

# The Barbless Hook

May 2020

Edited by Mark Spruiell



[tri-valleyflyfishers.org](http://tri-valleyflyfishers.org)

## President's Message

by Albert Mansky

Hi Guys and Gals:

Well, if you are like me, bored to death, "sheltering in place" at home. I can't wait to get out there and wet a line. Not much has happened on the home front, other than my wife spending a week in the hospital with pneumonia. I thought she was possibly having a heart attack, due to the pressure in her chest and breathing difficulty. They tested her for the coronavirus, which was negative. They removed a half a liter of fluid from her right lung. The hospital was on "total lock down". I couldn't see or visit her for the entire week. All is well again, for the time being. She had more excitement in the hospital than I did at home, with the parade of people in handcuffs coming and going. Oh, not to mention the women in the next room to her bombarding the nurse's station with her TV remote and telephone. Needless to say, they removed her to another facility for psychiatric evaluation.

I'm sorry to say that we had to cancel the Kistler fishing trip for April. With all of the Federal and State mandates coming down in regard to the coronavirus pandemic, it was the only decision that I could make to ensure the safety and health of our membership. I'm sure that there will probably be a few more fishing trips that will have to be canceled in the next few weeks or months to come. Hopefully by mid-summer or at the latest this coming fall, things will get back to some sort of normal.

In the meantime, stay safe and healthy. We are all going to get through this crisis together. Like the old saying goes, "there's a light at the end of the tunnel", but not just yet.

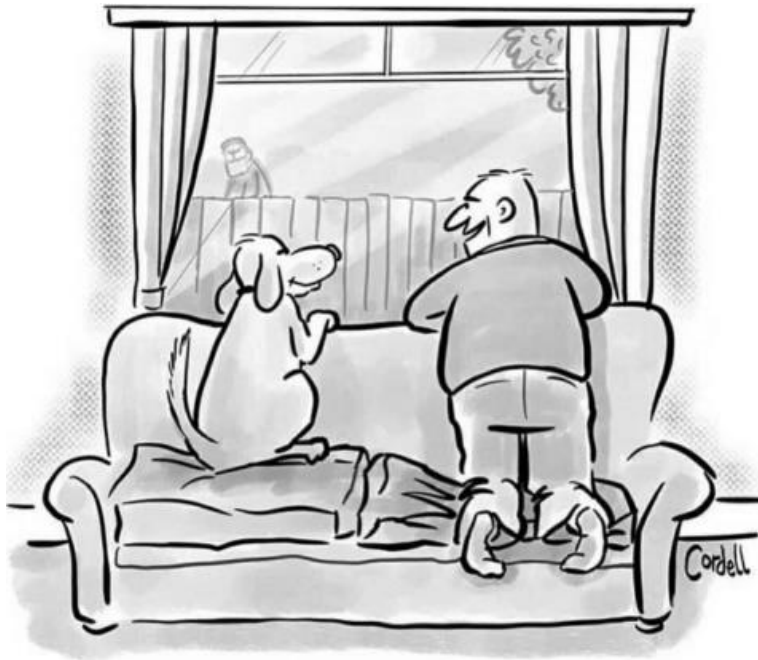
*Al*



*"Daddy, you have to flatten this curve."*

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*“Until now, I never understood why you got so excited when someone walked past the house.”*

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## May Meeting – CANCELED

Our May club meeting is canceled. Please check our website for the status of our June meeting.

## Outings and Activities

Many of our outings are described below. Please visit the [Event Calendar](#) on the TVFF website for a complete list of all upcoming meetings, outings and activities.

## Lake Almanor Hex Hatch – Late June

We'll be fishing the traditional Lake Almanor Hexagenia hatch in the late afternoon and evenings, plus early and mid-day fishing of local small creeks while awaiting the late, sundown hatches. This is a very exciting hatch and surface explosion of both large brown trout and bass just as the sun sets, so it is a frantic one-hour period of time, with pre-hatch deep nymph fishing earlier in the afternoon. This is primarily a float trip at the lake for the Hex hatch and wading for the small local streams. Two events are available for registration: [weekday](#) and [weekend](#).



## Baum and Manzanita Lakes – July 9-12

This is a three night, four day camping trip to [Baum and Manzanita Lakes](#) in the Shasta and Lassen National Park watersheds. You can fish from shore at both lakes but a watercraft is recommended. Participants can attend whichever days work for their schedules.

