

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



Last month we talked about Alaska and the lower 48. Alaska included a bit of salt water that is pretty cold, so this month we're going to discuss that warm saltwater to the south of us.

My son and I first decided to head to the flats for bonefish in 2019. Since then we have been to Belize, the Yucatan, South Andros, and Exuma in the flats, but also a bit cooler climate on February North Carolina coast and to the Louisiana Marsh in December. This month I'll share with you the positive and negatives of those trips and then how to prepare for them.

And one last comment from your guide, LEARN THE DAMN STRIP SET!!

HIGH COUNTRY TU MEETING

When: Thursday March 5th, 6-8 PM

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

What: Streamer Fishing Techniques

Who: Skye Kreis-Potgeiter
High Country Guides

Skye, is an accomplished fishing guide who will be sharing his global knowledge of streamer fishing and best patterns for each season. Plan to bring your gear and tie up a few while we're all together! As always, there is food and drinks to share with all in attendance. For more details visit: [High Country Chapter TU](#)

HICKORY TU MEETING

When: Tuesday, March 17th, 6:30 PM

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

What: Test your fly fishing knowledge

We will be presenting a series of quizzes to test your fly fishing knowledge. This will be a competition with some fantastic prizes.

For Morganton members, we are only 30 minutes away and for the CFFC members living up here in the foothills, please feel welcome to join us.

Our attendance was very low with our meeting at the American Legion last month and we really need your support to help the chapter survive. Remember without meetings our chapter will be shut down resulting in an end to Trout in the Classroom and events like the planting at Wilson Creek. I'm sure you joined because you care about our rivers and it is programs like these that it is all about. We had to move because Old Hickory Station wanted to start charging us \$400 to reserve the room. I think you'll find this is a great venue for our programs, but if you can suggest somewhere else, please let us know.

Thank you to everyone who has been contributing to items for our monthly raffle. There have been some fantastic giveaways. If you have fly fishing items in good condition that you no longer use, please bring them to the meeting for our monthly raffle.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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

Catawba Riverkeeper Live Stake & Tree Planting at Wilson Creek- March 7th 10-2, 2188 Playmore Beach Rd, Lenoir, NC Register by March 6th at [Register](#)

High Country TU tree planting, Boone Greenway near Watauga High School March 7th, 10 AM. 300 Go Pioneers Drive. [Details](#)

New River Live Stake Giveaways

Watauga Mar 11th [Details](#)

Ashe Mar 13th [Details](#)

Wilkes Mar 19th [Details](#)

Allegheny Mar 20th [Details](#)

Trout Unlimited, Armstrong Creek Tree Planting and Tree Giveaway April 11th, 9 AM, Turkey Grove Baptist Church, 3146 NC-226A, Marion NC. Register signup [Signup](#)

Trout Unlimited, North Toe River Tree Planting, April 28th, 9AM, 12190 NC-226, Bakersville, NC and on April 29th a Tree Giveaway from 9-3. [Signup](#)

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.

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

New River Cleanup at New River State Park, Saturday April 4th, 10-2:30. New River State Park Rd, Laurel Springs, NC. [Signup](#)

Tie-a-Thon. Mark your calendars for the next event on April 18th at Patterson School. We'll be tying some wooly buggers so start practicing. Details in next newsletter.

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

3/4/2026 - Getting Started Bass Fishing - Virtual
3/11/2026 - Springtime Tactics for Crappie - Virtual
3/19/2026 - Intermediate Fly-tying Workshop - Morganton
3/21/2026 - Fly-fishing Basics: Selecting Equipment & Making Connections - Lenoir
3/25/2026 - Rod Building Primer - Virtual
3/28/2026 - Basic Rod Build Workshop

