



month 2015

President's Message

January Meeting

Youth Outreach

Outreach

Awards

From the Editor

Sustaining Donors

RMF Quick Links



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From the President

Happy New Year everyone!

I hope everyone had a safe and happy holiday season. Except for the brave(?) ice anglers, one might think we have entered the slow time of year meant for gear cleaning and purchase, fly tying and trip planning. If that is the case, several ongoing and upcoming activities might be just the thing for you.

Our general meeting this month will take a look at some trip planning tips from one of the best in the business. And, both the Denver Fly Fishing Show and the International Sportsman Expo in Denver should provide you with more gear, technique and trip info than you can possibly need. In February we round things out with our annual Fly Tying Expo at the Fort Collins Senior Center.

Of importance in the short term are; the deadline for submitting applications for Volunteer Awards and our need for coordinators and volunteers for this years revised structure to the Youth Day Camp. Both of these topics detailed in depth below.

Stay Warm!

Dick
Dick Jefferies, President
Rocky Mountain Flycasters



Dick Jefferies

Chapter Event Calendar

at the \$50 donation level.

Join Our Mailing List!

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January Program Meeting

Maybe the lure of azure blue water, 80 degrees and bone fishing sound like the perfect locale. Perhaps the thought of fishing the great trout waters of South America are what you desire. Who could argue, right? However, finding some nice temperate tail water that is within reasonable driving distance might be more to your liking or perhaps some late winter early spring activity in the Ozarks.

Grant Houx from **St. Peters Fly Shop** in Fort Collins joins us this month to talk about different destinations that you might want



January Speaker: St. Pete's Owner Grant Houx and a Big Belize Tarpon

to consider. There is ample opportunity for anyone interested in some travel fishing. Join us at 6:30 pm on the 21st at the Fort Collins Senior Center, as Grant helps us explore those opportunities.

Mark your calendar:

- **February 18** Program - Annual Fly Tying Expo
A grand collection of top tiers representing the fly fishing community will be present. In addition to those renowned artists, enjoy great food, camaraderie and giveaways! There will also be silent auction items in support of Rocky Mountain Flycasters. Don't miss this evening!!
- **March 18** Program - Domingo Rodriguez, Czech Nymphing

January Youth Outreach Notes

Dick Jefferies

RMF's 2015 Day Camp is scheduled for July 27th through August 1st, Monday through Saturday. The preliminary Camp Schedule is on our **web site**. This preliminary schedule is a reliable picture, as adjustments will only be minor...so volunteers are requested to commit your calendar availability now.

Many new Day Camp leadership opportunities have been defined as part of a new distributed leadership team structure. We welcome and encourage both past and new volunteers to engage

with camp preparations and/or serve as Day Coordinators and specific Activity Specialists. These position breakouts will create many interesting and enjoyable team roles.

RMF members interested in any of the position(s) listed below are urged to let us know now so we can discuss your position interests and confirm a final team in time to launch preparations. A review of volunteer responses will be held in about a month, and again at two months, to determine how (read "if") we will proceed with camp this summer.

Team positions are divided into those that engage with preparations before camp starts, and those that engage during the camp week. Pre-camp positions lend themselves easily to subdivision and/or role sharing, so you may want to collaborate with a member friend and volunteer. Some of the camp week positions also can be collaborative, i.e. a Day Coordinator may prefer certain members to lead that day as Activity Specialists. These kinds of collaborations can also enrich the team experience.

New team leadership roles are.....

Pre-camp Preparations:

Camp Director

Public Promotion, Application Process & Post-Camp Survey Camper Manual Binders, Daily Journals & Volunteers Name Tags

Fundraising

Camp Week Core Staff:

Camp Director

Van Driver

Utility (2 positions)

Photographer

Day Coordinators (Six) - Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday)

Activity Specialists (Casting, FF Techniques (Dry, Nymph, Stillwater), Fly Tying, Entomology

Members interested in the Camp Director position, please contact **Dick Jefferies** or call 970-493-2862.