We'll be camping at Manzanita Lake campground in Lassen National Park. Manzanita is a wild trout fishery with special regulations hosting rainbows and browns. Baum Lake, near Burney, also contains rainbows and browns and is stocked by its on-site hatchery. Both lakes offer excellent dry fly fishing, and nymphs and streamers work well too.



## La Paz Mexico Ocean Fishing – July 11-18

[This trip](#) is a broad-based fishing excursion in La Paz, Mexico hosted by guide [Gary Bulla](#) with fishing for Dorado, rooster, mangrove snapper, yellowfin, grouper, wahoo, and cabrilla pargo. Cost includes all food, beverages (including beer) and single-occupancy accommodations. Gary runs a superb all-inclusive trip with the best fly fishing captains in the area and two lovely sisters that prepare great Mexican meals. He'll be on hand in La Ventana to share his vast knowledge, and he fishes with a different "pescador" every day to get you well acquainted with Mexican fish. His season, which runs April thru October, is mostly full for 2020 but he has held this week exclusively for our club. He will open it up to all others at the Pleasanton Fly Show. This is a great trip that should be on your bucket list.





## Truckee Watershed – July 24-27

This is a three-night, four-day [camping trip](#) at Logger Campground on Stampede Reservoir, with four days of fishing the Big Truckee, Little Truckee, and Milton Lake for rainbow and brown trout. It coincides with the peak of multiple aquatic hatches in the area and will include river wading opportunities and a day of either float tube or bank fishing at Milton Lake. Fishing techniques to be used include traditional indicator nymphing, Euro nymphing, streamers, and dry fly techniques. On the first evening, we are planning to have local guide Jon Baiocchi join us over dinner to discuss



where to fish, how to fish, and the current flies that are working in the areas at that particular time. It should be a great kickoff for 3-4 full days of fishing in the area since we won't be going in "blind" to the conditions.

## Southeast Alaska – August 28-September 5 – Martin Plotkin

Have you ever wanted to fish Alaska? I am sponsoring a [Tag-Along Fishing Trip](#) to Prince of Wales Island in Southeast Alaska. The trip will be at Mike and Sarah Warner's, Coffman Cove Adventures. We will plan to arrive at Prince of Wales on August 28<sup>th</sup> and depart on September 5<sup>th</sup>.

Coffman Cove is located near two dozen rivers within 5-90 minutes from the cabins and each offers something different to anglers. Depending on the river, we will be fishing for Coho, Pink or some Sockeye Salmon or Sea Run Cutthroat, Rainbow or Dolly Varden Trout. Each fishing group will have a private cabin with full access to the amenities of the dining cabin.

The trip cost includes lodging, meals, fish cleaning and packaging, use of a vehicle (fuel is extra), and transportation from the ferry or any float plane base on the island. This is a great trip for people looking for amazing river action. For complete details, click on the link above and contact me with any questions.



## Member Reports

### Ken Tetzl

Not much to report on my end. Fished the lower Yuba two weeks ago and caught one trout. @ 16". The water was muddy which made for slow fishing. Fished the Lower Stanislaus last weekend and only caught 3 trout. All small. Cool weather has it kinda slow, in my opinion? This warm weather may heat up the fishing too.....I hope!!

## Bart Hughes

I've been able to sneak off to UT a couple of times during CA's covid-19 restrictions. It has given me the chance to fish Provo, my local Utah stream which has challenged me given how technical of a tailwater it is. I don't have any pictures as evidence, so you'll have to trust me ;-)

I had a nice breakthrough the other day and was able to catch a few fish, including two nice browns in the 17-18-inch range on size 22 black midges (emerging style submerged) – that's how technical the Provo is these days!

Key to my success was to slow down and observe what was really going on bug action-wise. My hand seine really came in handy – funny how one's tools are useful if/when you take the time to use them ;-)

Another nice benefit was that I was able to fish with a cousin I hadn't seen for about 30+ years. We both discovered that we are avid fly fishers and lamented that we'd let so much time go by without knowing each other's fishing passions. He's looking forward to introducing me to some of his other favorite fishing spots around Utah.

Good outing over all – for me fly fishing is much, much more than just the fish one catches along the way – and this was one of those outings that reminded me of that point.

