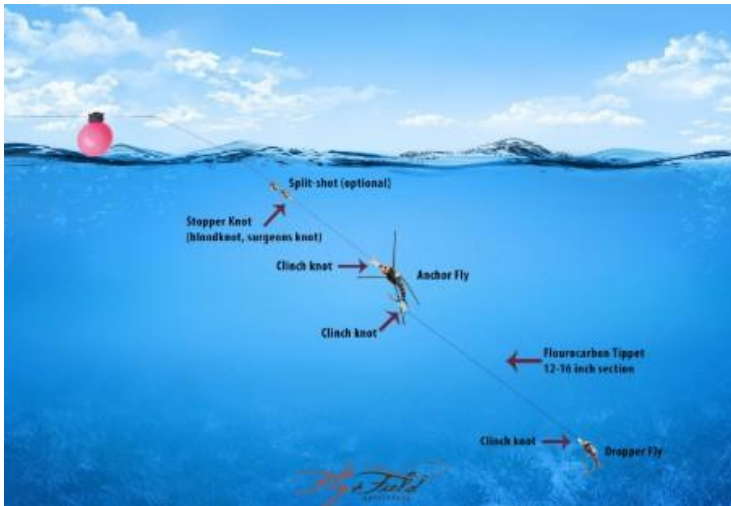


# Hickory, Table Rock, High Country Trout Unlimited April 2025 Newsletter



Last month we discussed an introduction to nymphing. About 90% of trout food is on or near the bottom of the river so that is where they are looking to eat and therefore you will normally catch more fish by nymphing. This month we will expand on this by providing you with some tips to improve your game.

Quicksand discovered at Wilson Creek sandbar caused by the Helene flooding. See the details in the newsletter.

Also, please check out upcoming events. April is going to be a very busy month and without your support we won't be able to accomplish all our goals.

## HIGH COUNTRY TU MARCH MEETING

**WHEN:** Thursday, April 3<sup>rd</sup> at 6:00 PM

**WHERE:** South End Brewing Company  
747 W. King Street, Boone

**PROGRAM:** 2025 Stocking Schedule, Alternate Places to fish, and tying some spring bugs.

## HICKORY TU APRIL MEETING

**WHEN:** Tuesday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 PM

**WHERE:** Old Hickory Station  
232 Government Ave SW, Hickory

**SPEAKERS:** Ron Randle

**PROGRAM:** Maintaining Your Fly Fishing Gear

Ron is the fishing manager at the Orvis Store in Huntersville. [Huntersville Orvis Store](#)

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

*"The pleasant'st angling is to see the fish cut with her golden oars the silver stream, and greedily devour the bait.*

*....Shakespeare, Much Ado About Nothing*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**45<sup>th</sup> Annual Blowing Rock Trout Derby April 5, 2025**

[Blowing Rock Trout Derby](#)

**Howards Creek Cleanup Apr 5<sup>th</sup> from 10-2** and meeting at Bethany Lutheran Church, 1030 Big Hill Rd., Boone  
**North Fork of the New River, on Saturday April 12<sup>th</sup>.**

Join us in Creston, North Carolina for a North Fork of the New River on April 12, 2025. (Back up date in case of bad weather is 4/19/25) 10:00 am.

The volunteers will meet at the Creston Fire Station at 167 3Top Rd, Creston, NC 28615, 36.42990307013774, -81.62010433035957)

This will be a float cleanup so folks will need to prepare to be on the water for around 5 hours.

Bring snacks and water, as well as waders if you have them. New River Conservancy and Mountain True will be working collaboratively on this effort. [REGISTER HERE](#)

**Fly tying for the Mayfly Project Saturday April 19<sup>th</sup> 9AM-2PM.** Lunch and all materials provided. Please bring your own fly tying gear if you can. A few sets can be provided if you don't have a set to bring.

We will be tying the Walt's Worm, Y2K, and Squirmy flies. If you haven't tied them before, here are links to review before you attend [Walt's Worm](#), [Y2K](#), [Squirmy](#)

\*\*Note, the squirmy pattern may depend on the materials provided.

**Veteran Fly Tying, April 25&26, 9:30-11:00 Patterson School.** The group is holding a two day event for Project Healing Waters and Wounded Warriors. Both mornings will be teaching fly tying. The Southern Fly Tyers Guild will teach the group to tie flies and needs volunteers to help out. If you can, volunteer to teach how to tie a fly. Also they need volunteers to circulate in the room to help assist the tyers. If you are able to do either, please contact Dave Everhart at [jacobsfork-flytying@gmail.com](mailto:jacobsfork-flytying@gmail.com).

**TU Eastern Rendezvous, April 25-27, Shepherdstown, WV.** For more information and to register go to [RENDEZVOUZ](#).

**Hickory TU Trout in the Classroom releases.** South Mountains State Park has finally announced to us that they will be

You are receiving this newsletter either as a member or prospective member of the Blue Ridge Chapter of Trout Unlimited. If you do not wish to receive this newsletter, please respond by email to [HkyNCTU@gmail.com](mailto:HkyNCTU@gmail.com) and let us know.

open for our release dates so we have now firmed up when and where. We have our volunteers for fly casting and fly tying, but we can always use more help to chaperone the events and if you haven't been to one you are really missing out on something awesome. To see the video of one of last year's events go to our website at [2024 TIC Release](#).

Hickory & North Lincoln High Schools will be releasing at South Mountains Park on Tuesday, April 29<sup>th</sup>.

River Bend Middle School will be releasing at Stone Mountain State Park on Wednesday, April 30<sup>th</sup>.

Blackburn Elementary School will be releasing at South Mountains State Park on Monday, May 5<sup>th</sup>.