Members interested in any of the leadership pre-camp positions, or camp week positions, please contact **Dennis Cook** or call (970) 372-9229.

Mentors: After team leadership positions have been filled many single activity volunteer Mentors will continue to be needed to achieve our goal of a 1:1 ratio between campers and adults during on-water and selected field activities.

January Community Outreach Notes

Put in Your Two Cents....

Did you receive the invitation from TU to participate in a national survey? It might have been easy to overlook in the holiday rush.

In short, here's what it's all about: "TU has been developing a new branding initiative in order to apply clarity to the brand of TU. Simply put, we seek the answer to the question "What does TU do for me?"

You can answer that question at:

<http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/1758486/>

Trout-Unlimited-Survey. Please do.

Clear Explanation from Ft Collins Natural Areas Zoe Shark, Community Relations Manager for Ft Collins Natural Areas, gave a very clear explanation of some of the city's floodplain work in the December 26th *Coloradoan*.

On behalf of RMF, I congratulated her and said we were proud to be a part of their efforts. This was her response: You are definitely part of the efforts—Rocky Mnt Flycasters has been a great partner of Natural Areas in a variety of ways.



Will Huett, RMF Community Outreach Coordinator

If you have been part of one of their work projects: Be Proud!

In case you missed the original:

<http://www.coloradoan.com/story/life/2014/12/26/cottonwoods-sometimes-need-help-finding-home-along-river/20916627/>.

Awards for Excellence, Achievement, and Distinction

If you know someone who should be recognized by Rocky Mountain Flycasters, now is the time to think about making a nomination. Nominations are designed to recognize member volunteers and chapter partners' achievements. Recognition will be announced to chapter members and communicated prominently across our Colorado host community. Nominations for awards, with supportive information, must be received from January 1 through January 31. Please visit the **Award criteria page** on our website for nomination requirements, and email nominations directly to the RMF Secretary **Lance Asherin**.

From the Editor



Flypaper Editor Bob Green and a Blue Lake Cutthroat

Complexity of the West and Simplicity of the East: Learning to Fly Fish Ass-Backwards?

In this article I describe my late-in-life experiences with learning to fly fish. Like most anglers I began with the traditional (Western) fly rod and reel set-up. However, this past August, I added a Tenkara rod and a Tenkara philosophy (Eastern) to my fly fishing persona. I share my experiences with methods and question whether the sequence of my learning (proceeding from classical to Tenkara) was ass-backwards and suggest, rather, that learning from East to West, rather than West to East,

might be better suited to beginning fly anglers who are very young or (very) old.

The Complexity of the West and Simplicity of the East: Learning to Fly Fish Ass-Backwards?

Unlike many Rocky Mountain Flycasters, fly-fishing hasn't been a lifelong endeavor for me. Rather, following a move to Fort Collins from the southeast a year and a half ago, my passion for the sport ignited spontaneously. And, it "grewed like Topsy". As a retiree with plenty of recreational time and access to the marvelous waters of the Front Range, I soon became what my wife describes as "obsessed". Although I'm 70 years old, fly-fishing continues to make me feel like a kid in a candy store with lots of money and parental approval!

Complexity of the West

In spite of my joy in the discovery of "the fly" and of the Colorado outdoors, my beginning efforts to fish independently (sans guide) were not without barriers and setbacks. The sheer complexity of the sport was daunting, particularly for an old guy, and posed many challenges all at once: acquiring and learning to use the requisite equipment; selecting from an armada of techniques and learning how to apply them; acquiring knowledge about aquatic insects; and identifying different types of trout and trout habitats. Although I have the ability to focus and tend to be persistent, these

multiple learning tasks, each with its own particular learning curve, became extraordinarily challenging. I vividly recall one cold and windy morning on the Poudre, with numb hands and cold wet feet, trying to join 6x and 7x tippets so that I could then attempt to tie on a fly or two that I could barely see. This was necessary because I had just lost my rig, on my first cast of the day into the trees. After a lot of time and several unsuccessful attempts at re-assembling my rig, I remember thinking: “What in the hell am I doing here at this point in my life? Am I having fun?” It seemed like my motor skills, visual acuity, and physical stamina were all declining precisely at the time I began to learn a sport that relies upon all of these. I answered myself –“no, I’m not having fun” – and I thought about giving it up.

