

Hickory, Table Rock, High Country Trout Unlimited February 2026 Newsletter



I've been fortunate in my life to have had several fly fishing adventures from Alaska to the Caribbean and around the lower 48. Most trips have been a wonderful memory and only a few have not turned out as well. The few that have not turned out well have mainly been due to unexpected weather and there is nothing you can do about that, however, there are several things to consider that can improve the chances of making it a great trip. Great places book quickly, so you can't always wait until the last minute to book a trip. So start planning now for that trip in your future.

The best way to decide where and when to go is to talk to people who have been there. I have shared many of my trips in newsletters and you can find them at [Past Newsletters](#). But the best way is to attend your local TU meeting and talk to people. And even better plan a trip with them. Part of a memorable trip is the people you share it with.

HIGH COUNTRY TU MEETING

When: Thursday February 5th, 6-8 PM

Where: Blue Ridge Conservancy Education Center
416 Aho Rd, Blowing Rock, NC 28605

HICKORY TU MEETING

When: Tuesday, January 20th, 6 PM

Where: American Legion 2nd Floor
70 Lakeside Ave, Granite Falls

Who: Thomas Hawkins
TU NC Project Manager

What: Recently completed and upcoming TU projects in NC

TJ Hawkins started with TU in November 2024, as the North Carolina Project Manager and oversees the stream restoration projects across western North Carolina

There will be no meal service at this meeting. Drinks and snacks such as potato chips can be purchased at the bar on the first floor.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed some great fly fishing gear to our monthly raffle. If you have things in good condition that you no longer need, bring them to the meeting to share in the monthly raffle.

JANUARY HICKORY TU MEETING

(TJ) Johnson gave us a good look at the status of state trout hatcheries and upcoming stocking for 2026, 2027, and potentially 2028. The Wildlife Commission's largest trout hatchery (Bobby N. Setzer) will be closed for full renovation during that time, and the Armstrong hatchery in McDowell County will be the primary source for stockings. This will not only lead to a reduction in overall trout production but also require modifications to stocking schedules and logistical operations to meet program demands. On a positive note, the Commission recently acquired a new state hatchery (Glady Fork) and is also coordinating with regional private trout hatcheries to boost production and stocking numbers during the renovation. Although the total numbers of trout stocked during the renovation process will be reduced, exactly by how much is unknown at this time. A modified stocking approach and schedule will apply during the rebuild, so anglers are encouraged to check the Commission's website for updates regarding their stocked stream of interest using the links provided below. Specific stocking approaches are location dependent, but as an example, Delayed Harvest Trout Waters (DH) within District 8 will be stocked during the typical Spring/Fall seasons at a reduced rate; however, these DH stockings will be single stockings and only occur in October, March, and May. Combining stockings into fewer months will hopefully provide a better fishing experience by offsetting the overall reduction in fish numbers.

You can follow the progress on the Setzer hatchery renovation and stockings at <https://www.ncwildlife.gov/setzer> and <https://www.ncwildlife.gov/trout>.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Monthly Chimney Rock Cleanup-Feb 6th, 10-1, Chimney Rock Village Park 195 Main St, Chimney Rock [Sign Up](#)
Tie for a Cause, Saturday, Feb 21st, 9-3, Patterson School, 4646 Patterson School Drive, Lenoir 28645. We will be tying flies for the national Tie-a-Thon organization that donates flies to organizations throughout the US. The flies we tie are [Walt's Worm](#), [Y2K](#), [Squirmy](#), [Egg Fly](#). The second Tie-a-Thon will be February 21st at Patterson. We need a head

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 and let us know.

count for lunch, so if you are coming, please RSVP to theflytyingsanta24@gmail.com.

Live Stake Planting at Wagoner-March 7th, 10-3, New River State Park at Wagoner Access (1477 Wagoner Access Rd. Jefferson, NC) [Sign Up](#)

New River Live Stake Giveaways

- Watauga Mar 11th [Details](#)
- Ashe Mar 13th [Details](#)
- Wilkes Mar 19th [Details](#)
- Allegheny Mar 20th [Details](#)

2026 Southeast Regional Rendezvous, March 13-15. YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly, Black Mountain, NC. [Tickets & Lodging](#)

WILSON CREEK LIVESTAKE AND TREE PLANTING EVENT

MIDDLE BRIDGE PLANTING AREA



TREE SPECIES TO INCLUDE: SWEET BIRCH, SPICEBUSH, WHITE OAK, EASTERN RED BUD, BOX ELDER, SYCAMORE, AND DOG WOOD OR LOCAL EQUIVALENT.
LIVE STAKES: 2-3 FEET APART ARROWWOOD VIBURNUM AND NINE BARK.

