a tag end of line on our leader or tippet so that we can attach a second fly to it. This is a fantastic way to do that. Create a Dropper Loop as described in the section above and then use your nippers to cut one end of the loop at

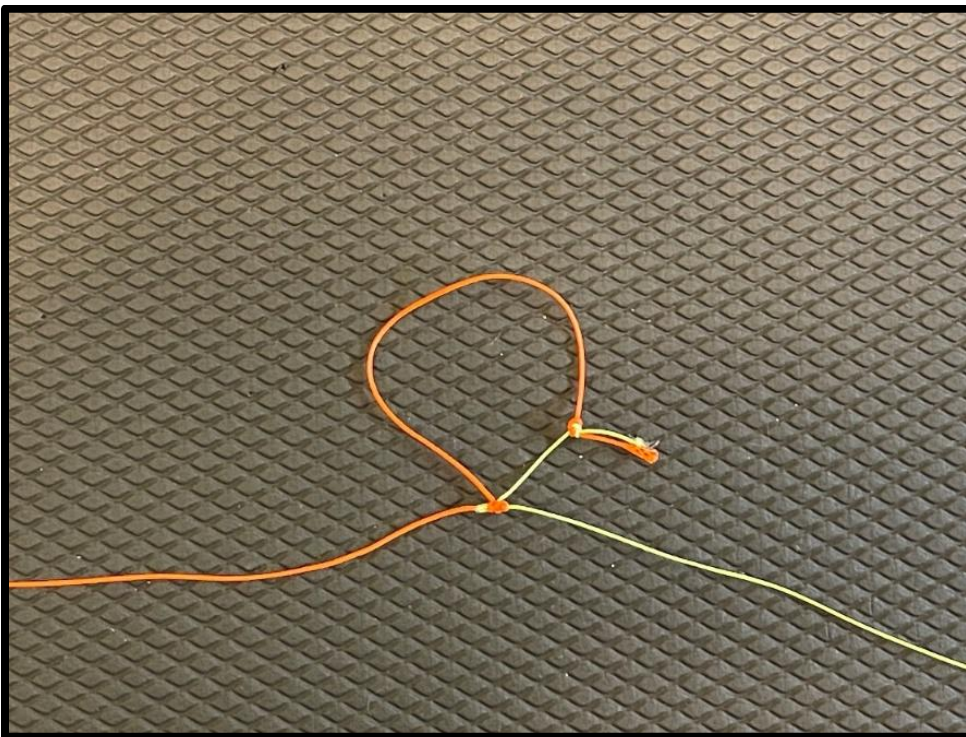
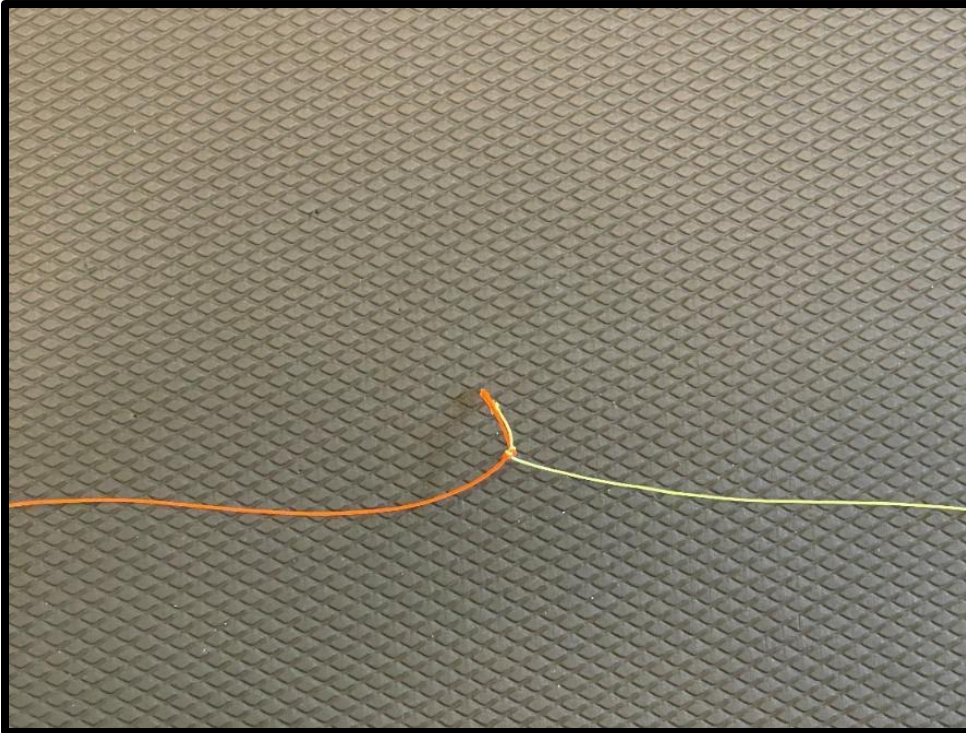
the knot. Note: always leave a very small tag when you trim the line at a knot, about 1/16" will do. You no longer have a loop of line, but now you have a dropper *tag* of line. The length of the tag end is of course determined by how large of a dropper loop you created before trimming one end at the knot. You have all the advantages of the Blood Knot in creating this tag end of line for connecting a second fly.