## Rob Farris

### *Governor Newsom, "Tear down that Wall..."*

WARNING: THIS IS A POLITICALLY INCORRECT TRIP REPORT, NOT FOR THE CORONAVIRUS SENSITIVE

OK, I've had enough. Finally they opened a driving range in Livermore so that was a bright star this past week and the golf courses as well. But it's not enough. I have the need for speed. Surface-take rainbow speed on a screaming downriver run. And so I review my alternatives and my responsibility as Fishmeister to determine whether the Club Hat Creek trip should go on May 15<sup>th</sup> after the Shelter in Place is lifted May 1. Somebody has to do it. So I pack up and go "solo" to Hat Creek and Burney this past Monday and Tuesday just before the expected expiration of the Shelter in Place.

But what if I get stopped and thrown in jail by Newsom's goon's? Well, I figure that they are releasing the inmates anyway so I'll only be in Santa Rita for two days max. As long as I get to fish first I'm OK. Turns out both Siskiyou and Shasta counties have few coronavirus cases and open fishing. In Shasta County they have 29 total cases and only 5 in Siskiyou County. So if I go prepared, maybe I can pull this off??

**(May 1 Update):** We do have a Club trip for the Hat Creek Salmonfly hatch scheduled for May 15. My scouting trip below was in anticipation that the Shelter in Place guidelines would be lifted May 1<sup>st</sup>, which of course has been extended for another month. So at this point we've decided to postpone the trip to later in the year unfortunately. However, if you do decide to go "solo" as I did, you may want to consider my experiences of what you will face in order to stay safe and be prepared. A trip anywhere is a personal decision and may conflict with Shelter in Place orders so evaluate what you do carefully.

**Traveling now:** Almost no traffic except lots of company from Amazon, Walmart, and UPS trucks. Otherwise it's a wide-open road. One tank of gas with a direct route to Hat Creek, and a return tank at \$2.47/gal while up there. Yes, two rest areas were available with open restrooms (take your own precautions of course), and a drive through In & Out in Redding did the return trick for dinner (no cash accepted with only a terminal to insert your card, fully contact free). All internal employees gloved and masked. Very good approach In & Out!

**Hotel precautions:** I wanted to camp but everything is still closed. My experience with a hotel was a very good one. Hotel cost \$72 vs. \$119/night usually. When making the reservation (by phone) I asked what their protocols were for managing during the virus, which I suggest you do if you travel. In their case they completely wipe down and disinfect everything in the room after each stay, and then take the room off-line for three days before renting it again. All linens and all bedding also get washed after each stay, including the comforter. Check in at the front desk was from behind a plexiglass screen, with no cash accepted, and hand sanitizer available right there at hand. I erred on the side of caution and also brought enough wipes with me to fully wipe down every surface from the front door handle to kitchen stuff before I brought any luggage in, which I also left packed the entire time.

I brought my own bedding with a sheet to lie on top of the bed, my own pillow, and a sleeping bag for on top of my sheet. Overly cautious? Hard to say, but felt safe nonetheless so I could focus on the fishing and not feeling uncomfortable.

**Food issues:** I brought my own... few places in town are open for takeout aside from Safeway (with many in the store shockingly maskless, except employees). Glad I brought my own meals and heated in the microwave (after the wipe down). Ice machines not operable so prepare appropriately.

**Social distancing (see the photo):** Not a problem as I read on a website last week, "I can't wait for social distancing to end so that I can go out and be alone again".... Perfect. Only four people on 400 yards of Hat Creek on Monday and seven spread out over similar distance on Tuesday. And that was only from 8am until noon when almost everyone called it a day due to the typical fat, lazy, and hunkered down fish snoozing at Hat Creek mid-day after gorging on the morning hatch. Note that public restrooms are all closed so don't have that extra cup of coffee.



OK; now for the FISHING REPORT once you're up there. Hat is a tale of two times; mid-morning hatch and late evening Caddis hatches.



**Day 1 AM:** Typical with clear water, a touch below average depth at Powerhouse #2, and 54 degree water temp. Four guys at the riffles, all spread out top to bottom. Everyone, except me (the dry fly purist and Euro guy), was fishing indicators. Note that PG&E has closed the gates for the back access road to Carbon Bridge and the downstream section below highway 299.