Fortunately, rather than quit my pursuit after this memorable/miserable experience, I made two important decisions. I took another trip to the Poudre with guide Jin Choi of St. Peter’s Fly Shop who had earlier provided me with some instruction, and I joined the Rocky Mountain Flycasters. I’m pleased to say my experiences with Jin and with RMF made my learning curve much gentler. Jin provided perspective, encouragement and some excellent on-stream coaching. And, I soon acquired many RMF friends who were more than willing to provide the support and assistance I needed. These guys also understood and shared my joy, and many possessed the knowledge and skills I sought.

As my “time on the water” and confidence grew, I began to feel somewhat comfortable with rod in hand, and started exploring the diversity of fly fishing venues in the West. As I traveled to different waters I learned to use the various types of fly rods and reels required or suggested by the environments of different lakes and streams (My cache of rods grew from 1 to 6 in less than 2 years!). In the past year I’ve traveled with RMF groups to the North Platte/Gray Reef, the Frying Pan, the Green River in Utah, and the headwaters of the Colorado River. I’ve also taken fly fishing trips to Canada, the Snake River and Yellowstone Rivers in northern Wyoming and well-known Colorado Rivers (the Gunnison, the Taylor and Arkansas). Needless to say I also persistently fished the waters of the Poudre, the Big Thompson and Red Feather Lakes when in town.



Western Methods: Taylor River Rainbow

Simplicity of the East

Rather than explore a different fishing venue last August, I decided to devote the month to learning Tenkara locally. This ancient Japanese philosophy and method of fly fishing has grown rapidly across the country, and has a distinct footprint on the Front Range. Although dismissed as a fad by the legendary Lefty Kreh only a few years ago, Tenkara has nevertheless continued to grow. In fact, there are two Tenkara manufacturers headquartered in Northern Colorado: Zen Fly Fishing Gear in Loveland and Tenkara USA in Boulder. Rocky Mountain Flycasters member Adam Omernick owns

and operates Zen Fly Fishing Gear and is sponsoring a series of Tenkara winter lectures in 2015 (for information about this series go to tenkarawinterseries.com). Similarly, Tenkara USA will host a Tenkara Summit Conference in EstesPark in September 2015 tenkarausa.com

Because of my beginning difficulties grasping and then integrating the technical complexity of western (traditional) fly fishing, I was particularly drawn to, and even soothed by, the simplicity of the Tenkara philosophy and equipment. The Japanese meaning of Tenkara is “from heaven”, and reflects the central element of naturally presenting a fly.



As I reflect this winter on my August and early fall Tenkara adventures, I wish I had learned Tenkara fundamentals first and then transitioned to more traditional western methods. My sequencing, from traditional to Tenkara, feels like it was ass-backwards!

Unlike western fly fishing, Tenkara reflects minimalism in its philosophy, techniques and equipment. It requires 1) a long rod that telescopes from a carrying/storing length of eighteen to twenty four inches, to telescoped lengths that extend from seven to twenty-one feet, 2) fly line roughly matching the length of the extended rod footage, and 3) a fly! That's it. Reels are unnecessary and the rods only weigh from 2 to 3 ounces. As a consequence, Tenkara serves to mitigate many of the problems typically experienced by beginning fly fishing anglers: learning how to cast with accuracy; learning to manage fly line under different circumstances; attempting to cast distances beyond one's skill level; and regulating the drift. Can you say, “cane (or bamboo) pole”?