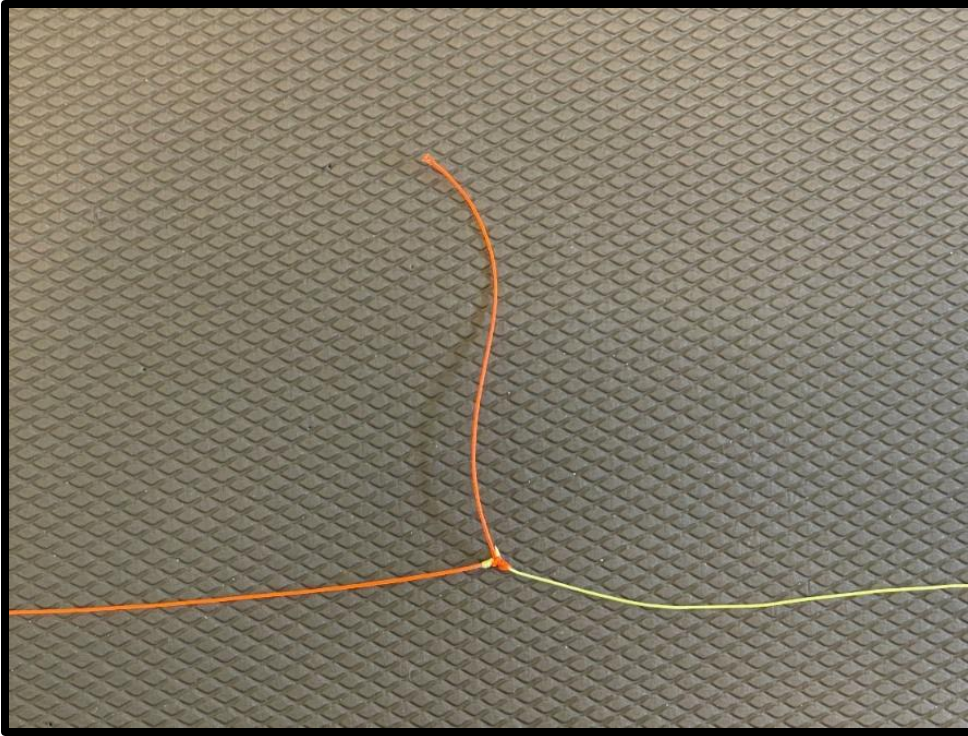


Dropper Tag Joining Leader Segments

Probably the most common scenario is to add a dropper tag where *two* segments of different diameter line are joined together. Again, this fantastic knot is the solution. Simply take the ends of the two segments you are joining and tie an overhand knot right at the ends of them in order to join them together temporarily. Now create