I started swinging a #14 wet fly (mayfly) downstream before the hatch and had my first fish (6") on the 3<sup>rd</sup> cast. I then moved to an indicator rig with dual nymphs including a PMD bead for the point and a pheasant tail 9" above anticipating the bug movement to the surface. Bingo! Another two fish in the 12" range. At a precise and a historically consistent 9:30am it began... and so did the most fun I've had on dry flies in a while. I moved on down to the bottom of the riffles in the flats with lots of visible risers, tied on a #16 hackled PMD onto 14' of 6X, and lost two quick fish by setting too quickly (are you excited, or what??). "God save the Queen" before you set, dummy! Changed to a #18 PMD /Comparadun and landed that cute little rainbow you see in the photo (about 16", but probably lost some weight and size from all the jumping... ☺). The hatch lasted until 11am, and then just as quickly it was over. Just before it died, I hooked into another nice fish on the #18 PMD again, and that was it for the morning. So back to check in at the hotel, and maybe a snooze after leaving that morning at 4:15am to make the hatch.



**Day 1, PM:** Hat is known for its epic late day Caddis hatch and I thought I was ready. But as they say, "the best laid plans" ... On the stream by 6pm but the hatch didn't start until 7:30pm.

Had the entire stream to myself that night, so I was practicing maximum social distancing for extra points I guess. The hatch was awesome and very prolific in 14's and 16's. Couldn't ask for anything more as I dove into my Caddis dry box to give it a workout. Normal Caddis for Hat Creek is the Henryville Downwing Special. Nope, not in 14, 16 or 18. Adjust with 40-45' of casting with parachute, pile, wiggle casts, downstream presentations, and aerial mends to do everything to minimize drag. Nope. How about my favorite Emerger/Cripple Caddis? Nope. Tan Elk Hair? Nope. Black Elk Hair? Nope. Small Stimulator? Nope. And very few surface risers; go figure. So I finally picked up a nice fish (15") by going down with an orange Caddis Poopah 6X dropper under my small Stimmy and catching it on a Leisenring lift at the bottom of the drift. Talk about having to work for it. And then it was dark and a challenging walk back across the riffles.

**Round 1:** 5 caught, 9 lost, at least 15-20 rises with tough downstream presentations and hookups.

**Day 2 dawns bright and sunny:** Oh, I am ready after a good night's sleep. Spent the previous evening rigging up both my Euro and dry rod with the #18 Comparadun PMD and 14' of 6X that worked on Day 1. Showed up at 7:30 and had my pick of which claim to squat on. Got two 10-12" fish during the initial two hours on the Euro rod in the mid riffles (PT's and Perdigos). Picked up my dry rod stashed on shore and was in the ready position for the 9:30 fire drill. Oh yea, here they come...not the fish; 6 other people right at 9 for the hatch! But I'm defending the best downstream riffle section with 50' sloppy dry casts in all directions and my best hearty scowl at anyone even thinking about encroaching to protect my social distancing requirements (sure...). And so it begins at 9:30 with quite a few takes all up and down my "turf". But I and can't keep the #18 PMD in

their mouths and lose a good number of fish to tough downstream fly first presentations, including two big slabs as they turn down and dislodge the small fly even with downstream hooksets. I get maybe another 15-20 rises, so plenty of fun activity casting to fish and chasing them up and down about 40 yards of water without the previous day's success. But now I'm frustrated and humbled, so I change tactics and tie on a #18 PMD vertical hanging CDC emerger as a 6X dropper, and voila (!) a nice 15" fish comes home to Papa. And then, it's over, again...

I grab my Euro rod on the way back across the riffles and hook into something big on my first cast right on the bottom, except strangely it doesn't fight. I bring it up and it's a 20" rainbow foul hooked in the Adipose fin, AND... it's dead. Probably 2-3 days as it still had color but was stiff. What skill with the Euro rod; I can even catch dead fish? So I call the high court of Prince, McCann, and Spruiell and ask for a ruling; does it count? Only if I claimed it as bringing it to hand, but not as a caught fish was the ruling by a unanimous 3:0 court decision...

**Round 2:** 3 caught, lost 5, with numerous rises, and one more 20" rainbow brought "to hand".

And rather than wait around for another late Caddis humiliation and an even longer 4.5 hour drive home, I decided to pack it in and get an early start. What a great mental health break trip after the SIP of the last six weeks. Feeding rainbows are calling... but do be careful out there, make your own decision as to SIP requirements, and take every precaution that you think is necessary to stay safe if you do go out.

## Fly Fishing Videos – Loretta Strickland, DVFF

Below is a list of fly fishing shows and documentaries that you may be interested in.