2026 DELAYED HARVEST STOCKING WEEKS

COUNTY	STREAM	WEEK OF						
		3/2-3/6	3/9-3/13	3/30-4/3	4/6-4/10	4/27-5/1	5/4-5/8	5/11-5/15
Ashe	Helton Creek	X					X	
	Trout Lake	X					X	
	Big Horse Creek	X						X
	South Fork New River	X						X
Burke	Jacobs Fork	X					X	
Caldwell	Wilson Creek	X					X	
Clay	Fires Creek	X					X	
Graham	Big Snowbird				X		X	
Haywood	West Fork Pigeon River	X				X		
Henderson	North Fork Mills River	X				X		
Jackson	Tuckasegee River	X					X	
Macon	Nantahala	X					X	
	Big Laurel Creek			X			X	
Madison	Shelton Laurel Creek			X			X	
	Spring Creek				X		X	
	Curtis Creek		X					X
McDowell	Mill Creek		X					X
	Catawba River		X					X
	Cane Creek		X					X
Polk	North Toe River	X					X	
	Green River				X		X	
Surry	Ararat River	X						X
	Mitchell River	X					X	
Swain	Tuckasegee River			X			X	
	East Fork French Broad River	X				X		
Transylvania	Little River			X			X	
	Watauga River	X					X	
Watauga	Lake Coffey	X					X	
	East Prong Roaring River	X				X		
Wilkes	Stone Mountain Creek	X				X		
	Reddies River	X				X		
	Elk Creek	X				X		
Yancey	Cane River		X					X

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“When that 2# bonefish takes you into your backing for the third time, you’ll start planning your next trip to the flats.”
Chick Woodward

HEADING FOR THE SALT

My son and I have been fly fishing together for more years than I can remember. We did one trip together to Alaska in 2000 as a graduation gift, but after I retired we started some serious travel. We began regular trips in 2014, but then something led us to try out the salt for bonefish. We made our first trip to Belize in 2019 and since have made yearly trips to the Yucatan, South Andros, and Exuma, plus a couple side trips to the NC coast and to the Louisiana March.

Turneffe Flats Lodge



When we first started planning our trip to Belize my son was planning to go to the El Pescador Lodge on Ambergris Caye. It was an Orvis certified lodge and as a plus you would be receiving a free Helios Rod. He contacted them, but never got a reply. We later learned that they were in the process of changing ownership. A little more study and he found Turneffe Flats Lodge and we booked a week there.

Turneffe Flats is a series of barrier islands about an hour from the Belize mainland by boat. It sits behind one of the largest barrier reefs in the world, so is largely protected from the ocean waves. I would have to say it is probably the most beautiful trip we have made to the salt.

It is reported that this is a good location for bonefish, tarpon, and permit. We caught several bonefish. A friend had been down there shortly before us and caught five permit, but they were scarce while we were there. My son had one cast at them our last day, but managed to catch a piece of coral instead. Tarpon is more a matter of timing. While they can be caught there year around they are most prevalent late spring into early summer.

I have to say that the most memorable thing was the day my son and I caught a dozen bonefish each. There are several fish camps (actually catching lobster). When they clean the lobster they



throw the guts into the ocean in front of the camp and draw the bonefish. Our guide had a cousin with a camp and we spent part of a day fishing from the camp shore and had a ball. Most of the bonefish there are fairly small and weigh 2-3 pounds, but even that 2 pound bonefish will take you into your backing.

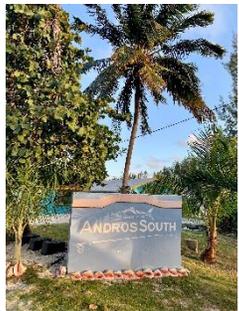
In addition to the fishing, the lodge makes regular trips to the famous blue hole nearby for some scuba diving and there are some beautiful reefs inside the flats that we took an afternoon and snorkeled.

Traveling to Turneffe from Charlotte can either be direct or through Miami, depending on the day. Once you have arrived in Belize City, you will be picked up by the lodge and driven to the dock where you will catch a boat out to the lodge across a large strip of ocean and then through channels in the mangroves. It's an enjoyable adventure just getting there.



As I said this was a beautiful place to visit, great food, and enjoyable evenings in the lodge with other guests. The only downside of the trip was the smaller bonefish and the fact we spent a lot of time running to locations which cut into our fishing time.

Andros South Lodge



After our trip to Belize we did a little more research and decided to go to the Andros South Lodge. Perhaps it is not what you would call a luxury resort, but the cost was very reasonable and they provided individual rather than shared rooms. My son's snoring made that a very desired feature. The other attraction was the report that the bonefish were much larger.

We were not disappointed with the fishing. Each day you have a moderately long trip out into the mangroves and then spend the rest of the day there. The guides were excellent and we did well, probably averaging a half dozen fish apiece with several getting up to the 4-6 pound size.