The Hickory TU chapter has arranged for a livestake and tree planting event for bank protection on Wilson Creek, Saturday, February 28th, from 10-2. The event will take place at the middle bridge (just above the old mill foundation and handicap area). Park in the lot just above the bridge to the right and if full additional parking just beyond and to the left under the power lines. If you have a sledge or shovel, please bring them along. We will have soda and water, but please bring your own lunch. If you plan to attend, please email us at hkynctu@gmail.com.



Note: If your organization has an upcoming event and would like it in the newsletter, send it to HkyNCTU@gmail.org.

NCWRC FLY FISHING CLASSES

2/4/2026 - Volunteer Orientation - Marion

2/7/2026 - The Fly Angler's Next Steps: Leaders & Lanyards - Lenoir

2/11/2026 - Springtime Tactics for Crappie - Virtual

2/13/2026 - Fly-fishing Basics: Understanding and Selecting Fly-fishing Equipment - Marion

2/14/2026 - Basic Fly-casting Workshop

2/18/2026 - Rod Building Primer - Virtual

2/19/2026 - Intermediate Fly-tying Workshop - Morganton

2/21/2026 - Basic Rod Building Workshop - Marion

2/26/2026 - Beginning Fly-Tying Workshop Part I- Morganton

2/27/2026 - DIY Fishing: Soft Plastics Lure Making Workshop - Marion

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“Enjoying a fly fishing trip is not just about fishing, but includes the thrill of the travel to a new destination, the environment around you, the companionship of the fellow fishermen, and occasionally a very unique experience.”

PLANNING A TRIP TO ALASKA

I've made four trips to Alaska. Two stand out as some of my most memorable fly fishing trips, two was dampened by the weather. In this article I'll share with you what I have learned about planning for those trips and where you might want to go.

When to go?

My first trip to Alaska was to the Kenai River Lodge to celebrate my son's graduation from college. My wife, my son, and I went on the trip. The first thing you'll want to do in planning a trip to Alaska is to determine what fish you are targeting and when they make their run up the river. The best way to do that is to use the Alaska Department of Fish and Game "Sport Fish Run Calendar". [Sport Fish Run Timing](#) Alaska covers a vast area and runs have a wide variation depending on where you will be going. Note that normally your trips will be to catch salmon coming into the rivers, so for that you should select the "freshwater" location.

We had decided to go to the Kenai to fish for the large king salmon that spawn in that river. The king salmon run in the Kenai is May through August, but we learned that it really peaks from late June through July so scheduled our trip in July. (*Note: In recent years Alaska Fish and Game has shut down the season for king's early due to over fishing. It might be safer to schedule that trip in the last half of June.*)

During the trip to the Kenai, the lodge also took us out on the bay for halibut. Halibut are there all summer so it's easy to work that trip in with whatever salmon you are fishing for.

Our second and fourth trips to Alaska were to Lake Iliamna for rainbow trout. The rainbow trout come up the streams to feed on the salmon eggs. On Lake Iliamna the sockeye salmon come up the streams in July and August and the coho come up in August and September. We were told that the last half of August to mid-September was the best time as the rainbow

have had time to bulk up on eggs and you'll get the biggest rainbow at that time.

Our third trip was to Prince of Wales Island for coho. The coho run there is August and September. Because the timing of the runs is never absolute, we opted for late August, the mid-point of the run. If you go too early, the run may be late that year and if you go too late, many of the salmon will have turned dark and are not as good to eat. As it turned out, our timing was off as there had been little rain before our arrival. The rivers were low and the run had shut down. No matter how hard you try to pick the right time there is always a chance that the weather can damage your trip as it did on this trip from the rain and our second trip to Lake Iliamna when and tropical like weather system move in and we faced 50 mph winds on part of the trip.

WHERE SHOULD YOU GO?

Alaska is the largest state in the USA and as a result has many different places for you to go and many types of fish and types of fishing. Most people probably go for the salmon, but there is a variety of other freshwater and salt-water fish you can go for like rainbow trout, grayling and even northern pike. The fish you are after can help make the deciding factor. If you are after salmon, the best choice will be a coastal river. When they come in from the ocean they are fresh and tasty if you plan to take some home.



After only four trips there, I can't claim to be an expert on the state of Alaska, but I would say that there are perhaps five different zones in the state you might want to consider:

- SE Alaska Peninsula and Islands
- Kenai Peninsula
- Alaska Peninsula (around Lake Iliamna and Katmai National Park)
- Kodiak Island
- North of Anchorage to Denali

I have fished the first three locations on our trips. Once to SE Alaska, twice to the Alaska Peninsula, and once to the Kenai, but a second time to Kenai at the end of one of the trips to Iliamna.

Kenai Peninsula

If you are going for salmon, the first four locations are all good choices. It's easy to get to the Kenai Peninsula and it offers a lot of side adventures along with the salmon fishing. As I mentioned before, the largest and best tasting salmon is the king salmon. I learned years ago fishing on Lake Michigan that they are so much tastier because they have twice the calories of coho and the same as a sirloin steak. And they get huge in the Kenai River. We caught 24 and 38 pound fish on our trip there and they can go well over 50 pounds.