### Amazon Prime Video\*

- [Orvis Guide to Fly Fishing](#) – Full shows on Amazon Prime, shorts can also be found on [YouTube](#).
- [Planet Fly Fish](#) – Three-episode documentary.
- [Fishing with Ladin](#) – Multi-season fishing show focuses on the Northwest and Canada, Seasons 2-15.
- [Seasons on the Fly](#) – Documentary-style series.
- [Pure FLY NZ](#) – Sixteen episodes covering the rivers and lakes of New Zealand.
- [Live the Stream: The Story of Joe Humphreys](#) – The story of a famous fly fisherman, teacher, and conservationist.
- [Sport Fishing on the Fly](#) – Canadian rivers and lakes.
- ...and for pure escapism, a fun little film: [Salmon Fishing in the Yemen](#).

### Videos YouTube

- [George Daniel](#) – Fly fishing educator/coach of Livin on the Fly.
- [Ashland Fly Shop](#) – Everything from gear reviews, fly tying and fishing reports to cooking and skills building.
- [New Fly Fisher](#) – Formerly shown on PBS, now available on YouTube. THE mellow fly fishing show, with a focus on skills and venues in Canada and northern U.S. states.
- [Gunnar Brammer](#) – A focus on fly tying, sprinkled with the odd gear review and skills building videos.



- [Jensen Fly Fishing](#) – Destination and skills videos from Dave & Amelia Jensen as they fish western Canada and the South Island of New Zealand.
- [Jim Misiura](#) – Videos highly focused on fly tying, from a gentleman who's been tying for 30-plus years.
- [Fly Fish Food](#) – Fly tying tutorials with a few odds and ends.

\* Requires subscription to Amazon Prime.

## Salmon Update

The [Golden State Salmon Association](#) (GSSA) reports “Tanker trucks carrying hundreds of thousands of baby salmon, the fish we will catch in 2022, lined up to release in Sausalito on Friday April 30<sup>th</sup>. These fish will enjoy very high survival rates thanks to the hard work of the Mokelumne hatchery and its dedicated crew.”

GSSA also has an interesting article about the [extinction crisis](#) affecting the San Francisco Bay ecosystem.

An [article](#) in the San Francisco Chronicle says “California’s commercial salmon season begins Friday May 1<sup>st</sup> for the coast from Pigeon Point (San Mateo County) to the southern border, which means Bay Area residents are potentially only days away from seeing wild king salmon back in local markets.

Early signs indicate a bountiful year for salmon catches in 2020. There are more than 470,000 adult salmon off the Bay Area coast this season, according to recent scientific data. In 2019, there were almost 100,000 fewer fish along the coast, and many fishermen called last year the biggest salmon season in a decade.”



## H.R. 3742 - Recovering America's Wildlife Act of 2019

The stated purpose of [this bill](#) is “To amend the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act to make supplemental funds available for management of fish and wildlife species of greatest conservation need as determined by State fish and wildlife agencies, and for other purposes.”

Co-authored by Reps. Debbie Dingell, D-Mich., and Jeff Fortenberry, R-Neb, was passed Dec. 5<sup>th</sup> by the House Natural Resources Committee and would provide \$1.4 billion annually to state and tribal efforts to assist animal species of concern. The majority of the money – \$1.3 billion – would go to wildlife recovery efforts led by state wildlife agencies. This spending would be guided by the congressionally-mandated State Wildlife Action Plans, which identify 12,000 species of concern nationwide.

Tribal Nations would receive \$97.5 million annually to fund proactive wildlife conservation efforts on tens of millions of acres of land.

RAWA would get its funding without instituting a new tax or fee. It would instead draw the \$1.4 billion from the approximately \$5 to \$12 billion the federal government receives annually in royalties from oil and gas development.

## COVID-19 and Fly Fishing – Kirk Deeter, TROUT Magazine

A month ago, I tackled the fly-fishing “elephant in the room” with this piece in both Angling Trade and on the [TU blog](#).

It was related to the coronavirus pandemic, namely, can and should anglers be fishing now? The general conclusion was “yes,” where states allow, in a hyper-local context and under a number of strict guidelines.

Now, we are starting to reach the next level, as many states are easing “stay-at-home” restrictions. Anglers are ready to fish more — and guides/outfitters/shops who have felt the financial impacts of shutdown are chomping at the bit to resume some type of operations.

So, let’s tackle another elephant — what might guide trips and DIY angling practices look like in the “new normal?”