In addition to the bonefish there were many barracuda on the flats. They carried a spinning rod and a barracuda tube lure. You cast anywhere in the direction of the fish and then cranked back in just as fast as you could. It was amazing to



see the barracuda come flying across the flat and attack the lure and then it was just "hang on." The battle is amazing. On a later trip we tied up some lures for a fly rod but found that you just cannot bring the line in fast enough to lure the fish. Not all guides have the tube worm baits so I would suggest you buy some and take them along with you. Green seems to be by far the best and they are available on Amazon.

On our second trip we were heading back to the lodge through a channel with a lot of mangrove along the side. The guide rigged the fly rod and took us along the edge of it. I let my son do all the fishing. He would lay the fly up right at the edge of the mangroves and came out with a fish on every cast, and nearly every time a different species. I would highly recommend that if you are down there for a few days that you take a break from bonefishing and give it a try.



Another alternative to bonefish while you are there is fishing the several small blue holes back in the flats. You will be doing this with a spinning rod as these holes are too deep to use a fly rod. One guest spent a day doing this and came back with a large cooler full of tropical fish that we had for dinner that night.

Each evening we returned to the lodge about five. After getting cleaned up and changed we all met at the patio for cocktails and appetizers and shared the experiences of the day. The companionship of all the fishermen was a great part of the trip and a reason to go to a lodge where there are other people. I can't say that we had gourmet dining there, but the food was good and then after the meal we would head to the gazebo at the beach for more drinks around the campfire. We truly enjoyed the time at the lodge.



There are no direct flights from Charlotte to South Andros, but you fly to Fort Lauderdale International and then out of Fort Lauderdale Executive. We flew Makers Air from there to South Andros. The flights to Andros leave early in the morning so we would fly to Fort Lauderdale and then spend the night. There may be other options if you do a little searching.

As I mentioned, the real plus is a reasonable price and single rooms. And there are very large flats where you seldom see the other fishermen. If you want something a

little more upscale, Bairs lodge is nearby and if you've never bonefished, Louis Cahill of Gink & Gasoline offers week long bonefish schools at Bairs.

[Hosted Trips](#)

Exuma Bahamas

After a couple years at South Andros, my son and his wife took a vacation on the island of Exuma. While there one day she headed to the spa and he hired a local guide to go bonefishing. He loved the guide and had an excellent day so the following year and ever since we have been going there.

This is a much different type of trip by not going to a lodge as housing and meals are on our own. There are many rentals there and we use AirBnB to pick one out. There are also many restaurants, but a lot of them are not open after 5 PM so while we eat out a couple times we also cook our own meals for breakfast and dinner, and also because our guide does not provide meals, we pack our own lunch. Perhaps this trip is not your cup of tea, but after three years there we are still loving it. Honestly the cost is not much less than a lodge, but we find it relaxing to come back at night and just sit down after dinner and play some cribbage.

Our guide originally worked for a fishing lodge there, but it closed down and he went out on his own. He has many years experience and based on his knowledge of the various flats, selects whichever is best for the winds and the tides. He has been teaching his son to guide and he has joined us on several trips. We've had great luck and averaged about 8 fish a day each, which from all I've heard is much better than normal. Most of the fish are in the range of 2-4 pounds, but we get some 5-6 pounders daily. And there are a lot of barracuda around that we have been able to catch. There are also some blue holes there and we plan to put that onto our agenda to catch some dinner if our guide is willing.



We're a bit spoiled being able to book and fish with him every year so I'm not going to publish his name here in the newsletter. If you are interested in going to Exuma to fish with him, see me at one of the Hickory TU meetings. There is quite a bit to know before taking a trip there, like restaurants and grocery stores that I can help you prepare for the trip.

A great advantage to this trip is that American Airlines often has direct flights there from Charlotte. Occasionally they have a direct return, but it generally connects through Miami.

Campeche Mexico

I never had a desire to spend four hours fighting a 150# tarpon on a fly rod. Maybe when I was young and naive, but not now. But I was always impressed with the fight put up by tarpon, even the baby ones. So my son and I started looking around for a trip to catch them. We happened to see Campeche Tarpon in the Yellow Dog Fly Fishing catalog and decided to give it a try.

We booked the trip and headed down. To get there from Charlotte we had to connect through Miami to Merida. There we were picked up by a driver and taken to our hotel in

Campeche. That afternoon the owner of Campeche Tarpon met us at the hotel and explained our program for the next three



days and in the evening his son came and picked us up and took us to dinner. Dinner was on us, but it was really good of him to show us to a good restaurant in town. He did this again the next two nights.