At South Mountains State Park we will release at the Picnic Pavillion. When you enter the park, continue to where the road ends in a large parking lot. At Stone Mountain State Park we will release in the parking lot where the main road changes from asphalt to gravel. The event usually runs from 9AM-Noon. Bring your own lunch.

## TIE-A-THON A GREAT SUCCESS



The goal for the tie-a-thon was to create 2000 flies to be donated to various charity events. That goal was not just met, but shattered. Over the two Saturdays, 53 tyers attended and tied up 3000 flies. In addition there were donations of an additional 2200 flies. Thank you to every-

one for joining us in making that such an outstanding success.

The tie-a-thon will be repeated again next year and in addition there will be another event quarterly for specific organizations: Mayfly Project April 19<sup>th</sup>; Project Healing Waters July 19<sup>th</sup>; and Casting Carolinas October 18<sup>th</sup>.

## QUICKSAND IN WILSON CREEK

BE CAREFUL OUT THERE! <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/198C61gsDN/>



John Rabb

I knew the rivers and creeks would be dangerous after Helene but I really didn't think of quicksand. This gentleman was walking on a sand bar and suddenly sank waist deep. It took hours to dig him out so be careful out there trout fishermen. Cotton Mill Area of Wilson Creek Gorge

The sediments washed into the rivers by hurricane Helene have created new sandbars and in some cases there has not been adequate time for it to settle and harden, resulting in some areas of quicksand. This event happened recently at Wilson Creek near the cotton mill. Be very careful when you head up to the rivers

and it might be wise to not head out alone.



## 15 Awesome Nymph Fishing Tips [That Really Work]

[How To](#) / By [Spencer Durrant](#)

Few of us anglers are actually the purists we aspire to be, I think. For years, I styled myself as the dry-fly guy. If fish wouldn't eat on top, I didn't want to catch them. And for a while, that worked alright for me. But I realized quickly how much fishing I was missing out on. After all, most a trout's diet is subsurface, which means that you have more opportunities to catch trout when you're fishing nymphs, than if you're only ever fishing dries.

So, it's only natural that, as part of your evolution as an angler, you'll start looking into nymphing and different ways to be effective with those flies. Today, we'll go over 15 awesome nymph fishing tips that just flat-out put fish in the net. Some of them take practice, but they're all worth trying. You never know which one is going to work best on your local water.

### 1. Learn to Mend Your Fly Line

Mending line is a critical part of successfully catching fish on nymphs. Since you're fishing subsurface flies, your floating fly line dictates where your nymphs end up in the water. If your nymphs are in slower water, but your fly line is in faster water, you'll get immediate drag on your flies. That's not a natural presentation, and trout won't commit to your flies that way. I've got a great video on YouTube check it out below.

Good mending also allows you to extend the life of a drift for as long as you can keep mending. By mending your line to keep it moving at the same speed as your flies, you're increasing the time those flies spend in the strike zone – thereby increasing your chances of hooking fish.

**Guide Tip:** Learning to mend your line for a long, drag-free drift ensures that you get the best possible presentation to the trout. Master this skill as quickly as possible.

### 2. Minimize Drag on Your Fly

I touched on this above, but it's worth repeating as its own tip. Drag is the number-one killer of any fly presentation, but it's one that we often focus on more when fishing dry flies. That's because drag on a dry fly is easy to see. Drag on a nymph rig occurs when your line is in faster water than your



nymphs, pulling the nymphs at a faster-than-natural speed through the water. By getting a drag-free drift, you're making your nymphs look as realistic as possible.

*Read more ways to reduce drag in this article. [Understanding Drag when Fly Fishing and How to Reduce it](#)*

The best way to ensure you have a drag-free drift is to pay attention to your strike indicator and floating fly line (unless you're using Euro rigs, which we'll touch on later). If your fly line and indicator are roughly parallel on the water, then your chances of drag are lower. Watch both, though, and mend your line if you see either the indicator or line dragging across the river's surface.

### 3. Learn to "High Stick" when Nymphing

This is a technique that you absolutely have to master if you're planning to fish pocket water. Here in the Rockies, I think this was the first kind of fly fishing I really learned how to do. Essentially, you're trying to drift your nymphs through a pretty small pocket that's often surrounded by fast water. If you threw a traditional cast in there, the nymphs wouldn't have time to settle into the strike zone before being whisked away by the current.

High-sticking means that you lift all the extra line off the water, so that only your indicator is floating. By keeping all that slack line off the water, you're able to let your flies sink without the fast water taking them out of the hole.

### 4. Try Euro-Nymphing for More Trout

Euro nymphing deserves its own article, but you can fish Euro-style rigs without a Euro rod. Essentially, all you need is a colored piece of indicator leader to pull this off. Fishing a Euro-style rig just means that you're drifting only leader and tippet through the water. Your fly line never leaves the reel.

*In the article [Experimenting with Euro-Nymphing](#) I describe setting up a fly rod and fishing this technique.*

A long leader, with a colored indicator section, is easier to control in tight spaces, and easier to feel the bite when fish are being subtle with their takes. Again, Euro nymphing is its own story by itself, but you can employ some of its techniques in traditional nymphing settings for quick success.

### 5. Learn to Hook Set Often

This is something I've had to work on a ton over the years. My hook sets while nymphing have been notoriously soft. Often, I'll go to lift my rig up to re-cast, and there's a fish on the end. I didn't notice, and because lifting the line isn't a stiff hookset, I'd lose the fish.

The best hookset for nymph fishing is a quick, sharp pull straight up. It doesn't matter what angle your flies are at, or where your indicator is – **just set straight up**, quickly, and with a lot of force. You want that indicator to pop off the water with your hookset.