On our trip to the Kenai River we stayed at the Angler's Lodge, right on the river. Days we took fishing trips and evenings we fished right off the bank for sockeye salmon and caught quite a few. We got a package that included three days on the Kenai, one day on the ocean for halibut, and one day a fly-in across Cook Inlet to Lake Clark National Park. I'm told the fly-in is no longer part of the package, but that is something you can book on your own.

If you have had some experience salmon fishing, the Kenai is a good place where you can do your own fishing without a guide. A little research on the internet and you will find some stream access



with a great river



being the Russian River. Streams can get a bit crowded there on weekends as it's a short drive from Anchorage.

Our second trip to the Kenai was three days at the end of a week on the Alaska Peninsula. We fished on our own on the Russian River for two days, but did hire a guide for a float trip on the Kenai. It was early September so we didn't get any Kings, but did get coho, pinks, and even a dolly varden.

The additional benefit of the Kenai is there are many side trips you can take while there. Near the entrance to the Kenai is Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center. It is like a drive through zoo and a fun visit. Out of Seward there are several trips you can take. One of the best is the Kenai Fjords day trip. Weather can get rough there and cancel the day, so plan out your weather for the week and pick the best day. There is also an amazing number of wildlife and sealife, including whales you may see on this trip. You can also schedule your own halibut trip out of Seward. You can walk right up the face of a glacier at the Exit Glacier turnoff just north of Seward.

Alaska Peninsula

If you are planning a trip for big rainbow trout, the rivers off Lake Iliamna are amazing. We caught numerous over 20" and the biggest ones going more than 25". There are several lodges around Lake Iliamna and we chose to go to the Intricate Bay Lodge. The lodge is a short ride to the mouth of the Copper River. They take you by boat up the river to the lower of three drift section and then work back down. Only sockeye salmon spawn in the river and by late August when rainbow fishing is peaking thousands have been spawning in the river since June. It takes a bit of a strong stomach to fish at that time because many of the fish have begun dying and the banks are lined with them. The lodge also has a larger boat that takes people to the mouth of the Gibraltar River where they have boats to take you upstream and then drift fish back down. These boats have outboard motors, but are unique in that they

have been fitted with a jet propulsion rather than a prop so easily handle the shallow water of the rivers.

But it was not for these that we selected Intricate Bay Lodge, but for the fly ins to many rivers around the peninsula. During our second trip we traveled for rainbow to the upper and middle sections of the Copper River, the mouth of the Newhalen River, to the river that flows out of Lake Iliamna and to the Moraine River in Katmai National Park. On one day we flew to the Kamishak River on the ocean coast for coho. The wonderful thing about fly ins is you are fishing pristine water and rarely see another group fishing.



Many lodges offer fly ins and whichever you choose, be sure they offer a fly in to the Moraine River. The experience is one you will never forget. Katmai National Park is renowned for its bears and on the Moraine they are everywhere. At first you'll find it a bit unnerving, but you'll soon find that they are there for food and are not interested in you. The photo here is not taken with a telephoto lens. The only thing you are told is that if a bear comes near while you are landing a fish, let the line go slack so the bear doesn't follow it to you. In the rare case a bear does become aggressive the guides have been trained to handle it. On the Moraine River I caught my largest Rainbow and my first grayling. Even if you don't go to the Moraine River, there are day fly ins out of Anchorage to the Katmai for bear viewings that are well worth the trip.

Southeast Alaska

Southeast Alaska has two distinct parts: the islands and the rivers along the main peninsula. For reasons I can't remember other than it was a reasonable cost, four of us chose to go to Prince of Wales Island. As I mentioned before, a lack of rain had slowed the run and we were catching almost no fish at the river mouth. We tried going inland with little luck and discovered access to these places was quite an effort. It was a long hike in and the trails in places were muddy and there were fallen trees to climb over. At midweek my son and I hired a local guide and he put us onto a good spot where we were able to get our limit.

We flew into Ketchikan, spending the first and last day of the trip there. It can get a bit crowded at times as several cruise ships stop there. There is a lot to see there and they have a fantastic lumber jack show.

The main peninsula going north has several lodges and since it is all coastal it's easy to include a trip out onto the salt-water for some halibut. I've never been there, but from watching some shows they also have a lot of fly ins to the upper parts of the streams.

Kodiak Island and North of Anchorage

What I know about these areas was mostly learned from Larry Csonka's TV show "North to Alaska". The TV show aired for 16 years and episodes covered just about everything you could want to know about fishing in Alaska. You can see the shows on YouTube. From what I saw, fishing on Kodiak Island is much the same as other coastal areas of Alaska.