The next morning they picked us up and took us to a pier where the guide was waiting for us. He didn't speak English, but it was surprising how well we communicated during the trip. We headed out and ran up the coast a few miles and entered the mangrove forest through a hidden channel that took us back into some open coves where we did a lot of fishing, catching several snook and a few smaller tarpon. Late in the day as the tide was going out he took us back to a cove at the entrance to the forest. The falling tide had brought the baby tarpon out of the mangroves and the water was boiling with them. My son and I both hooked up quickly with a couple tarpon of about 25-35 pounds. As the sun started to set we headed back to the pier.

The mangroves in Campeche were like no others I have seen elsewhere. The trees are huge, some 50' tall and trunks easily 18" in diameter. They are a tourist attraction that people come from all over the world to experience. The forests alone made our trip to Campeche worthwhile. In addition we took a walk around the city one night and viewed some of the history of the area that includes a major Spanish fort. Overall it was a wonderful experience in addition to some great fishing.



The second day he took us back into the mangroves again and we got some great fishing including some more snook, redfish, and more baby tarpon. We started working our way back out toward evening, even fishing in some of the narrow channels between the mangroves. We had no clue where we were, but the guide was very knowledgeable of the area as we got back to the bay from the night before, we didn't have time to fish as the tide was so low and the shoreline was so shallow he hurried to get back out while he could. The third day was much the same, but we had to get out even earlier and only were able to fish 6 of our planned 8 hour day. Even then he struggled really hard to get the boat across the shallows while dragging bottom a lot of the way.

The conclusion is that this really was a fantastic adventure through the mangroves and the city as well as some terrific fishing while we were out there, but...if you plan this trip be sure to affirm that you are coming there during the proper tides. Our timing brought us there at the time the lunar cycle gave us the lowest tides. They should consider not fishing during those

times or perhaps find another spot on the coast where they are able to get in and out.

Everglades Florida

Our trip to Campeche confirmed even more the fun of catching baby tarpon. The strength of the fight and the bow to the many jumps has made it one of our favorite fish. Back at our



Hickory TU meetings I was talking to Bill Elliott (a very well known fish artist, one of his paintings featured here) about it and he gave us this recommendation. Bill lived in Florida for several years before moving to North Carolina and had a good friend who guides out of Everglades City, Elmer Pillon. We got in touch with Elmer who booked us during the right tides. That's also important wherever you fish along the ocean coasts. We found a great cottage on AirBnB that turned out to be just a few houses away from Elmer and he picked us up at our dock in the morning.

While the mangroves in that part of Florida are not quite as large as the ones in Campeche, they are still large enough that you have a great experience traveling between the many small lakes within the everglades, ducking your head in many places to get through.



The fishing was phenomenal with my son and I catching about 30 fish each day apiece including redfish, snook, and baby tarpon. The scenery and the fishing made this one of our favorites that we are now planning to make it an annual event. Unfortunately, the time of year that Elmer recommended as the best is in January and February and our trip this year was cancelled due to weather down into the mid 30s that might create a massive fish die off. Just a matter of luck as another couple from here went the week before and had a beautiful trip. Rather than go into the details of our trip, view this video that Elmer made while we were there. I've shown this at two TU chapters and the reaction was ecstatic.

[Chick and Michael Take On The Everglades](#)

Getting to Everglades from Charlotte is quite easy. There are direct flights each day to Fort Myers. From there you rent a car and drive just over an hour to Everglades City. If you have rented an AirBnB and plan to make any meals it's a good idea to stop at a grocery in Fort Myers before heading down as groceries in Everglades City are a bit limited.

North Carolina Redfish

The above trips were all into tropical waters, but there are two others we have taken into more northern waters I'd like to share. A few years ago we booked a trip to the Roanoke River for striped bass. Through some confusion we got booked on a day the guide was not there. Half way to Roanoke we talked to him and found out we didn't have a trip. In return for his mistake, he offered us a free trip to Wilmington the following March for redfish.

We were blessed with a warm and sunny day the first week of March and headed out into the coves along the intracoastal waterway. The number of redfish we saw was unbelievable. The schools had hundreds of fish and we saw thousands of them during the day. My son is an expert caster and laid the fly right in front of the fish as directed, but never got a bite that entire day. I was told by someone else they had the same experience, but I don't have enough input to say that is typical. I'd say give it a try since if you catch a day as beautiful as we have it's still worth the experience.