### 6. Swing Your Nymph at the End of a Drift

Swinging flies: This is something I never really took advantage of for the first years of my fishing career. But trout love to eat flies that are swung through the water. Emerging insects – especially mayflies and caddis – will zoom up to the surface of the water. This quick movement triggers the predatory instinct in trout, and a well-swung fly can seal the deal on fish that look like they're eating dries, but are ignoring your offerings.

To swing flies, just let your indicator and nymphs rise up in the water at the end of your drift, and pull them in a shallow arc back towards you before your next cast. This simple swing at the end of every drift will put a surprising amount of fish in your net.

### 7. Adjust the Depth of Your Nymph – Go Deep

When nymphing, you need to be flexible in adjusting your rig until you find what's working. One of the most important adjustments you can make is the depth of your flies. Generally, you want your nymphs bouncing along the bottom of the river. I've always been told that it's a good thing if my nymphs are pulling up moss. However, if you're not getting any action with flies on the bottom, move to the middle of the water column, or the top third. Mess with your depth until you find where the trout are feeding consistently.

*In the article [What is a Strike Indicator and How to Set it Up](#), we discuss even more about this.*

I like to fish one fly just off the bottom of the river, then another a few inches above it. This covers most of the fish that are hugging the bottom, and aren't willing to move too far to eat. Then, I place another nymph at what I think is the midpoint of the water column. This covers almost everywhere that actively feeding trout will. I tweak my rig constantly until I find that sweet spot, then stick with it.

### 8. Selecting the Right Indicator for Your Nymph



Indicator choice: The kind of indicator you choose to nymph with makes a huge difference in your success. For example, if you're fishing low water, with small fish, and small flies, you don't want an XXL bobber plopping down on the water. Not only will it scare the fish, but a bigger indicator is harder to move through the surface tension of the water. That means you're not seeing every take, because not every take is forceful enough to pull an indicator down a few inches below the surface.

I tend to go on the small side with my indicators, even if I'm fishing bigger nymphs. I want the most sensitivity I can get in my nymph rig, since seeing takes is how I'll catch the most fish. The style of indicator doesn't matter too much, although I've always had luck with the Thingamabobber style ones more than the wool or yarn indicators. They all have their place, though, and you'll want to choose the right indicator type based on the water you're fishing.

### 9. Nymph Fly Selection – When in Doubt Switch It Out

This almost feels too obvious a tip, but it's one that a lot of anglers surprisingly overlook. When I'm guiding, I'm constantly switching up rigs for my clients, going through patterns until I find the fly that's producing consistently.

Your fly choice should be inspired by the local insect population on your river. In most trout water, mayfly, caddis, and midge nymphs are present year-round. Some rivers have a lot of stoneflies, too, and you can fish those year-round to good success if you know what you're doing. I prefer to stick with the tried-and-true trout nymphs like Frenchies, Hare's Ears,

and zebra midges. These have yet to let me down on any trout river.

You also want to make sure that you're placing your flies in the correct order in your rig. My rule of thumb is to always put the smallest fly on the bottom. Nymph rigs cast better with the larger fly up top, in my experience. It's rare that I ever fish the biggest fly on the bottom. I also fish my bottom two nymphs close together – usually only 12-15 inches apart. This more closely mimics the spread of nymphs in the water column on the bottom of the river.

### 10. Recognizing “Nymph Water” When Fly Fishing

Finding water: Just like when you're fishing dries, you want to find water that's conducive to nymph fishing. In general, that includes any pockets, holes, deep pools, and runs. Fishing the inside seam of a bend is always a good bet, and it's not wise to skip nymphing riffles. You'll be surprised at how many fish are sitting in riffly water, just waiting for a meal to come on down the conveyor belt.

A good rule of thumb is to look for water that is deep enough to hold trout, and slow enough that your flies will have time to drop into the strike zone. Any water that fits this bill is good water to nymph. It may not be the most accessible water, but there's almost always a fish or two hiding in this kind of water.

### 11. Tried and True a Dry Fly with Dropper

I've long been a fan of fishing multiple flies, and my go-to rig across trout water anywhere in the Rockies is to fish a dry fly with two nymphs dropped below it. This rig is deadly, because it covers all the possible options for feeding trout, with the exception of streamers. But a dry-dropper-dropper rig can be modified to present nymphs on the bottom, or emerger patterns during a hatch.

Read all about setting up a dry fly with a dropper in this article. [How to Setup a Dry Fly and Dropper](#)

If I'm fishing nymphs off my dry fly, I drop between two to three feet of tippet from my dry to my first nymph. From there, it's only usually a 12-15 inch section of tippet between my nymphs. As I mentioned above, positioning them closer together is more realistic to where bugs swim at the bottom of the river.

If you use the dry-dropper-dropper rig to fish wet flies or emergers, you can be safe with at least 12 inches of tippet between flies. Distance doesn't matter as much if your nymphs or emergers aren't meant to be fished right on the bottom.

### 12. Become Great at Roll Casting a Fly Rod

Roll casting is at the heart of nymph fishing. You'll have to be good at roll casting if you want to succeed with nymphing. Luckily for all of us, the roll cast might be the easiest to execute in all of fly fishing.

To roll cast, simply let your line drift down below you until there's tension on your rod from the current pulling on your line. Then, lift the rod slight and push it forward, stopping the tip at a 45-degree angle above the water. This will “roll” the line out and into place with minimal effort on your part.