The truth is, it’s going to be much harder to reach general consensus on these matters, as different areas of the country have different levels of precautions and restrictions. Nobody can give exact catch-all guidelines for fishing in all 50 states and beyond.

For a qualified perspective, I reached out to one of the most credible public health and infectious disease experts in the world — who also happens to be a dedicated fly angler and a good friend. If anyone is legitimately positioned to see “both sides” of the “should we fish/guide, and how argument,” it is Eric J. Esswein, MSPH, CIH, CIAQP, FAIHA, CAPT, USPHS (Ret.), CEO, Emeritus Health and Safety, LLC.

In the past, Eric was instrumental in creating public health strategies to battle SARS and Ebola, and at this time he is on the front lines against COVID-19, literally trying to save the lives of many people. Still, he took time to answer some very pointed questions about DIY angling and how guiding might look in coming months, because that could save the lives of people in the fishing community.

### **Here’s what he had to say about using a fly rod as a better than average measure for social distancing:**

*“With progressively diminished ‘stay at home’ ‘safer at home’ restrictions, all types of fishing will increase because it’s our passion. Agreed, a 9-ft. rod is the ‘ultimate social distancing yardstick’ and that analogy should be exploited, however, a rod, used in that manner is only as good as the intent and expertise of the user. So how the user actually behaves when using the rod as a physical distancing tool is critical.*”

*“In a pandemic, consistent social behaviors are critical in breaking the chain of transmission and SARS CoV-2 is highly transmissible. Admonitions for behaviors and actions are textbook: maintain at least a 9-foot fly rod distance apart, wear some type of face covering, e.g., a neck gaiter/Buff, don’t drive together, net your own fish... fish hyper-local, fish mostly with family members. Additional guidance is suggested: Screen yourself using CDC guidelines for COVID-19, seek medical care if you are symptomatic, fish alone, plan and prepare to be completely self-sufficient, have all the tippet, floatant, flies, all the nostrums you’ll need for a day afield or plan to go without.”*

### **About the importance of candid in-advance communication with people you intend to fish with — as friends or clients:**

*“If you plan to rendezvous with a buddy, have a forthright ‘risk communication’ discussion before your trip. Discuss if anyone is experiencing cough, shortness of breath, fever (101.4 F or above) or feverish symptoms, if any have had any high risk encounters in the past 14 days (grocery shopping, close contact with the general public for periods longer than 30 mins, while not wearing a face covering, not washing hands for 20 seconds with soap and water or using an alcohol based sanitizer after dermal contacts with commonly touched surfaces). SARS CoV-2 is age-discriminatory, folks 55 and older have a much higher risk for contracting the virus than folks 45 and younger and if you are over 65 and you contract COVID-19 the risk of death is 22 times higher than those 55 and younger. My observation is that folks on guided trips can afford to be guided and, let’s face it, are often older. Guides and shop staff tend to be younger in my observations; they have lower risks for serious health effects. Folks with pre-existing heart, lung and kidney disease are at higher risk. Is fishing now really worth the risk if you are older or have existing health concerns. Can you wait?”*

### **On weighing hazards vs. risks:**

*“Now it gets a scant technical, so please bear with me... In occupational health and safety (and what I teach my South African graduate students) we control workplace hazards by first understanding exposure risks, then using a paradigm called the “hierarchy of controls” (HOCs) to control or minimize exposure risks. The HOC is prioritized and involves first trying to eliminate the hazard, next substitution of a less hazardous substance or material, next engineering out the hazard, next, using administrative controls (policy and procedure and worker training to understand the hazard and the controls), lastly use of personal protective equipment (PPE). In a pandemic, we are faced with this: decision making in the face of uncertainty, do we really understand “hazard” and “risk” and what controls can be used to limit exposures.*

*“Unfortunately, the public does not understand hazard vs. risk very well. A hazard is something that can harm or even kill us, risk is the probability or likelihood we will be exposed to that hazard and an adverse outcome will occur. A large hole in a sidewalk is a serious hazard; the risk is falling in, sustaining serious injury or even death. Securing a sturdy metal plate over the hole totally eliminates the risk but not all risks can be eliminated in a pandemic. Often, we begin to control risks through actions we can take personally to understand the hazard, our behaviors and the behavior of those around us. If we all do this, it’s a force multiplier, hence ‘stay at home.’ We can decide not to do something, or at times foolishly to do something: ‘Hold my beer, watch this...’ SARS-COV-2 is a serious hazard, so we need to understand how our decisions and behaviors influence the risk we may be exposed to; this comes down to making informed choices and personal decisions about how much risk we are willing to tolerate.*