Louisiana Marsh



The final saltwater fly fishing trip on our list is a trip to the Biloxi Marsh just southeast of New Orleans. We were told that the best time to make this trip is late fall through December as this is the time of year the big redfish come in out of the gulf. We later learned that these trips often get booked up a year ahead, but we were fortunate enough to find two days in Mid December. This time we really lucked out with some moderately warm weather and clear skies.

New Orleans is only about an hour from where we would launch so we got a hotel room just off Bourbon Street. That made the nights after fishing almost as much fun as the days on the water. We arrived at the launch site the first day and headed about a half hour out into the marsh. The fishing was phenomenal and my son and I each caught about a dozen fish each including this 34# redfish that I got on a flyrod. My son that day got the Cajun Slam of a red drum, black drum, and a sheepshead and the second day made it a Cajun Quad by catching a seatrout.



Fishing for redfish in the Biloxi Marsh is a sight fishing experience and since the water is a bit murky, you generally don't see the fish until they are near the boat. A bit into the day our guide mentioned that he had just installed forward looking sonar and asked us how we felt about it. We are there to catch fish and neither of us is a purist and quickly agreed to use it. The remainder of that day and all of the next we were able to see fish up to about 50' ahead of the boat and could start casting to them. This is really what upped our fish count for each day.

If you want to catch some really big redfish, black drum, and a few other large species, this is something that should be on your bucket list. Getting there is easy with many direct flights out of Charlotte. And at night you can enjoy Bourbon Street and be sure to head for the Gumbo Shop restaurant to have some of the finest Cajun food anywhere.

ADVICE FROM THE VISE

Since we are talking saltwater this month, thought I would share out a pattern that came across a couple years ago, I tied some up with the plans to get down to the coast and cast for reds in the flats. When stationed along the gulf coast in the early 90's, fly rodding in the salt was a blast. I even got the fly rod out for bluefish around the oil rigs and small mahi in the blue water. But stalking specks and reds in the bayou's and grass flats of Perdido Key was my favorite day out.

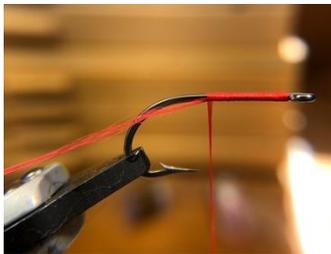
This fly is called Redfish Crack, it has rave reviews from Texas to our very own North Carolina coastal flats. It looks like a crab/shrimp/mullet or just food. I think that is the allure of it- could be any one of those, and I think it will fish as advertised.



This was a great opportunity to dust off my saltwater materials box and spin some of these up for the article. It looks complicated but it's really not.

The head on this typically uses a dubbing brush, but though I'd use a loop to keep it simple.

I'm on a #4 Mustad stainless hook for this one. Thread is Danville Flymaster in Hot Orange. 4mm dumbbell eyes- and those can be an option- sometimes you don't want too much weight in the grass. The tail is craft fur in tan, barred with a Coptic marker, some hot orange chenille in the rear, minnow wrap for the body and leech dubbing in a loop, for the head.



Dress the hook from the eye or the bend, and just a tad around the bend. The chenille will start about the top third of the bend. This elevates the tail some and gives a nice orange hotspot. Wrap a couple times, and trim the butt end.

Tie in the eyes using a figure-of-eight wrap, just about an eye length behind the eye. Don't crowd it, so there's room for a head.



Comb out a section of craft fur (and if you used marabou or a couple grizzly hackles here, that would be just as effective), and tie that in. I'm measuring that at 3 hook shanks in length.

Trim out the butt ends and tidy up the body for a uniform



foundation.



Tie in the minnow wrap at the base of the tail, and take touching turns up the body just behind the eye. Keep stroking the fibers back as you wrap. Secure that material and stroke back any extra fibers and take wraps for the foundation for the head.



Form a dubbing loop, and make this about 4-5 inches. The head on this fly pushes water on the strip, and that seems to be one of the things that make this fly so effective.



Lay the dubbing fibers out in the loop (a swipe off wax helps this). Twist the loop only slightly to just trap the fibers. They need to have some length rather than a typical tight loop.



Take touching wraps up to the eye, stroking the fibers rearward with each wrap to bulk up the head.