On our first trip to Alaska, we took a couple days and headed up to Denali. On the way back we stopped at one river a bit north of Anchorage and inland and my son and I were each able to get some pinks on our fly rods. The other thing I learned from Larry Csonka is that there are several lodges on lakes up that way with a lot of large northern pike to fish for.

Getting There

Since this article is based out of North Carolina, I'll speak to making the trip from the Charlotte airport. To get to the Kenai, Alaska Peninsula, Kodiak, and north of Anchorage, you will fly into Anchorage. From Charlotte there are no direct flights by any airline to Anchorage, they all have at least one stop and you can make the trip with most airlines. One thing to know about flights in and out of Anchorage is that most of them arrive near midnight and leave from late evening to near midnight. To get from Anchorage to the Kenai or north you just rent a car and drive. If you are headed to the Alaska Peninsula or Kodiak you will need to get a connecting flight from one of the local carriers like Iliamna Air Taxi or Lake Clark Air. If you're headed to a lodge, they will be able to tell you the best way to get there. Be sure to confirm the baggage weight limit for these airlines as it is quite restrictive.

My son and I have learned that the best thing to do when connecting through Anchorage is to spend a day in Anchorage before and after going to and coming from the lodge. At my age, spending a day to recover from a four hour time changes helps a lot, and if weather affects you on the return to Anchorage, that extra time will help assure you catch your flight home. On our last trip, Lake Clark Air overbooked and we had to catch a later flight that almost made us miss our connection.

Trips to SE Alaska for either Ketchikan or Juneau all seem to go through Seattle and American seems to be the prime airline to take. If you're headed to an island like Prince of Wales, again you should allow time as you'll be catching a local commuter flight to take you there. However there is an island ferry to get you there [Ferry](#). If your baggage weight is over the limit, the ferry might be a good option.

In Conclusion

If you have not yet made plans for a trip to an Alaska lodge yet for this year, you need to act quickly. There likely will be some openings left at lodges in February, but popular lodges tend to book up quickly. On our first trip to the Green River in Utah was in mid July and our guide was already half booked for the following July. We've had similar experience with our guide in the Bahamas. We now book almost all of our trips a year in advance. My advice is to try to get your trips booked no later than autumn of the year before.



If you haven't been to Alaska, you really need to get it on your bucket list. There are so many options it is difficult to decide what to do. The best way is to talk to people who have been there and get recommendations from them. TU meetings are a great place to do that. Or at least go on YouTube and start watching Larry's North to Alaska for ideas. Some of the lodges he shows might still be there.

ADVICE FROM THE VISE

Winter fly fishing continues and soft hackles are continuing to perform well, so thought I would carry on with another pattern that has been producing when others are not. This probably qualifies as a fly for those interested in ensuring taxonomic accuracy, but it lives in my box as one of those utility flies you pull out because it feels right. Incorporating the



two elements of pheasant tail and soft hackle- what's not to love?

I don't really have an origin story, or really remember when I started tying this one- or even a name for it, but I've had these in my box for years. I suspect it was something I tied up in Spain just due to the sparse materials, and I do remember fishing it - and taking fish on it there.

The tailing is pheasant tail tips, the body is wrapped pheasant tail, and the hackle is brown speckled hen- but any gamebird hackle is absolutely fine. A twist on this is the double hackle. It gives obvious motion in the water and the heavier density makes a nice profile. Silver wire for the rib. I think the red thread is a must, for the hotspot and the head. The hook is a 2xl wet fly hook 3761 barbless.

Dress the hook from eye to bend to get a solid thread layer down and tie in the tailing, about a third of a shank off the bend. Tie in the fibers to just behind the eye to keep an even foundation.



Tie in the rib and align tips of the pheasant tail and snip 6-8 fibers off and tie in the tips at the bend.



Wrap the tail fibers to about the halfway point and secure those with some snug wraps and snip off the butts. Take wraps to form a middle hotspot, in the royal coachman style.



Take another 6-8 fibers and tie those in by the tips, and wrap towards the eye, securing them just behind the eye.



Counterwrap the wire rib, that provides a little flash and protects the pheasant tail a bit from tiny trout teeth.



Now it's time for the hackle. Select two feathers that are similar in size, strip off the fuzzy below the hackle fibers, and stack them in a pair.



Using hackle pliers, grasp the first few tip fibers as shown, and stroke the remains fibers down towards the base of the stem. What's left at the tip serves as the tie in point and anchor.



Trim the tip flat and place the edge behind the eye and tie in the hackle.



Grasp the stems with hackle pliers and gently begin to wrap forward its touching turns and stroking the fibers rearward.



Once you get the hackle wrapped, about an eye length, behind the eye, secure the stems with a couple snug wraps, and trim the stems out.



Using multiple thread wraps, build up a head, and whip finish the fly. Pit on a couple coats of head cement or UV resin to get a nice shine.