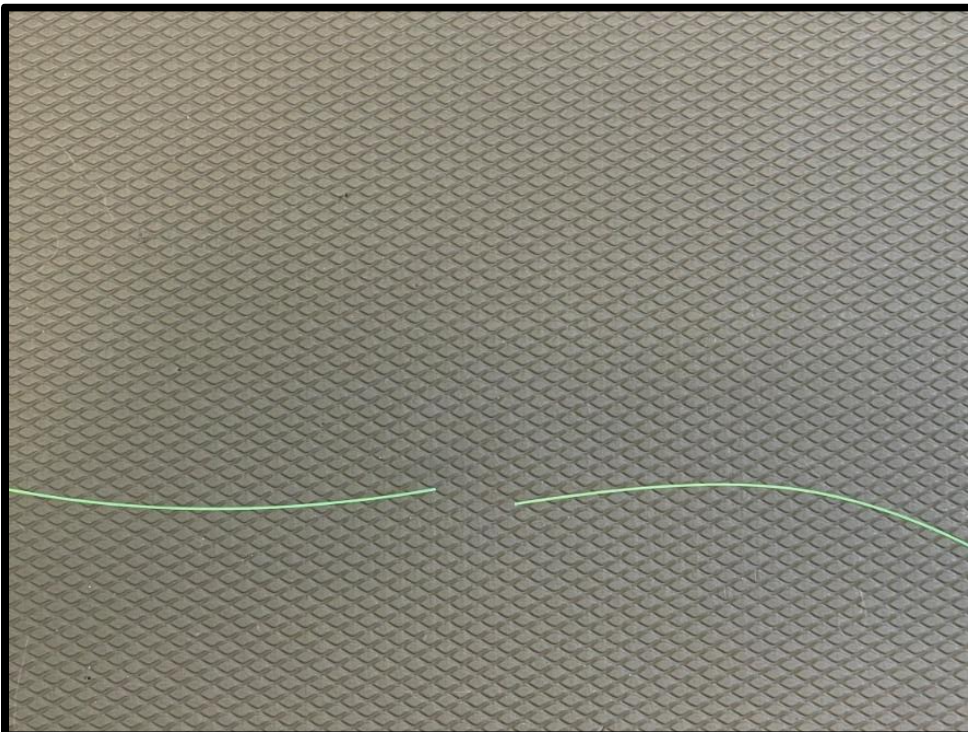
the Dropper Tag as described in the above section. When you are done you will have two different diameter tag ends coming out of the knot, tied together with your temporary overhand knot. Trim at the overhand knot for the diameter of line you now want to use as your tag end (either the larger or smaller diameter line). Trim the other section of line at the knot as it is no longer needed. With practice you can easily adjust where the overhand knot is located in the loop so that the length of line you trim away is very small. Trimming away only 1” of line is easily attained.