With the dubbing brush, comb the fibers forward and trim these out all the way around evenly, so there is about a half inch of length to those fibers. Then, brush them rearward.

Take several wraps behind the eye to build up a slight nose and whip finish.



Pulling the tail taught, take the marker and make evenly spaced barring marks on the tail.



As always, use your imagination on the head colors. I have always found that copper and orange seem to illicit strikes from redfish. Pink, purple and chartreuse would all be excellent choices to have in your box, as flats fishing can be a game of time and tides. What works in the morning may not work in the afternoon or evening.

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



BONEFISHING: GETTING READY TO FISH

BY LOUIS CAYHILL



Photo by Louis Cahill

It's time to catch a bonefish! Here are some easy steps you can follow to set you up for success.

Effective saltwater fly fishing, for bonefish or any other species, is all about making clean presentations. The more you can control the variables, the more fish you will catch. It's as simple as that. An angler who is methodical and pays attention to the details always has the odds in their favor.

In this video I share with you the steps I take to insure a clean presentation every time I take the bow. It's a deeper dive into how I prepare for success and why. I hope it helps you catch more bonefish.

BONEFISHING: GETTING READY TO FISH

[Bonefishing: Getting Ready to Fish VIDEO](#)

Louis Cahill

Gink & Gasoline

www.ginkandgasoline.com

YOUR COMPLETE PACKING LIST FOR A BONEFISHING TRIP TO THE BAHAMAS

By Fahran Ali

Reserving a bonefishing holiday in the Bahamas is an exhilarating adventure, and understanding what equipment to have in place is enough to tip the scales. You're either an old salt or a foreigner, but a grasp of **what to bring** along is the guarantee that you will make the best use of your time on the water. We at Mars Bay Bonefish Lodge pride ourselves on making your fly fishing vacation as simple and comfortable as possible.

BASIC GEAR

Most crucial on your list is an 8 or 9-weight grade fly rod and a corresponding saltwater reel with a good drag system. Carry spares of fly lines, leaders, and tippets. Bahamian waters tend to be clear, so a clear or tropical fly line will prove to be a good choice. A stripping basket is also a considerate inclusion while wading or boat fishing.

Mars Bay Bonefish Lodge advises to bring plenty of flies. Popular flies are Gotchas, Crazy Charlies, Bonefish Bitters, and spawn shrimp imitations. Try different weights and sizes in order to be able to make adjustments for changing depths and winds.

PROPER EQUIPMENT FOR FLY FISHING

Loose, protective clothing and light are musts. Bring along long-sleeved shirts, loose-fitting pants, and a hat for maximum sun coverage. Polarized sunglasses are required to observe bonefish shallow Bahamian flats. Bring an extra pair along.

Flats shoes or wading boots are a must in wading on rocky or coral flats. Bring along neoprene socks for extra comfort and blistering defense.

SUN PROTECTION & PERSONAL ITEMS

Bahamian sun is powerful, so bring high-SPF sunscreen, SPF lip balm, and after-sun lotion. A gaiter or buff offers wind and UV protection.

A rain jacket or windbreaker is a wise thing to bring for a sudden change in weather. A refillable water bottle must also be brought for drinking plenty of water throughout the day.

TRAVEL ESSENTIALS

In addition to your fishing gear and gear, do not forget your travel documents, medicines, insect repellent, and power adapter if needed. Mars Bay Bonefish Lodge also suggests wearing protective gear in the shape of a mini dry bag on your valuables by underwater.

OPTIONAL BUT CONVENIENT ADD-ONS

- Waterproof camera or GoPro to document your escape
- Mini waterproof pack or equipment bag
- Sun and handling gloves for fish
- Second tippet material and second flies
- Fast-drying lightweight towel

WHY PACK SMART?

Smart packing enables you to concentrate your energy where it matters most—becoming one with the excitement of your fly fishing lodge holiday in the Bahamas. Being prepared for fishing and play time enables you to be one with the joy and wonder of the holiday. Mars Bay Bonefish Lodge is a comfortable, laid-back place to spend the evening following a day's fishing, but coming here with your own equipment will bring an added dimension of pleasure to each and every second that you spend here.

WHY STAY AT MARS BAY BONEFISH LODGE?

At Mars Bay Bonefish Lodge, we are not merely a place to stay, but an experience to be remembered for bonefishing in the Bahamas. With experienced guides, comfortable lodging, and an excellent **fishing** location, we are the ultimate destination for sport fishermen around the globe. With planning and equipment, your experience can be everything you've dreamed and more.