Roll casts with lots of flies, or heavy ones, take a bit more getting used to. I highly recommend taking the time to practice your roll cast. Even doing it on the lawn is better than nothing at all. And, you'll be able to find plenty of online resources to

help you learn to roll cast. It really is simple, and too often made more complicated than it needs to be.

**Guide Tip:** *Don't force the roll cast. Let your rod do all the work of loading, and unloading, the energy of your fly line. A roll cast should be nearly effortless on your part.*

### 13. Relax and Be Patient Nymphing Will Work

Be patient: As much as I've tried to emphasize the importance of switching flies to find out what fish are feeding on, it's also important to give your rig time to work. If you're fishing with nymphs that have caught fish before on the river you're at, don't switch up after 10 minutes of no action. Instead, tweak your depth, or your presentation, before changing flies.

A guide friend of mine once said that fly choice matters far less than fly presentation does. Chances are, if your flies aren't getting any attention, it's because you're not presenting them properly. Make sure you don't have any drag, and that your flies are getting down to the strike zone, before you start switching up flies.

And remember that sometimes, fish just don't want to eat. That's normal, and why we call it fishing instead of catching.

### 14. The Size and Type of Tippet Matters When Nymphing

Tippet matters: Just like with dry flies, the size of tippet you use matters a great deal in nymphing. Thicker tippet actually sinks at a slower rate, and doesn't move as naturally below the water's surface as thinner tippet does. This doesn't matter when you're fishing a single streamer, but when you're throwing nymphs and trying to imitate bugs bouncing along the bottom of a trout stream, those bugs need to be able to bounce and float in as natural a state as possible.

I don't fish anything bigger than 4x on my nymphs, but I'm generally using 5 or 6x fluorocarbon. Fluorocarbon sinks quicker, is thinner than monofilament, and is obviously invisible, making it an ideal choice for tippet material. Make sure when you're putting together your nymph rig that you're using tippet matched to the water.

### 15. Add More Chances with More Nymphs



Fish as many flies as possible: I've alluded to this a lot, but I do fish a lot of flies when I'm nymph fishing. Where I live in the Rockies, it's legal to have three flies on a rig on any water. Some states don't allow three flies (Montana only allows two flies, for example) so make sure that you're up-to-date on local regulations. But the idea behind fishing as many flies as possible is that you're giving trout as many chances as you can to eat your flies.

If you can fish three flies, but only fish two, you're cheating yourself out of an opportunity to get into more fish. A three-fly rig can be a bit ungainly at first, but casting, mending, and fishing three flies isn't that much more difficult than two flies.

Fishing all flies possible really helps you out in figuring out what trout are eating, too. By giving them options, you're able

to more quickly see what they're keyed in on during any given day. If you fish a Frenchie, Hare's Ear, and zebra midge, but only hook trout on the midge, then you know that's what fish are looking for. You can switch your other two flies out to match other midge patterns, in the hopes of getting the fish holding in other locations in the water column.

### Last Cast

Nymph fishing can be an absolute blast. As someone who grew up being taught that dry flies were the only real flies in the world, I know I missed out on a ton of fish as a kid. Even now, my preference to fish dry flies sometimes puts me at a big disadvantage, where I'm not willing to fish nymphs. By utilizing them as a regular, and integral, part of your approach to fishing, you're expanding the tools with which you can use to outsmart fish. And after all, isn't that what fishing is all about? In many ways, you'll find that nymphs are easier to fish than dry flies, if only because they often produce more fish. It's easier to push through a slower day, or a bad weather day, when you're hooked into trout on a consistent basis. That said, you do need to practice your nymph fishing techniques. Make sure your drifts are great, that you don't have drag, and that you're allowing your flies to get into the strike zone for as long as possible. Paying attention to the smaller details will ensure that you're successful with your nymph fishing endeavors.

### TROUT BEADS



At the raffle at our monthly TU meeting one of the prizes was some trout beads. Many people have never used them and weren't sure how to. My son and I were first introduced to them fishing for rainbow trout in Alaska. Since that time my son has started using them here in North Carolina with phenomenal success.

We have found that the best size is in the 8-10 mm range and the mottled or frosted orange bring the best results. You can tie them onto the tippet in a loop, but we've found that the easiest way is to use a rubber pegs to pin them in place on the line about 2" above the hook. Doing this causes the hook to connect to the fish from the outside the mouth which helps prevent the occasional gill hook. The fish takes the egg into its mouth and when you set the hook it pulls the hook to the outside of the jaw.



To set up your rig simply slide the bead onto the tippet, tie on the hook, slide the peg into the egg from the bottom until tight, and then trim off the excess peg. The half trimmed off can be used for the next egg.

Give trout beads a try on your next adventure. They are easy to use, a lot less expensive than flies, and might help the caught fish to survive.

### FISHING CLASSES BY NCWRC

	Apr 2025	Volunteer Opportunity
4/2/2025	<a href="#">Topwater Bass Basics - Virtual</a>	
4/5/2025	<a href="#">Introductory Fishing for Adults - Marion</a>	X
4/9/2025	<a href="#">Bass Fundamentals: Intro to Crankbaits - Virtual</a>	
4/11/2025	<a href="#">Intermediate Fly-tying Workshop - Morganton</a>	
4/12/2025	<a href="#">Entomology for Anglers Workshop - Patterson School - Lenoir</a>	X
4/16/2025	<a href="#">Bass Jig Basics - Virtual</a>	
4/23/2025	<a href="#">Springtime Tactics for Crappie - Virtual</a>	
4/26/2025	<a href="#">Introduction to Kayak Fishing - Marion</a>	
4/30/2025	<a href="#">Soft Plastic Rigging &amp; Presentation - Virtual</a>	
May 2025		
5/7/2025	<a href="#">Topwater Bass Basics - Virtual</a>	
5/9/2025	<a href="#">Intermediate Fly-tying Workshop - Morganton</a>	
5/14/2025	<a href="#">Catfishing Basics - Virtual</a>	
5/17/2025	<a href="#">Fly-casting Instructor Academy - Marion</a>	X
5/18/2025	<a href="#">Fly-casting Instructor Academy - Marion</a>	X
5/21/2025	<a href="#">Fly-fishing Basics: Understanding and Selecting Fly-fishing Equipment - Virtual</a>	