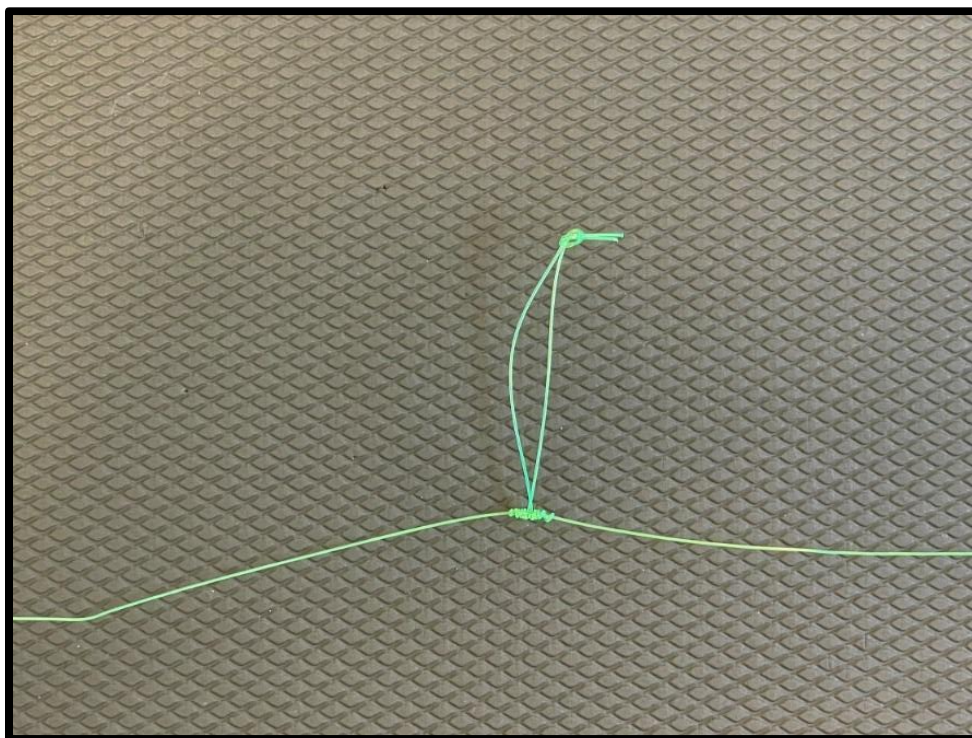
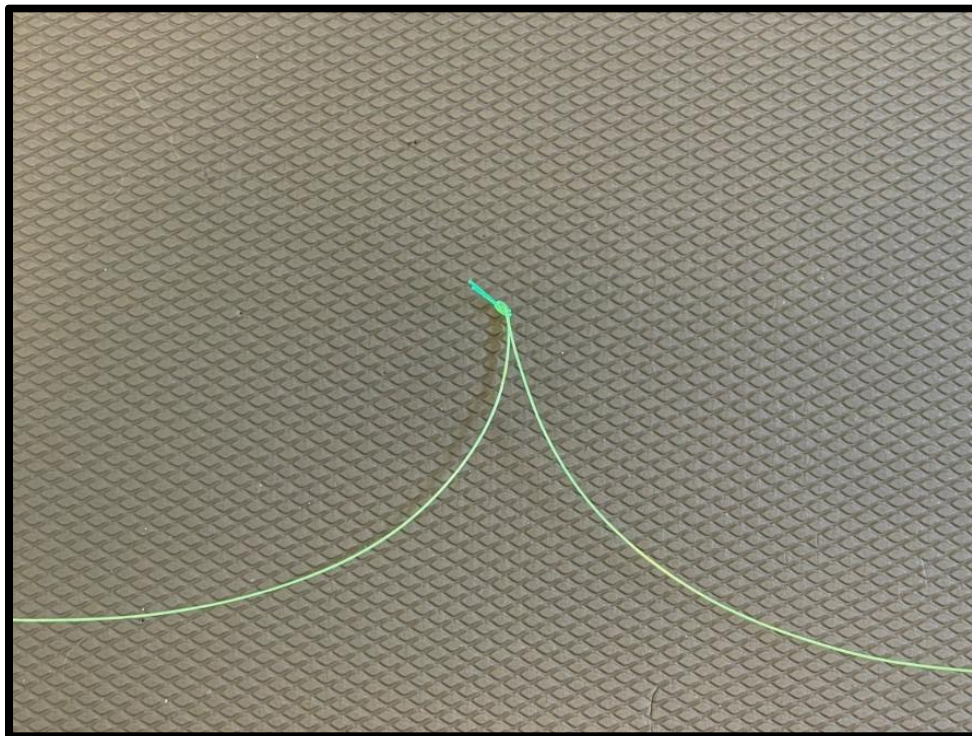


