



## ***The April 2023 NEWSLETTER***

**Northern Arizona Flycasters**  
**An active member club of the World Wide organization**  
**“Fly Fishers International”**  
**“Conservation, Restoration, and Education through Fly Fishing”**  
<http://nazflycasters.com>  
**POB 50517 Parks, AZ 86018**

**We support active involvement in cold water fisheries conservation. We work to insure that Arizona’s habitat is not degraded and in the development and maintenance of fly fishing opportunities.**

**We support the practice of “catch and release”, the use of barbless hooks, and quick and harmless release practices. Fish should never be kept out of the water for over 60 seconds.**

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Northern Arizona Flycasters meets the first Wednesday of the month at the Arizona Game and Fish Regional office at 3500 S. Lake Mary Road, Flagstaff. Meetings start at 7 PM with a board meeting at 6:00 PM. The meetings are free and the public is invited.

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### **PRESIDENT’S DRIFT :**

No board meeting this month; however, we will start at 5:30 pm in the AZGF conference room with our Spring Gear Sale. This is an excellent chance to purchase some lightly used equipment for a good cause: Cold-Water Conservation. As a reminder, all proceeds will benefit a Cold-Water Conservation Project.

Our presentation for the month of April will be given by Dr. Stefan Sommers, Department of Biological Sciences, NAU. He represents Northern Arizona Climate Change Alliance. Dr. Sommers will provide us with a scientific approach to our regional climate, changes/patterns, and the impact on fisheries.

I am waiting for temps on Upper Lake Mary to warm up just a bit. I have completed a set of wire bit tippets with leaders to attempt to land a few pike this spring. See you out there. Casey Simpson

Reminders:

Club Dues-

\$40.00 Family

\$30.00 Individual

\$10.00 Student

Reminder, our Post Office Box has changed.

**New Post Office Box is: POB 50517 Parks, AZ 86018**

AZ Fishing License-Check your renewal date

Facebook search under Northern Arizona Fly Casters.

AZ Daily Sun, web edition, under Events.

Website:<https://nazflycasters.com>

## **EDUCATION – Pike Fishing**

# About Esox Freshwater Fish

The Esox family of freshwater fish contains fish that conventional anglers have long sought. In addition to northern pike, more common species include chain pickerel and muskellunge. Anglers can catch them on the fly. These fish are predators built with a flat head, yellow eyes, and sharp teeth. Pike will eat just about anything that swims. Frogs, snakes, mice, ducks, bluegill, perch, and even smaller pike are apt to become dinner if they swim in front of a large pike.

They are ambush hunters and are one of the fastest-swimming freshwater fish. They lay in wait, motionless as they suspend in shallow water near weed beds or drop-offs, waiting for the dinner bell to ring. These drop-offs can be fished blindly with searching casts, but large fish are often seen, and sight casting is the norm. These casts are not delicate long [casts](#) with tight loops. These casts are 20 feet or less wide looped casts, and the action will be right in front of your eyes. Make a [strip jerk retrieve](#). If no takes on the first cast, cast again, and vary the retrieval speed. A slower retrieve will often coax a lazy fish into a strike.

Also, northern pike are territorial. Even if they are not hungry, if you annoy them enough, they will lash out at the fly. Often, anglers will see a wake in the water as the pike chase the [baitfish imitations](#) down before crushing your fly. This is what makes

pike fun to catch. They will not peel off backing like a blistering bonefish run, but the take is savage in nature and unlike anything else. They will jump, roll, and try everything else to spit your fly. They are like a junkyard dog that will not let go of a bone. This adrenaline is why anglers chase these fish.

## Essential Gear for Northern Pike Fly Fishing

To get into pike fly fishing, you will need gear slightly different from trout fishing. The good news is you will not need much of it. Here are the essentials.

### Fly Rod

A fast-action rod usually works best. The size of the fly is really the determining factor, not the fish. The flies used are anywhere from 6 to 12 inches in size.

Aerodynamics is not the intent; a larger fast-action fly rod will help turn these flies over. A 7-9 weight fly rod is usually adequate for the job, with an 8-weight rod being a good all-around weight. If muskies are also in the mix, a 10-11 weight rod may be required as these flies tend to be even larger. Make sure to get a rod with a [fighting grip and butt](#) to help battle these brutes. [The Temple Fork Outfitters BC Big Fly Rod](#) is designed specifically for Esox fishing.

### Fly Reel

These fish are not known for long runs, but a good [disc drag](#) large arbor reel to aid with line management is a solid choice. If the drag is strong enough to fight a water wolf (the Latin name of a pike), you will be in business.

### Fly Line

Make sure to get a fly line that matches the rod. Since most of the casts will be within 20 feet, a quick-loading compact head will come in handy. The line should be strong enough to load the rod and turn over flies the size of your forearm. [Scientific Anglers Titan Taper fly line](#) is a good floating line option. In some situations, an intermediate

line works well to get to fish suspended in the water column, and during the dog days of summer, a full sinking line may be required to reach pike that are in deeper waters.

## Leader/Tippet

For the leader, it is all about turning large flies over. Long 12-foot 7x leaders designed for Trico hatches will not work. A 7.5-foot leader is really all the length you need. For the tippet, these fish have sharp teeth and will bite through monofilament in a heartbeat. The [Orvis Predator Polyleader](#) is a good option and comes with a snap swivel for easy fly changes.

## Pike Flies

The good news is that you will not need a large selection of flies. For most pike, the bigger and flashier flies, the better. Do not be afraid to cast something that looks like a Christmas tree ornament. Pike like flash. Flies need to push a lot of water, and the coloring should somewhat mimic the natural colors of the bait intended.

Topwater flies include mice and frog imitations. Baitfish streamer patterns work well below the surface. Typically, these flies are on 2-4/0 hook sizes. Anglers should seek quality flies as cheap flies will shred after one fish. To keep it simple, a handful of topwater patterns and streamers are all that is required.

## Tools

Pike are large fish. Plan for safe handling before hooking one. Ensure your net is large enough, and keep your fingers away from their teeth. A good pair of pliers will help with hook removal and the wire bite tippet.

# Final Thoughts

I hope I convinced you to give northern pike fly fishing a chance. If muskies are around, I encourage you to try your hand at these monsters as well. Warm water fly fishing can be just as fun as trout fishing, so add this to your [bucket list](#). If you have questions or need help selecting a [rod](#), [reel](#), and [line](#) for northern pike fly fishing or gearing up for your next adventure, please reach out to myself or a fellow Fly Fishing Expert here on [Curated](#). We would love to help. Tight Lines!

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WRITTEN BY



Joseph Smith

FLY FISHING EXPERT

## **NAF EVENTS SCHEDULE**

Programs:

05 April 2023 Mark Alexander Northern Arizona Climate Change Alliance  
NAF Gear Sale  
03 May2023 Oak Creek Watershed Council

### **Under discussion by board**

Fishing outings to local lakes

Fly casting sessions on a regular basis.

Work project with game and fish

**The Board welcomes suggestions from members.**

### **NAF CLUB OFFICERS/COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

President	Charles Simpson
Vice-President	Tom Hudnall
Secretary	Mac McIlwaine
Treasurer	Denise Dean

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