*“A real-life fire-breathing example: on a float trip or when wading, a tangible hazard is falling from the boat and drowning, slipping and falling when wading, entrapment against a log or rock: drowning or serious injury. We control the risk by wearing a life jacket, listening to the guide, not drinking alcohol to excess, sitting down and bracing while in rapids, wading safely, wearing a wading belt, using a wading staff, not wading in swift currents or past our wading strength or skill levels.”*

### **On implementing the HOC’s for COVID-19 and fishing:**

**Elimination:** *decide if the joy derived from fishing is worth the risk one may encounter in times of a pandemic and high COVID-19 transmissibility. We are still in the acceleration phase of this pandemic, the risks are still high. If you decide to accept the risks of being out with a guide or others, maintain physical distancing as much as possible. Perhaps that means no float trips, waiting until new cases of COVID-19 are decreasing for a 14-day*

period. Any guide trips should require agreed upon no touch guiding, no shared food, guides not handling clients' rods, and touching clients only in an emergency. No handshakes, use an elbow or toe tap to greet or say goodbye.

**Substitution:** we can't substitute a virus of lesser transmissibility or pathogenicity but we can substitute another experience: binge watch fly fishing shows and videos, tie flies. Read Harrop's Trout Hunter.... Some of this is a waiting game, for now.

**Engineering controls:** not a lot here that's particularly useful, hard to engineer out a virus. A vaccine would help; it's a long way off.

**Administrative controls:** Keep COVID-19 symptomatic clients out of shops and off boats as best as possible. If guides and shop staff have symptoms they should not be working. This involves developing and implementing policy and procedures (e.g., waivers we sign before a float trip that give clients caveat emptor that in a time of a pandemic there will be risks) but the shop and guide are doing everything possible to limit the risks of transmission. Using alcohol-based hand rubs, washing down frequently touched surfaces in shops and on boats, posting signage on shop doors: if you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms please do not come in, phone into the shop, pay by CC, curbside pick-up of your order. No shaking hands when greeting clients, tipping can happen and should but the guide needs to wash his/her hands or use an alcohol based hand rub. No hugs after a big fish day.

Clients should be asked to wear a face covering or a neck gaiter, and BTW these are on sale in our shop for 30% off for guided trips but you have to stand away from the register and other shop customers, and we are limiting customers to 3 at a time in the shop at any one time for physical distancing purposes to protect our staff and our customers. Please don't pet Otis the shop dog, he loves it, but he does not want to be a fomite (technically he can't be because fomites are inanimate objects such as doorknobs, phones and such that can hold and transmit virus). Still, don't pet him during the pandemic.

**PPE** has a big place in a pandemic and for some of the right reasons, especially in healthcare. For fishing and in shops, face coverings are recommended but the degree of how well neck gators and cloth face coverings really work to prevent transmission is unknown, there's no data yet. But yes, recommended.

#### **Regarding fishing from boats now:**

That's where a clear caveat emptor needs to be discussed with the guide and client before the trip. Is the shop insured for force majeure events, of which COVID-19 certainly falls under. Phone calls with the client before a trip to inquire: are you symptomatic, have you had any high-risk exposures, can we do a walk and wade trip instead of a float? Risk communication needs to occur with clients and shop staff. Here's what we are doing, but we can't control the risk 100%.

Re: pangas and flats skiffs; one client likely poses less risks but all boats are potentially floating hot zones (e.g., cruise ships). Again, shops need to "have the discussion" and provide risk communication to clients before the trip to qualify if they are experiencing symptoms and acknowledging there will be some degree of risk, explaining that with COVID-19 infections can be asymptomatic and shop owners are doing what they can to follow CDC guidance for prevention.



*The main points for control now are going to be taking whatever actions can reduce risks of transmission by following CDC guidance for small business, clear risk communication with clients, shop staff and guides and until the pandemic is better controlled acknowledgment there will be risks for exposures because some risk can be controlled to some degree but not entirely. Clearly stating what measures are being taken on the part of the shop and guide and asking clients for mutual actions for behavior and actions on their part will be required. So please, take all that in and consider it carefully. Here are my personal takeaways and how I'm going to apply it to my fishing, going forward.*

Numero uno, all anglers should strictly abide by the local regulations imposed by their states, counties and local communities, foremost. When somebody goes rogue, breaks the rules and gets somebody sick, that could have ramifications for all of us.