I like the buggy look you get from the double hackle stack and the classic simplicity of a pheasant tail. Fish this as a dry, a wet, a nymph or a stopped streamer. I've had fish take it off the top when it lands – especially in the winter, or stripped upstream at the end of a swing.

Water levels have been low and water temps have been staying at or below 40, so the bite is less than optimal this winter. But the mild afternoon weather provides fantastic conditions for

getting out, and makes there's no better way to spend a few hours than walking the river. Get out there and enjoy the challenge as the reward is even greater.



Please don't hesitate to contact me at Jacobsforkflytying@gmail.com with questions or to just talk tying. Please follow along on Instagram check out some current ties @ Jacobs Fork Fly Tying.

Dave Everhart

THE LOWER 48 TROUT FISHING

There are three things you should consider that make a good fly fishing trip: the fish, the scenery, the companionship and uniqueness. As you begin looking for a place to go start ranking each of those things in your mind. Over the many years I have been fly fishing there are a few of those trips that stand out in my memory.

The Fish

Absolutely the most memorable trip for catching fish is the Green River in Utah. This river not only has a lot of fish, but it has a lot of big fish. Right below the dam it has been reported that there as many as 18,000 fish per mile. This tapers down as you drift through A, B, and C sections, but the fish population has continued to be dense for us all the way through the B section. On both trips we averaged about 30 fish each per day on #16 dry flies. And these fish are big! I would estimate our average fish was 16-18" with several over 20".

Something a little different, the Riverbound Xstream fly fishing club in SW Virginia is also a great place to join for a lot of fish and big ones as well. The club has four rivers located in Southwest Virginia in the mountains and foothills of the Appalachians. Beautiful Scenery and a reasonable club rate. To check it out visit [Riverboundxstream](http://Riverboundxstream.com).

The Scenery

I'm not sure I have ever been on a trout stream where the scenery was not beautiful. But there are some that stand out in my memory.

Certainly Yellowstone has to be high on the list. Not only do you have the surrounding mountains, but also the geysers in the park and the animals are something to see while you are there. Each day into the park we were delayed on the road by buffalo.



The Green River ranks high on this list as well. Section A starts at the base of the dam in a deep gorge. We were fortunate to have a guide that was knowledgeable about the geology of

the river. Sections A & B are all gorge and the geology changes from granite mountains to shale to sandstone ocean bottoms as you drift down the river. Each section presenting a different type of scenery. If you go at the right time of year, you may also experience the cricket invasion. We were there in mid July and caught the end of the hatch, but we were told that at times they create a solid bridge across the river. And earlier in the year there is a locust hatch that peaks

The Companionship

I'm fortunate that my son loves fly fishing and we take many trips together giving me companionship wherever we go. And if you go to a lodge, you will have time to spend with the other people staying there. But one trip in particular stands out in my memory: Gunnison Canyon.

In 2024 we booked a trip with Rigs Fly Shop in Ridgeway, Colorado. It is a 3 day, 2 night, trip through Gunnison Canyon. The trip includes three boats with six fishermen. On the trip they have a long lunch and then overnight camp and dinner along the river that gives you a lot of time off the river to meet and share adventures with not only the other fishermen, but with the guides as well. This trip is one that will always stay in my memory. Check in out on the website at [RIGS Fly Shop](#).

The Uniqueness

A couple trips stand out in my memory for being unique. One is the trip I mentioned in Gunnison Canyon. You get to experience fishing, camping, hiking, gourmet dining, and white water rapids all in one trip. The boats and supplies are all delivered by mule to the river the day before and you have a pretty good hike (all downhill) to get to the river. Oh, and an added bonus, we were actually had ice cream sundaes for dessert the first night.



The second is a trip to the Pere Marquette River in Michigan for the annual mayfly hatch. You'll fish the day with some success, but just before dark the massive mayfly hatch starts and at dark you will hear fish jumping all around you.

You cast to the sound of the fish feeding, estimating the location and distance. You will be surprisingly successful at catching fish this way and amazed at the size of the rising fish. The one concern with this trip is the timing of the hatch. The target is the third week of June. We fished three days and were lucky to have a massive hatch the third night.

In Conclusion

I can't say that I have ever taken a trip in the lower 48 that was not a good trip and I'm sure there are many other places out there that can compete with the ones I have mentioned. If you're looking for a great trip, check out one (or all) of the above and also get to your TU meeting to talk with people who may be able to recommend other places just as great.

FOOTHILLS CONSERVANCY OF NC

We're excited to finally share something we've been working on for over a year! Our documentary film is officially ready for your viewing pleasure!

Through sweeping visuals and personal stories, "A Dream for the Future" weaves together our rich history, ongoing work, and vision for the future.