Originally conceptualized and designed by 17th century Japanese commercial fishermen who hiked to fish in small, mountain streams, Tenkara in the U.S. as well remains more compatible with smaller streams and fish. Although my rod, a twelve foot Zako by Zen Fly Fishing Gear, is constructed for small stream fish, sturdier rods for larger fish are available. So far the largest fish I've caught on my rod was 13", but landing it reminded me of catching a Tuna or Cobia in the Atlantic Ocean. I took the Tenkara with me on recent trips to the Green and Frying Pan Rivers, but after observing the size of these fish I stayed with my conventional five-weight and reel. I do plan, however, to buy and use one of the more sturdy Tenkara rods for larger waters and bigger fish. Indeed, I plan to take a very sturdy Tenkara rod with me this summer (2015) on an Alaska salmon fishing trip.

This past summer (2014) I used the Tenkara rod at Lawn Lake and The Loch in Rocky Mountain National Park, at Bellaire Lake in the Red Feather Lakes region, on Joe Wright Reservoir (for grayling, of course), and in the Poudre and smaller streams. I especially enjoyed Tenkara fishing on the St. Vrain in Wild Basin, the Big Thompson below the Fern Lake Trailhead and the headwaters of the Colorado River in Rocky Mountain National Park proper. When fish take a fly they seem to sense the flexibility of the Tenkara rod immediately and are more likely to jump out of the water as well and to go deeper during the ensuing fight.

I don't plan to replace my conventional fly rods, but I do plan to carry a Tenkara rod with me on most future fishing trips. Although the consequences were unintended, learning to practice Tenkara has sharpened and complimented my skills as a conventional trout angler and, when I'm on the water, helped me feel less like a disruptive actor and more like a participant in an ongoing natural drama.

The short Tenkara line also gave me more opportunities to actually view fish as they considered, rejected or ate my fly. I learned a lot about the subtleties of fish behavior that can't be seen at 30 feet or more. (I am now aware of the number of fish I frighten away when I attempt to cast at



Zen Fly Fishing Gear Rod (telescoped down), Rod Sock, Carrying Case and Extra Tip



Eastern Methods: Lawn Lake Cutthroat

distances exceeding 20 feet). With the shorter Tenkara cast, I learned that more fish examine artificial flies than I previously imagined. Similarly, many more fish also flee from even the most delicate presentation. Indeed, I learned first hand the way fly lines traveling over the water with the smallest shadows, even the shadow of a fly rod, frighten away more fish than I had ever imagined.

Problems with Tenkara

In spite of the philosophical and technical symmetry provided by the Tenkara experience, learning this method also posed a few practical problems for me. The first of these was actually landing a fish. In my experience, the more the Tenkara line exceeds the length of the rod, the more difficult it is to bring a fish to the net. And, even when I shorted the length of my line, guiding a fish into the small narrow nets I use when hiking or on “small” water was awkward and challenging. To facilitate landing, some recommend bringing the fish in hand-over-hand. But, this approach seems incompatible with the recommended 6x Tenkara tippet. Others recommend a more rounded net, but this larger net fits less comfortably in a back pack.

As a dry fly partisan/enthusiast, I also encountered some difficulty using dry flies with the Tenkara

rod. Neither of the two types of line recommended by Tenkara experts, the traditional furled and the level, seem particularly suited to dry fly fishing. Because these lines sink, presenting the dry fly requires keeping the line out of the water. Frequently in venues that I fish, like mountain lakes, I like to present flies at distances a bit longer than the length of my rod. Consequently, I searched for a floating Tenkara line. Some of the Tenkara purists I talked with about floating lines counseled me that use of such a line was not “Tenkara” and others suggested an obvious solution---use an old floating fly line and cut it to fit. I was able to solve the problem by contacting Rigs Fly Shop in Ouray. Several of the guides out of that shop had the same love of the dry fly and the shop recently developed and began marketing a floating fly line that I’ve used successfully on several occasions.

In conclusion, Tenkara gives me great joy and I recommend it to fly anglers of all skill and age levels. It might be a particularly useful method for beginning fly anglers, both the very young and the (very) old. RGG, 12-10-1

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