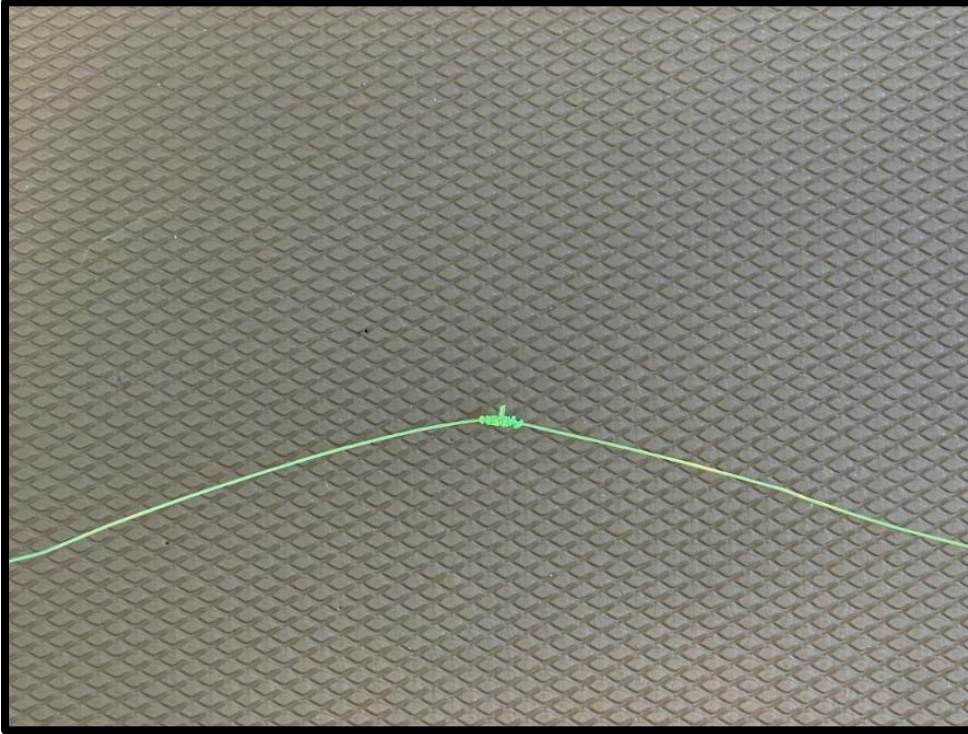


Joining Segments of Leader or Tippet Together

Another very common use for this knot is to connect two segments of line together, such as when adding a couple feet of tippet to the end of your leader. All you have to do is create the dropper tag joining leader segments, as described above. Tie it with a very small loop so you don't unnecessarily waste line. When you have tightened the knot then just trim away *both* ends of the loop. You have just connected two segments of line with a One-Sided Blood Knot instead of a traditional blood knot. You can do this with frozen fingers using any size line, in a fraction of the time of a traditional blood knot! It is so easy that I have even tied this knot Steelheading while wearing Nitrile gloves in 5 degree temperatures and wind.







NUMBER OF LOOPS VS. NUMBER OF TURNS

An important knot tying principle is that it usually doesn't matter when tying the knot whether you take multiple turns of the tag end *through* a loop or take fewer turns through multiple loops – you end up with the same result. Similarly, the same result can often be achieved whether you take turns of line *around* a loop or wrap the loop around the line. See tying the 16-20 knot later in this article for a great example this.

The Double Surgeon's Knot has traditionally been popular for connecting sections of leader and tippet and makes a good example because of its familiarity for tying with these alternate methods.