The 27-minute film, produced by WNC-native filmmakers from Creative Campfire, showcases FCNC's conservation achievements, including iconic places such as Lake James State Park, South Mountains Game Land, Catawba Falls, and Wilson Creek.

So grab a cozy blanket, pop some popcorn, and settle in. We hope this film invites you to slow down, reflect, and feel connected to the places that matter most.

Thank you for being part of this journey and for supporting the work behind the scenes that made this film possible.

[A Dream for the Future, a Documentary Film by Foothills Conservancy](#)



THE ANGLER'S BLUEPRINT: HOW TO PREPARE FOR AN UNFORGETTABLE FLY FISHING ADVENTURE



Fly fishing has grown into a popular pastime, hobby, recreational sport, and even a way of life for many. It offers a perfect opportunity to step outside, breathe the fresh air, and immerse yourself in the soothing sounds of a rushing river or babbling creek. It's also a chance to connect with nature and learn about the delicate ecosystems thriving in these aquatic environments. Planning a successful fly fishing trip requires attention to detail, from selecting the right destination to ensuring you have all the necessary **gear**. This guide will help you organize a memorable outing, whether you're a novice eager to cast your first line or a seasoned angler looking to explore new waters.

Summer, in particular, can bring both abundant opportunities and challenges for fly fishing enthusiasts. As one of the most popular seasons for fishing, especially in scenic locales like mountain streams and rivers, summer often means more crowded fishing spots. To maximize your experience, it's crucial to plan your trip well in advance. This not only helps in securing accommodations and necessary permits but also ensures you have ample time to gather recent fishing reports. Keeping an eye on local river reports can provide invaluable insights into water conditions, fish activity, and the most

effective flies at the moment. This kind of preparation allows you to arrive at your chosen destination with confidence, ready to enjoy the best fishing the season has to offer.

1. CHOOSING YOUR DESTINATION CONSIDER THE SPECIES

Deciding which fish species to target is a critical first step in planning your fly fishing trip. This choice will significantly impact your destination, as various fish species thrive in different environments and conditions. In North America, some of the most sought-after targets among fly fishers include trout, salmon, and bass, each preferring distinct habitats:

- **Trout** are most commonly found in cold, clear streams and lakes. There are several types of trout, such as rainbow, brown, and brook trout, each with its own preferred conditions. For example, rainbow trout are often found in fast-flowing parts of rivers, while brown trout may favor slower, murkier waters.
- **Salmon** are known for their epic migrations, making them available in both freshwater rivers and saltwater oceans, depending on the time of year. The pursuit of salmon often leads anglers to the Pacific Northwest and Alaska, especially during their spawning runs when they return to freshwater to breed.
- **Bass**, including both largemouth and smallmouth varieties, are adaptable to a variety of water conditions but are predominantly found in warmer and more stagnant waters than trout. Largemouth bass are often associated with lakes and ponds with plenty of vegetation, while smallmouth bass prefer rocky streams and rivers.

Each of these fish species not only requires different gear and tactics but also different times of the year and types of water bodies. Understanding the specific needs and behaviors of your target species can greatly enhance your chances of a successful trip. Researching and talking to local shops, guides or experienced anglers can provide you with crucial insights into the best times and places to fish for your chosen species.



RESEARCH THE BEST LOCATIONS

Once you've chosen your species, research the best places to find them. Consider factors like fish activity periods, the scenic quality of the area, and the level of challenge you're looking for. Use resources like state wildlife websites, fly fishing forums, and local fly shops, and fly fishing reports to gather information.

CHECK LOCAL REGULATIONS AND SEASONS

Before settling on a location, ensure you're aware of the local fishing regulations. This includes season dates, catch limits, and any special restrictions. Obtaining the necessary fishing licenses in advance is also crucial.

2. TIMING YOUR TRIP UNDERSTAND THE BEST TIMES TO FISH

The success of your trip often hinges on timing. Most freshwater fish are more active during dawn and dusk, coinciding with insect activity, which is crucial for fly fishing. Additionally, consider the season—spring and fall can offer excellent fishing conditions with fewer crowds.

MONITOR WATER CONDITIONS

Ideal water conditions depend on the species and location but generally include stable water levels and clarity. Many anglers use streamflow data available from US Geological Survey sites or local water management agencies to find the best conditions.

3. GEAR AND EQUIPMENT ROD & REEL

Choose a rod and reel suitable for the type of fish you're targeting and the conditions you expect. For beginners, a medium-action fly rod is often recommended as it offers more versatility.

The **Yellowstone II** series is known for its durability and responsiveness, designed for those who require a rod that can handle various fishing conditions. It features high-quality IM8 graphite construction, making it both lightweight and strong, suitable for catching larger fish.

On the other hand, the **Silvertip** rod series are a great option for those new to fly fishing or anglers who prefer a more versatile medium-action rod. They are designed to offer exceptional performance in a variety of fishing scenarios, from small creeks to larger rivers.