### ADVICE FROM THE VISE

By Dave Everhart

In case you missed it- spring is finally here-and it's the peak time for most of us to get out and wet a line. I started seeing some fish moving up the lower Fork last week, so it's time

to map out the newly carved out holes for me. South Mountain is opening back up so maybe there will be some stocking to come up there.

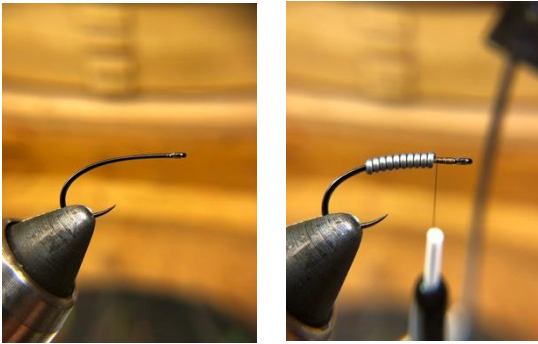
Keeping with the nymph theme this month, I going to show a simple pattern that you can spin up easily, and it has a plethora of variations you can make to the base model.

This is the same base pattern we will be teaching to Project Healing Waters retreat at the end of the month. Always looking for volunteers to assist the vets in tying or at the stream side, so if you are interested in having a good time with some great folks, email me and I'll get you in touch.

This pattern morphed out of some hew material I found from Semperfli called Straggle Legs.



A bit longer than straggle string, and they give you this nice wrap of movement in the thorax in a chenille like product. I couple this with their dirty bug yarn- lots of color combinations with those two - and wing case of flash as an attention getter. I didn't have a name for it and told my

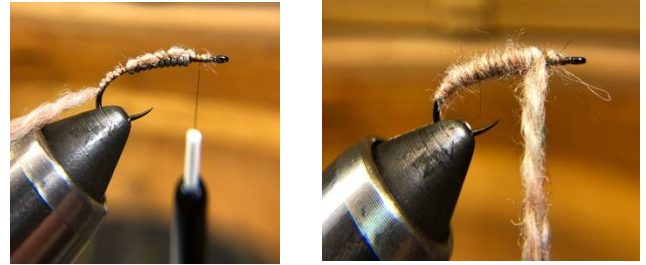


Mississippi fishing buddy the recipe and it became the Dirty Strangler. So, I'm going with that.

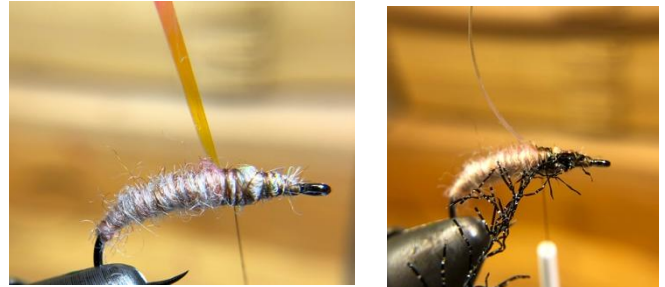
This is my favorite curved nymph hook, the B300, or 2312, or FH718. Size is up to yourself, from an #8 to an #18 will work- turn over some rocks and see the average bug size for your water. Weight is also among the variants. A little for mid column, bead and wire for deeper and bottom ticking , or no weight as a dropper.

Tail or no tail,, rib or no rib. You can modify the base as you want.

With the wire wrapped snugly, tie in the yarn the length of the shank from eye to bend. This smooths the foundation for the



yarn wraps on the body. Take touching wraps up to the eye, secure and trim the tag. Simple but really effective body.



At the 2/3 mark from the bend, tie in some pearl flash to form the wing case. Again, razor foam, solid bug back, or even pheasant tail fibers work here as a variant. Next tie in the end of the straggle chenille and start wraps just in front of the wing case material. Wrap to the eye but avoid crowding it.



Stroke back the straggle fibers and create the beginning of a small head. Pull the flash over the legs and secure the flash with a few snug wraps before trimming out the tag. Take several wraps to form a headband whip finish.



That finishes the base model. I like a little UV resin to give it a little more protection from this time trout teeth.

A little black on the head- again a hot spot color for a variant and some clear on the flash to give it some dimension and refractory notes.



Great looking, super buggy and very effective nymph that is ripe to put your own creative spin on.



I give you the Dirty Strangler. Give this one a try this spring in your favorite nymph rig. Please don't hesitate to contact me at [Jacobsforkflytying@gmail.com](mailto:Jacobsforkflytying@gmail.com) Please check out some current ties on Instagram at Jacobs Fork Fly Tying.

## HOW TO DETERMINE THE DEPTH FOR A STRIKE INDICATOR WHEN NYMPH FISHING

June 2, 2021

By: Jenn Hsia



Most have heard the phrase, "set your indicator at 1.5-2x the depth of the water." But what if you are unfamiliar with the water you are about to fish. How do you know what depth to be fishing at?

### RULE OF DEPTH

There are several variables to consider to determine what depth to be fishing at. Water current speed, how much weight I have on my line whether that is split shot or size of the tungsten bead I am using, and my best guess estimate of water depth.