FARHAN ALI

THANKS FOR SHARING, IT MEANS THE WORLD TO ME!

SALTWATER 101:

A BEGINNERS GUIDE TO BONEFISHING

This is an excellent article on preparing to begin bonefishing, but way too long for the newsletter. If you are ready to get started with this new sport, check out [Saltwater 101: A Beginner's Guide to Bonefishing | Salt Water Sportsman](#)

Editor's Note: And now perhaps the most important aspect of learning to bonefish: THE STRIPSET. Learning this will save you a great deal of embarrassment and harassment by your guide. As side note, Gink & Gasoline offers several bonefishing schools at South Andros each year. If you've never been before this is a great opportunity to get your first trip off to a great start. [Bonefish School](#)



STRIP SET, DAMMIT!

BY LOUIS CAHILL

Quite likely the most frustrating thing for an angler who is new to salt water is the strip set.

A dedicated freshwater angler will have thousands of hours of muscle memory to overcome. I did it myself time after time. I'd see a fish eat and my arm, without permission from my brain,

would raise the rod tip and off would swim a happy bonefish. Then I would hear my friend Josie Sands, from the platform, “da ain’t no trout in the Bahamas Louis”. To be fair, as frustrating as this is for the angler it may be worse on the guide. He has to deal with this almost every day.

I wish I had a silver bullet to offer that would solve this problem for you instantly, but I don’t. It just takes focus and practice. However here are a few suggestions that may help. First, don’t beat yourself up. Every guy who stands on that bow has gone through this. You are not a moron, you just feel like one. Self loathing will not help.

Second, stay focused. There is a lot to think about and when you spot fish things happen quickly. Try this. When a fish turns and chases your fly, with each strip say out loud, “strip set, strip set, strip set”. When he eats, you may remember what to do.

Lastly, apply a proper strip set. There are a few important points to this. Point your rod at the line. Rod tip in the water works best. When you set you don’t want the rod tip to bend at all. Set yourself up for a good long set. Reach the rod out as far away from you as you can. Take the line with your line hand, right at your rod hand. Now, if you’re six feet tall for example, you have your full six foot reach to apply a good firm set. This is crucial because the fish is likely moving toward you. If the boat is also drifting to the fish you will need every inch to come tight.

It’s not that tough. It just takes practice. So practice. Before long you’ll get the hang of it and you’ll be on to solving the next problem, which is the one I had last week. After a great week in the Keys I went trout fishing with my buddy Dan. A beautiful brown trout well over twenty inches came up and inhaled my fly and what did I do? That’s right, STRIP SET! SNAP! ...Searing waves of self loathing.

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GET YOUR STRIP SET RIGHT EVERY TIME

By Louis Cahill

Remembering to strip set is the hardest thing for anglers new to saltwater fly fishing.

It’s absolutely crucial in saltwater angling to use a strip set. If you lift the tip of your rod at all, known as trout setting, you will not get the hook into the hard mouth of any saltwater fish. It’s hard for beginners though. When the fish eats, muscle memory takes over and the body does what it’s used to doing. If you’re a trout angler, that’s a trout set.

More saltwater fish are lost as a result of weak hook sets than anything else. When I teach my bonefish schools I work with students to be sure they have the pressure right. I hold the line and have them set the hook several times, telling them when they are using the right amount of force. It’s like a firm handshake. Enough to say your serious but not enough to start a fight.

Even with this practice it’s hard to fight the muscle memory and put it all together when the fish eats. I tell my students to

say “strip set” out loud every time they strip the fly. It feels silly but I have never seen it fail. If you say “strip set” you will strip set. It’s a great device to keep your head in the game.

Watch this video to see me make a good strip set and get some pointers on getting it right.

[Strip Setting](#)

Louis Cahill

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FEBRUARY TIE-A-THON EVENT

LENOIR, NC — It was another great day in Happy Valley



as tiers gathered at the Patterson School Foundation’s Cap Wiese Fly Fishing Center for this year’s Tie-A-Thon event—an annual effort that blends craftsmanship, conservation, and community service.

Thirty-one fly tiers filled the room with the familiar rhythm of bobbins spinning and stories flowing—“tying and lying” about the fish we’ve all been catching. The camaraderie was as abundant as the materials on the tables, but the mission was clear: tie as many flies as possible to support the national Tie-A-Thon effort and its charitable recipients.