Both rod types are paired well with **Yellowstone Grizzly** reels, which are crafted from CNC-machined aluminum and known for their reliability and smooth operation. These reels come with a refined arbor and an improved drag system that enhances line retrieval and reduces line coiling, making your fishing experience more efficient and enjoyable.

FLY SELECTION

Your **flies** should mimic the local insects or prey of the target species. Research or consult with local fly shops to understand which patterns are most effective. Always have a variety of sizes and colors to adapt to different conditions. For further insight into fly selection, consider exploring some of our [fly selection blog posts](#), particularly our "[Fly of the Month](#)" posts, which provide valuable tips and recommendations for choosing the right flies based on the current conditions and targeted fish species.

APPROPRIATE CLOTHING

Dress for the weather and water conditions. Layering is key, and waterproof gear is essential. Waders are almost a necessity in most fly fishing scenarios, providing comfort and protection. For those looking for suitable attire, Jackson Hole Fly Company offers a diverse range of apparel perfect for any weather condition you might encounter. Our selection includes **sun hoodies** and **windbreakers**, which are crucial for protection

against the elements. Additionally, we offer a variety of **hats and beanies** to keep you comfortable whether it's sunny or chilly. For those who appreciate branded merchandise, our collection of **t-shirts** and **hoodies** proudly display the Jackson Hole Fly Company logo, perfect for showcasing your passion for fly fishing.

SAFETY AND NAVIGATION GEAR

Always pack a first aid kit, a waterproof bag for your electronics, and a map or GPS device. If you're venturing into remote areas, inform someone of your plans and expected return.



4. SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES

CASTING AND RETRIEVAL TECHNIQUES

If you're new to fly fishing, consider taking a class or practicing your casting technique before the trip. Understanding the basics of casting, line management, and fly presentation can greatly enhance your chances of success.

LEARN TO READ THE WATER

Understanding where fish are likely to feed and rest—such as in pools, eddies, and along seams where different currents meet—can improve your catch rate.

5. LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND RESOURCES

HIRE A GUIDE

For unfamiliar destinations, hiring a local guide can be invaluable. They can provide insights into local fishing hot spots, effective fly patterns, and techniques that are successful in the area.

VISIT LOCAL FLY SHOPS

Local fly shops are not only great places to stock up on gear and flies but also hubs of information. The staff can offer up-to-date advice on conditions and what's working for other anglers.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Planning a successful fly fishing trip is all about preparation and flexibility. By thoroughly researching your destination, gearing up appropriately, and honing your fishing techniques, you can set yourself up for an enjoyable and fruitful experience on the water. Remember, every trip is a learning opportunity—take in the sights, enjoy the solitude, and always be ready to adapt to the ever-changing conditions of the great outdoors.



FISHING TRIP CHECKLIST

We've all been there. Season after season, year after year. You get up early to arrive at your favorite fishing spot. By the time you arrive, the sun has barely risen. You hold your favorite rod and reel in your hand, with the perfect lure on the other end of it. After identifying where your quarry is, you cast right into the spot, and the bait drops into the water with a soft splash. You crank and pause the reel again and again until you feel the bite of a fish. It pulls on your line, but you pull harder. The fish is as good as yours now. As you reel it in, you hope for the perfect trophy at the end of the line.

There are a thousand reasons that people fish. But the common factor between all of those is simply to catch big fish. The pursuit of the perfect fish keeps us going out again and again, trying a hundred different rods, reels, and baits.

For this reason, it's good to have a kit of your favorite baits and lures. You should also keep a multi-tool or a pair of needle nose pliers in your tackle box when you need to dig a hook out of a fish. If you're going to keep any of your fish, you'll need a cooler and a knife. There are a few other items on our list that are worth considering, too. It's important to be prepared, you don't want to leave things to chance on your next big day out.



Equipment

- License
- Regulations
- Rod and Reel
- Lures, bait, flies
- Sinkers
- Fishing Line
- Net
- Multi-tool Pliers Pocket knife
- Fillet knife
- Cooler
- Stringer
- Measuring tape and scale
- Rag
- Tackle
- Box
- Navigation



Clothing

- Boots or Waders
- Fishing Vest
- Gloves (fingerless)
- Rainwear/poncho
- Fishing pants
- Hat
- Sunglasses
- Bandana or Balaclava



Protection from the Elements

Sunscreen
Insect Repellent
Lip Balm
Dry Cases
Bags



Emergency

First-aid Kit Medication for seasickness
Personal floatation devices
Cell Phone (in Waterproof Case)
Duct Tape
Solar cell phone charger
Batteries for Electronics
Cash



Nutrition and Hydration

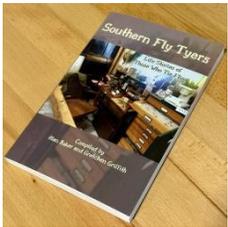
Snacks (Granola Bars)
Water Bottles
Gorp or trail mix



Personal Hygiene

Soap Item Hand Sanitizer
Quick-dry Towel
Toilet Paper/Wipes
Extra socks

SOUTHERN FLY TYERS BOOK AWARD



Gretchen Griffith and Alen Baker received an award for their book *Southern Fly Tyers: Live Stories of Those Who Tie Flies* by the NC Society of Historians. You can view the award at [Award Presentation](#). The book can be purchased at Jesse Brown's Outdoors in Charlotte, Carolina Mountains Sports in Statesville, or The Hub in Hudson, and on-line at [Jesse Brown's Outdoors](#) and [Lulus](#).