Weight of your rig + depth of your indicator + current speed = fish

### 1ST STEP - DETERMINE WEIGHT OF FLY TO USE

One of the keys to successful nymphing is to get your nymphs to depth as quickly as possible. With higher current speeds, I will generally go heavier with the weight I have on my rig. With slower current speeds, I will go lighter with the weight.

## WEIGHT OF FLY TO USE

- Higher Current Speeds = Heavier Flies and/or Weight
- Slower Current Speeds = Lighter Flies



### 2ND STEP - PICK A DEPTH

Once the weight of the fly is determined, I will then pick a depth to set my indicator at. If I feel the water depth is 4 feet, I will start at 3 feet of depth to be safe.

Typically I will make 3-4 casts and if I don't get a bite or tick bottom, I will move my indicator 6 inches. I will repeat this cycle going deeper and deeper until I tick bottom or catch fish. If I never tick bottom, I will consider placing more weight on the rig, especially if I see that my strike indicator is moving at the same speed or faster than the surface current.

### PICK A DEPTH

If I never tick bottom, I will consider placing more weight on the rig, especially if I see that my strike indicator is moving at the same speed or faster than the surface current.



### BOTTOM CURRENT MOVES SLOWER THAN TOP

Generally, I like to see my indicator moving just a little slower than the surface current. This gives me an indication that my nymph is now drifting near the bottom of the stream since the current near the bottom of the stream/river tends to move slower than at the top. Trout tend to reside just off the bottom of the stream.

Don't be afraid or reluctant to make changes in the weight and/or depth of your rig.

### LEVEL NYMPH LEADER

If I know that I will be nymphing most of the day, I will use a nymphing level leader rather than a tapered leader.

The tippet below the indicator should be level. A level tippet sinks at the same rate along its entire length, whereas a tapered tippet section sinks unevenly due to the difference in diameters.

Thicker tippet sections (nylon or fluorocarbon) sink slower than thinner-diameter material. Thicker tippet will also be influenced by the current and create drag.

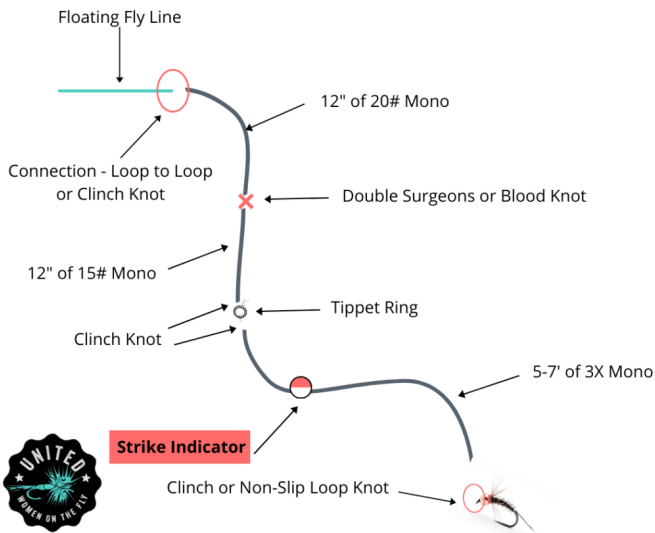
**Nymph Level Leader:** 12 inches of 20# mono + 12 inches of 15# mono to a tippet ring (optional) + 5-7 feet of 3X mono. If you need to go thinner with your tippet, I typically will use 5 feet of 3x + 3 feet of 4x or 5x mono.

This level leader does not cast as well as a taper leader. It's also much easier to move a strike indicator along a level line than a tapered line. Your line won't kink nearly as much.

Watch the June UWOTF Virtual Meeting Presentation on Summer Trout Fishing Tips on Approaching Trout with Stealth, Nymph Fishing with a Strike Indicator and Alaska Fishing Techniques. Co-Hosts – Anh Thai, Jenn Hsia and Jackie Bowman.

## Level Nymph Leader Set-Up

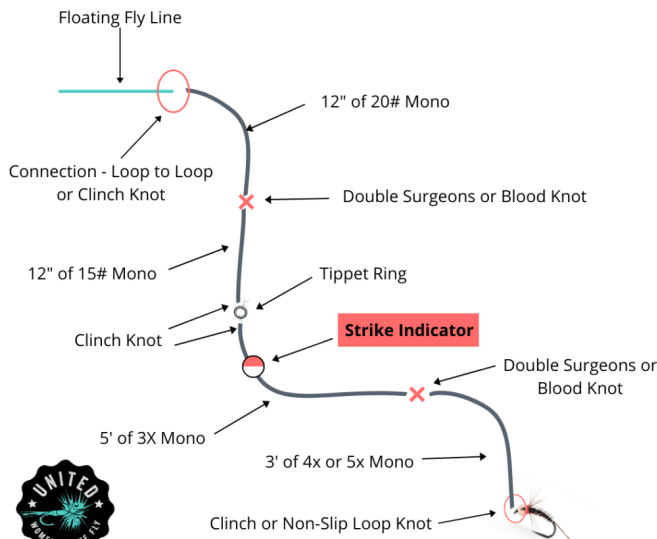
A level leader sinks at the same rate along its entire length, whereas a tapered tippet section sinks unevenly due to the difference in diameters.



There are many ways to set-up a subsurface nymph rig. Here is one suggestion from Jenn Hsia, UWOTF Education Contributor.

## Level Nymph Leader Set-Up

Smaller Diameter Tippet Option #2



There are many ways to set-up a subsurface nymph rig. Here is one suggestion from Jenn Hsia, UWOTF Education Contributor.