Over the course of two Saturdays, volunteers tied an impressive **3,140 flies**, with an additional **2,000 flies** generously contributed by Bear Owings. Bear also treated participants to his world-famous smoked pulled pork and all the fixings, making sure no one left hungry after a long day at the vise.

In total, **70 different individuals** took part across the two events, representing a broad cross-section of the regional fly-fishing community. Participating groups included the **Southern Fly Tyers Guild, Carolina Fly Fishing Club**, multiple chapters of **Trout Unlimited, Saluda Beads, Jacob’s Fork Fly Tying, The Fly Tying Santa** and the **Fly Fishers International Southeastern Council**.

The flies tied during the event will benefit youth programs, veterans’ initiatives, and other nonprofit outreach efforts supported through the Tie-A-Thon network—continuing a tradition that has delivered hundreds of thousands of flies to worthy causes nationwide since its founding.

Organizers also extended their gratitude to the Patterson School Foundation for consistently providing a welcoming home for tying events that support charitable causes throughout the year. The Cap Wiese Fly Fishing Center continues to evolve, with educational displays now going up and the space steadily coming together as a regional hub for fly-fishing education and outreach.



What began as a simple gathering of anglers around a few tying vises has grown into something much larger—a testament to what can happen when a community shares its passion for fly fishing and channels it into service.

As tiers packed up their vises and swapped a few final fish tales, one thing was certain: in Happy Valley, the hooks are sharp, the fellowship is strong, and the spirit of giving runs deep.



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If you are interested in tying at future events, please contact: theflytying-Santa24@gmail.com to be added to the mailing list, and if you would like to help sponsor all or part of an upcoming Tir For A Cause Saturdays, then also reach out, and if you would like to donate, please use the QR Code.

To all the people who have donated their time for this Tie-A-Thon 2026, thank you from the Guild Leadership, as well as to all our sponsors.

TROUT IN THE CLASSROOM STUDENTS HEADED TO RIVERCOURSE



I-r Gary Schnick, Chick Woodward, Christopher Sigmon, Andrew Houston, Micah Williams, Khloe Carroll, Krystal Luce, Peighton Beatenhead unable to attend

At Hickory Trout Unlimited we have students from five schools and six classes enrolled in the Trout in the Classroom program. We provide the school with an aquarium and trout eggs. They raise the trout over the year learning about the importance of Clean, Cool, Clear water and in the spring go to a river to release the fish and explore the stream. This year we decided to sponsor one of the TIC students to the North Carolina TU Rivercourse summer camp, a camp that teaches fly casting and river conservation. The student providing the best essay about river conservation would be sponsored to attend the camp. In the Fall we put out the statement to the students and asked them to submit their essays by mid January.

We received essays from five students, all of them from Ms. Luce's class at River Bend Middle School. We read the essays from three boys and two girls and were very impressed. At that point we decided to up the sponsorship to one boy and one girl. We included Chris Marok from the Rivercourse program in the review and when she read them she was so impressed she

wanted to find a way to sponsor all five of the students. She spoke with North Carolina TU Headquarters and other TU chapters in the state and was able to raise enough funds such that all five students are now being sponsored and will attend the summer camp.

On Wednesday, February 28th all TIC students were gathered in the gym to make the announcement. The students who had submitted the essays had not been told about the increase in sponsorship. They still believed that only one of them would be going. When we announced that all five of them were now being sponsored, they were surprised and thrilled. Each student was called down and received a certificate of sponsorship and a Trout Unlimited hoodie.

At the presentation we also gave a hoodie to the teacher, Ms. Luce, for the great effort she has given to the Trout in the Classroom program. She is the longest participating teacher in our program and has become a bit of a mentor to the other teachers that have joined the program. As part of her TIC program, she has developed a Trout Project learning syllabus and had required that the students to complete it before being allowed to submit their essays.

We were very pleased to award these students for their excellent essays regarding the conservation of our streams and hope that they will remember and practice the clean, cool, water policy throughout their lives.

To learn more about Trout in the Classroom you can contact Hickory Trout Unlimited at hkynctu@gmail.com. If you have a child that might like to attend the North Carolina Rivercourse camp you can get the details at www.ncturivercourse.com. By the way if you want to help Rivercourse out, they can use some Gilley's (guides). They have free lodging for the Gilley's this year.



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