FLY FISHING FIRST AID KIT

By John Stenstorm

Tier 1: The Pocket Kit (for Waders & Shore Anglers)

This small kit fits in a pocket or sling pack. It's for immediate action on minor injuries until you can get back to your vehicle or a larger kit.

Case: A small, waterproof pouch or Altoids tin.

Essentials:

- Assorted waterproof adhesive bandages.
- A few gauze pads (2×2 inch).
- Antiseptic wipes.
- Small roll of adhesive tape or duct tape.
- Small tube of antibiotic ointment.

- A few doses of pain reliever (Ibuprofen).
- Miniature tweezers.

Tier 2: The Day Trip Kit (for Kayaks & Small Boats)

This is the most common kit, designed for a full day on the water.

Case: A small, waterproof dry bag or box.

Essentials: Everything in Tier 1, plus:

- More bandages and sterile gauze pads.
- Trauma shears (paramedic scissors).
- Heavy-duty wire cutters for hooks.
- Disposable gloves (2 pairs).
- Medications: Antihistamine (Benadryl), antacid, motion-sickness medication.
- Quick Clot hemostatic gauze for severe bleeding.
- Elastic bandages (ACE bandages) for sprains.
- Emergency whistle and a small flashlight.

JANUARY TIE-A-THON



👏 What an incredible day at the Patterson School for Boys – Cap Wiese Fly Fishing Center! 👏

Yesterday, **25 dedicated tiers** came together in Lenoir, NC to support the **National Tie-A-Thon**, and the results speak for themselves: **1,350 flies tied in a single day!** Even better — we'll be doing it all again on **February 21, 2026**.

For those who may be new to the **Tie-A-Thon**, here's a little history and why this matters so much:

The Tie-A-Thon was co-founded in 2006 by **Terry Witorp** and **Tim Scott** with a simple but powerful goal: tie as many flies as possible for a good cause. What began as an effort to support the Kalamazoo Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited Youth Camp culminated in an event at the Elkhart Conservation Club — great food, great conversation, and great tying. That first year produced **2,500 flies for kids**.

Since 2006, the Tie-A-Thon community has donated **over 361,100 flies** to camps and organizations that use fly fishing to heal, teach, and inspire.

🎯 2026 Fly Recipients

- **Reel Recovery** – Helping men living with cancer find renewal through fly fishing retreats and fellowship.



- **Fishing the Good Fight** – Advancing men’s mental health awareness and connection through fly fishing.
- **Black Mountain Home for Children, Youth and Families** – Empowering youth through outdoor education and fly fishing programs.
- **Lee University Fly Fishing Education** – Integrating fly fishing into higher education as a tool for stewardship and personal growth.
- **Casting for Recovery** – Supporting breast cancer survivors through healing fly fishing experiences nationwide.

✦ NEWS

FLASH! ✦

Bear Owings has challenged us once again — he will **match 1,000 flies per day** for both our **January and February Tie-A-Thon Saturdays**. That’s motivation to tie fast *and* well!

If you’d like to join us on **February 21, 2026**, or want to learn more about tying for a cause, reach out to

👉 **Bill Jewett (Fly Tying Santa)** at theflytying-santa24@gmail.com

📷 Be sure to check out the photos and event poster for more details, and explore the links below to learn more about the Tie-A-Thon and the amazing organizations connected to our Lenoir, NC event:

- 🔗 <https://www.facebook.com/tieathon>
- 🔗 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1168511847822746>
- 🔗 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/theofficialcarolinaflyfishingclub>
- 🔗 <https://www.facebook.com/nwctu/>
- 🔗 <https://pattersonschoolfoundation.org/>
- 🔗 <https://www.etsy.com/shop/JacobsForkFlyTying>
- 🔗 <https://secffi.org/>

👥 **Community. Purpose. Impact.** That’s what the Tie-A-Thon is all about — and we can’t wait to do it again.

THE ULTIMATE TRASH FLY

At a chapter meeting last fall we presented the trash flies...because they work. The ultimate trash fly has now been created. If each one works, just think the impact of this trio.

As trash as it gets. The mop articulated y2k with squirmy tail.



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