## CONNECT WITH JENN HSIA

I am passionate and obsessed fly angler from the Twin Cities area of Minnesota. I found fly fishing relatively late in life – I started fly fishing as a way to explore the Minnesota outdoors more. It is the state of ten thousand lakes, after all. My first love is trout, but I have really come to enjoy targeting warm water species such as bass, pike, carp. My dream fish would be a musky on the fly!

I fish mostly in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa. I am excited about taking my first fly fishing trip to Utah this summer.

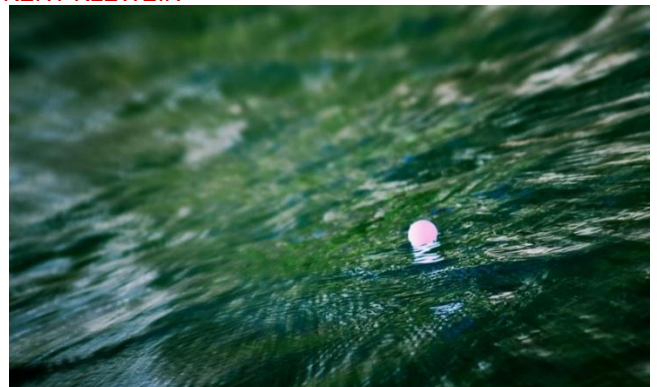
When I am not fishing, I work in healthcare. I enjoy traveling, hiking, and eating all the food!

*Editor's Note: If you are properly fishing your nymph you will be near the bottom and inevitably get snagged. Here is a great video to help you free it. [How To Free A Bottom Snag](#)*



## MEND YOUR STRIKE INDICATOR TO INCREASE YOUR DRAG-FREE DRIFT

BY KENT KLEWEIN



Mend your indicator to increase your drag-free drift. Photo by Louis Cahill



## IS THERE EVER A TIME, WHEN NYMPHING, THAT IT CAN BE BENEFICIAL TO LIFT THE STRIKE INDICATOR OUT OF THE WATER DURING A MEND?

When I first started learning the art of mending fly line, I constantly struggled with keeping my striking indicator and dry fly from moving across the surface of the water. Quite often, I not only moved them during my mends, I even lifted them completely out of the water in the process. Most of the time that wasn't a good thing, because it usually caused my flies to be pulled off my intended drift line, and that greatly hindered my ability to catch fish, no matter how accurate my initial presentation cast happened to be. I learned quickly, that poor mending, and sloppy line management, were the two main factors in keeping me from getting my rod bent with trout. There was no doubt that my problem with mending fly line laid in the fact that my technique was awful. I thought I was a whole lot maturer than I really was as a fly fisher, failing to realize that I had just begun to skim the surface of learning the intricacies of fly line mending. Such as, determining when or when not a mend was called for during a drift, mend timing and form.

I idolized, and wanted so badly to be the fly angler that made mending look effortless and second nature. You know, the fly fisher that can pull off split second mends perfectly during the drift every time, without moving the strike indicator in the slightest bit. After all, isn't that what a perfect mend is supposed to look like? The answer is yes, in most cases, but there are situations when not moving your indicator during a mend will fall short of providing an angler with enough drag free drift to get the job done. For instance, I was watching my client the other day, as he made a presentation with his nymph rig towards a slow seam on the far bank. Several times he made a pinpoint cast to the far seam and mended all of his fly line to his strike indicator. However, before his flies could reach the sweet spot of his drift, the fast current adjacent to the soft seam, would drag his flies out of the strike zone every time. This happened four or five times in a row before the lightbulb in my head finally turned on, and I told him, *"In order for you to keep your flies from being pulled off target at the last second, you need to not only mend all the fly line to your strike indicator, you also need to mend a good portion of your leader as well. The next time you make your presentation and mend, make sure you lift your strike indicator out of the water and position it back upstream. Basically, I want you to over power the mend, and do what you always thought was bad."*

The next few consecutive casts, my client did exactly as I had instructed, and his flies drifted drag free, all the way down the slow water seam. Unfortunately, he wasn't rewarded with a fish. Odds are, if there was a trout in that slow seam, it had probably been alerted from the previous presentations. That being said, all was not lost, because it did give me the idea of writing this post and pointing out that there can be situations on the water nymphing, when it can be beneficial for an angler to pick up his/her strike indicator during a mend. Doing so, it will allow the angler to also mend some of their leader, which will help to further lengthen a drag free drift. This can be

especially helpful when making presentations across different currents speeds, where the fly will be drifting in slower moving water than the rest of the rig and fly line.

Keep it Reel,  
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Kent Klewein

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## TANDEM TACTICS FOR TROUT PART TWO: BELOW THE SURFACE

LOUIS CAHILL



Photo by Louis Cahill

## DRY DROPPER SET UPS ARE ONLY THE BEGINNING. SOME OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE TEAMS RUN DEEP.

Tandem nymph rigs are hands down the most effective way to catch trout. Let's leave behind the aesthetic arguments about dry fly fishing for the minute, there's a reason that all competitive trout fishing is done with teams of nymphs. It works and it will increase your numbers.

There are a host of ways you can choose to fish nymphs. I'm not going into the details of Czech Nymphing vs. French nymphing or Merican nymphing, but I will include some links at the end of this article. For now I'm going to focus on choosing and rigging nymphs that work effectively as teams.

### Rigging

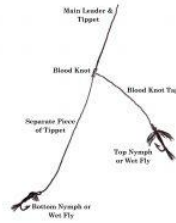
There are two common ways to rig tandem nymphs. The simplest and most commonly used for indicator set ups is to tie the dropper off the bend of your lead fly's hook. Sixteen inches of tippet between the flies is a good average length. You might assume that the dropper would fish sixteen inches deeper than the lead, but that's not the case. It all depends on the distribution of weight.