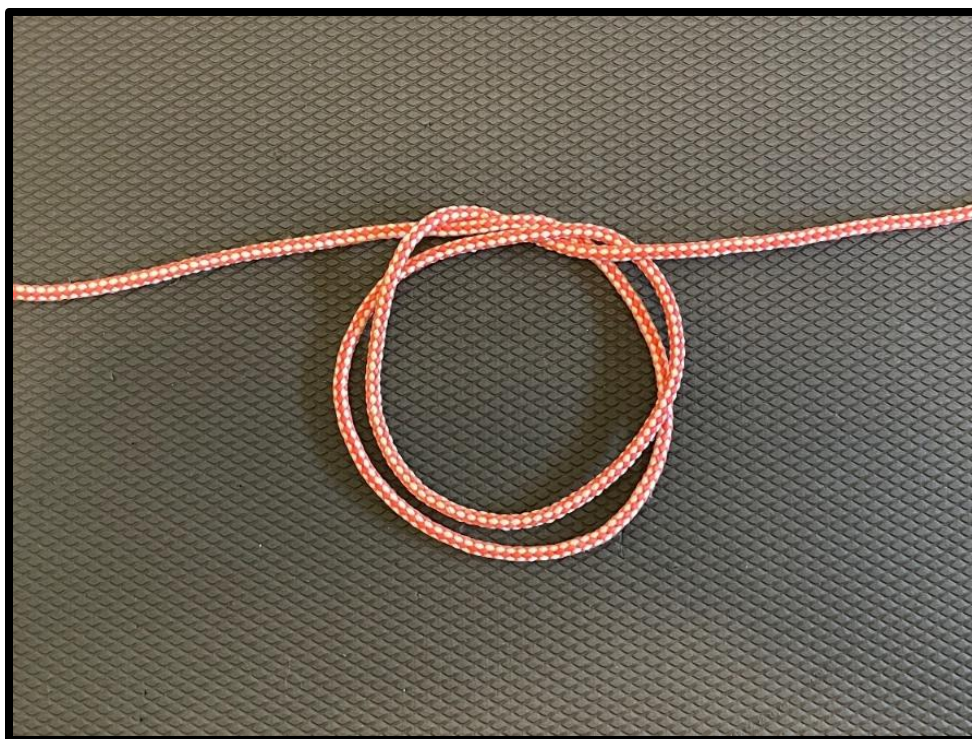
1 Loop / 2 Turns

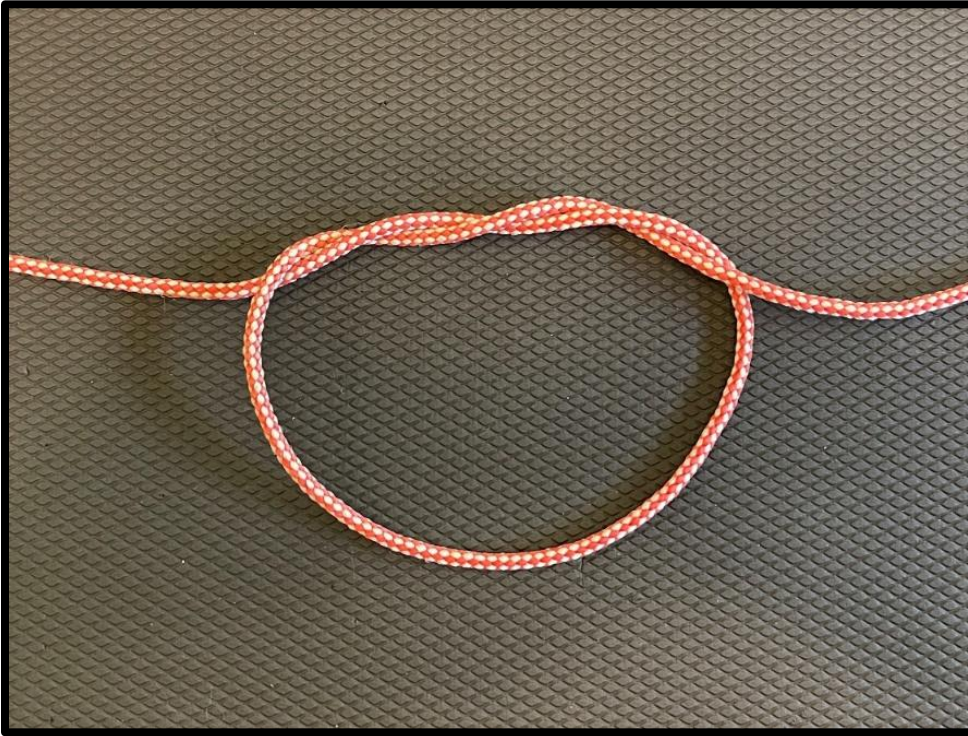
I am using a single piece of rope in the photos below to make it easier to see the principle being demonstrated. It works exactly the same if you do this with two pieces of overlapped line (or even three). Create a *single* loop and then run the tag end of the lines through the loop *twice*.



2 Loops / 1 Turn

Form *two* loops of line and then run the tag end of the joined lines through the loops *once*. When you begin to tighten it, you will see it transform into a single loop with two wraps of line, the same result as the first method above. This is usually a much easier method to create the Double Surgeon's Knot, especially if one of the sections of line you are joining is your tippet and already has a fly or two tied to it.





Eliminate your skepticism about the above principle by simply taking a length of any kind of line or rope and tie the above each way. You will quickly prove to yourself that it works! An even better example of the principle above can be seen in tying the Triple Surgeon's Knot. However, that is such a horrible knot that I won't disgrace this newsletter by using it as an example!

In our next newsletter I will cover the incomparable **16-20 Knot**, which is probably the only knot you need to know for non-loop knot applications. When you need to tie a loop knot look for the following newsletter for the introduction of **John's Loop Knot**. I am seriously biased, but I think it is the only loop you will need to learn!

Knot Resources

1. www.animatedknots.com Excellent for learning how to tie knots, but has a limited selection
2. www.netknots.com Used for illustrations above; Website for NetKnots app (below)
3. <https://knots3d.com> Website for Knots 3D mobile app (below)
4. www.proknot.com Website for Pro-Knot mobile app (below)
5. **Animated Knots** (free mobile device app version of animatedknots.com)
6. **NetKnots** (\$3.99 one-time fee mobile app version of netknots.com)
7. **Knots 3D** (free mobile device app)
8. **Pro-Knot** (free mobile device app)
9. **YouTube** (multitude of examples, some great but some not so great...)

Winter Fishing

Many people pause their fishing activities in October and resume in April but several members find other opportunities to fuel their passion. Some go south for the salt water experience and others take the local option. Often the takes are softer and the counts are lower but a day in nature on the water with the winter birds can be spectacular.



Bob Carney up to speed at Vogler



Frank with a Dorado in Mexico



Tarpon Time with Marion in Mexico



John pulls a big Lahontan from Lenore

Winter Fishing Cont.



Bruce Enjoying the Patagonia Experience



Bob with a Lahontan at Lenore



Steve with a Nice Patagonia Trophy Trout



Jeff Brings One in at the Pass Outing

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