It is pretty common to fish a weighted lead fly with an unweighted dropper. This team will fish at about the same depth. This tactic offers the fish two choices at the same depth. If your goal is to fish different levels of the water column, you must use a weighted dropper or a split shot four inches or so above the dropper. An unweighted dropper with a split shot will have better action but is a little more maintenance and can compromise your tippet strength. The difference in depth between the

two flies will only be about half the length of the tippet which separates them so you may want to go longer than sixteen inches, depending on conditions.

This is the setup I use most commonly. I place a split shot above my last blood knot on the leader, ten inches above my lead fly. My lead fly is usually weighted and the dropper set up varies between unweighted fly, unweighted fly with split shot and weighted fly. It has been my experience that most anglers do not fish enough weight. If you're not finding the bottom once in a while, you aren't nymphing this rig effectively.

The other common method for teams of nymphs is to tie each fly from the tag end of a blood knot. This method is most often used for tight line methods like Czech nymphing, because it allows the flies to move naturally in the water while the leader itself remains under tension.



Leave the tag end of your leader about eight inches long when tying on tippet and tie your fly to it. It's important that the fly is tied to the leader end of the knot rather than the tippet. This way the fish will pull the knot tighter and not apart. Repeat this procedure for the second and even third fly. Tie the entire leader before adding the flies.

The weight for this kind of rig is traditionally incorporated in the flies. The set up is challenging enough without split shot. There are many schools of thought but putting a very heavy fly in the middle of a three fly team with a smaller weighted fly in the lead and an unweighted fly at the termination of the leader is a common and effective method. The flies fish in a kind of W formation. You can also attach the three flies by tags and terminate the set up with split shot.

If you choose this type of rig, save yourself some grief, and minimize your casting. Lifting the flies to the surface and flipping them upstream is the best way to avoid making a mess of it. A classic dead drift with no indicator, or a tight line method yield best results.

### **Selecting flies**

Fly selection is a matter of psychology. Whether fish psychology or angler psychology is debatable. Effective anglers, sane or otherwise, employ some kind of strategy in selecting a team of flies. Often a given fly is only effective when paired with the right partner. Here are some strategies I commonly use.

### **Big / small**

This is almost always at play in my nymph rigs, sometimes incorporating another strategy as well. The larger fly is always in the lead position and is generally weighted. On streams where stoneflies are present, those are my go-to patterns. I may select a natural dropper like a Hare's Ear, a Caddis pupa or midge larvae, or I may choose some type of attractor.

### **Attractor / natural**

Hot Spot nymphs, flashy nymphs and bright colored patterns like San Juan Worms get fish's attention. They catch fish but they can also make your natural patterns more effective by

drawing the fish's attention. I decide which is the dropper by weight and size.

### **Nymph / emerger**

This is a great technique for taking advantage of pre-hatch insect activity. Target a species of insect you expect to be active and use a nymph and emerger that imitate that same species. There is no wrong way to set these flies up but I like to put the nymph in the lead and use unweighted patterns for both. You can fish them in the film or add a split shot. CDC emergers are my favorite and will still ride higher in the water column than the nymph, especially with split shot.

### **Junk / subtle**

I have found it very productive to pair subtle, natural patterns like RS2s or tiny Pheasant Tails with junk flies, especially egg patterns in the lead. Whether or not you like egg patterns they get the attention of fish. On highly pressured waters where fish will refuse eggs, they still look at them. You can use this to draw attention to a pattern they might eat, but might not see otherwise. This trick works well when water clarity is poor. In this case I keep the dropper no more than a foot from lead fly.

### **The hot ticket**

When fish are keyed in on a particular pattern, there's no reason you can't fish two, or three of them. You can vary the size and color slightly to increase the attraction. Spreading the patterns out let's you cover the water more effectively and increase your odds of a hook up.

### **Built to swing**

One of the most productive teams you can fish is a Woolly Buzzer followed by a soft hackle. Both flies work as dead drifted nymphs but they are both super effective on the swing. I will typically cast this team upstream for a dead drift presentation, then swing and lift them at the end of the drift. You can cast them down and across for the swing or straight across and strip them back. You'll even catch fish casting upstream and retrieving. There's no wrong way to fish this team, which makes it a great choice for beginners.

### **Streamers**

Yep, even streamers can be fished in teams. You can combine two flies of the same size or fish a small streamer behind a larger one. Flashy nymphs work extremely well dropped from streamers too. The fish who may not have the confidence to eat the streamer may eat the nymph. Larger patterns like size eight accommodate the heavier tippet needed for streamer fishing.

### **A word of caution**

Fishing tandem set ups can sometimes end in foul-hooked fish, and anglers. Keeping your flies at least sixteen inches apart will help reduce this but foul hooking is usually a result of a slow hook set. If your timing is good, it shouldn't be much of an issue. It's a good idea to fish barbless hooks, especially on random set ups. This will reduce the chance of seriously injuring a fish or yourself. The worst hooking I ever got was from a dropper pulled into my hand by a fish. The hook went through my thumb and came out through the nail. I was never more thankful that I'd crushed the barb.

Tandem flies are a powerful tool for putting fish in the net. This should give you some ideas and get you catching more

trout. Don't be afraid to experiment. Find what work for you on your water. There are no wrong answers.

[Read Tandem Tactics for Trout Part 1](#)

[Read about Czech Nymphing](#)

[Read about Merican Nymphing \(indicator nymphing\)](#)

*Louis Cahill*

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