I think DIY angling and hyper-local fishing will be the main focus for the next several months. Smart guides and shops will adjust business models to tap into this as an opportunity, perhaps becoming more "coach" than the guide who ties on your flies and nets your fish.

I think most trout trips can and should be walk-wade, and social distancing by at least the length of a fly rod is easily understood, even "catchy." Meet people at the fishing spot; don't drive together. Wear PPE and know which way the wind blows.

I feel really bad for guides who have no option but to guide from a boat. But I think you need to watch the science. Different states already have different precautions, which I understand and respect. New Zealand is now operating with 1-meter distancing guidance, which is much more do-able in the boat context, it seems, than 6-feet. Either way, I'm not having any non-household people in my boat until 6-foot distancing guidance is clearly lifted.

Communication, verbal screening, and candor are all critical things. Liability may be a legitimate concern.

The highest risk group for COVID-19 is 55 and older, which happens to reflect many anglers, and the vast majority of guide clients.

To date I have been nothing but impressed by the vast amounts of poise and character displayed by the angling community as a whole, and guides and outfitters in particular. We will continue doing our thing to offer discussions, updates, and information as we all work through this. Take care.

## **Transitions are Tough - Domenick Swentosky, Troutbitten**

The best anglers are seen moving through various tactics with ease. They smoothly transition from fishing deep nymphs to a light dry-dropper rig. Then just a half-hour and a hundred yards more, they might be found stripping a pair of streamers against mixed pocket-water currents.

It takes practice and some planning to know when and how to transition. But making the changes and adaptations, without keen awareness and a solid plan, can throw off any angler.

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The morning had gone better than I'd expected, and for the first time in a couple hours, I lifted my head and broke the concentration that tight line nymphing demands. I stood up straight and took deep, cold breaths, sucking single-digit air through a balaclava pulled up to my sunglasses.

I turned downstream to see where I'd come from and mentally rehashed each pocket that had given up a fish or two. I gazed downstream as far as my eyes could see, deep between a canyon of spruce trees and through blowing snow, until it put a hazy white mask over the river. The trout had come quickly. I'd changed flies a few times early on, but when the fish suggested that I'd found the right combination, I stuck with the same simple pair of Walt's Worms. Standing there thinking about the morning, I realized I hadn't changed or lost a fly for a very long time, and I'd caught a pile of fish.

Things were good. So I waded to a familiar fallen tree, broke out a small thermos of coffee and remembered a similar winter day from five years ago, how I'd visited with Dad at the same streamside log. The hot coffee warmed me from the inside, just like it did years ago, and I sat again on the soft mossy wood, remembering the way Dad and I had struggled to make heads or tails of anything the stream had showed us that day. Today, however, was different. Fishing had been almost easy.

I guess I was satisfied with the good nymphing, and a little curious about what else was possible. So after recapping the thermos, I stood up and grabbed my leader with toasty warm fingers, tied some leader knots and attached a streamer. I waded upstream past a thin shelf of ice that broke into the river's edge as my wake passed. Then I began targeting the same water type where I'd had success dead-drifting nymphs all morning, only now with a slow-strip streamer presentation.

I'll do this for fifteen minutes, I thought. And if the streamer turns up nothing, I'll go back to the Walt's Worms.

A half-hour later I begrudgingly admitted that the wild browns weren't having it. No matter how I altered my streamer presentation, I couldn't move a fish. And when I tried to switch back, to pick up the trail of my earlier nymphing success, I failed. Up against a ticking clock of deadlines and real-world obligations at noon, I floundered as I changed and swapped rigs and strategies too often and too much.

I caught just one more trout before I left.

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## **Fishin' Ain't Easy**

There are some strong themes running through the pages of Troutbitten. And over the nearly six-hundred stories and tips here, I've advocated for meeting trout on their own terms — to fish whatever they're eating. One of the great advantages of the fly rod is how effectively we can fish flies of any size and any type, and because of that, there's always hope for the next cast. We can match whatever food forms a trout is willing to eat, presenting flies at any depth necessary (from the glassy surface to the rocky bottom).

But transitioning from one style to the next is not easy.

So that's why I've also suggested before to focus on learning just one thing at a time. It may take years to really put together a solid tight line nymphing game. And, personally, I learn best when I'm dedicated to only one objective. So try carrying only your dry flies to the water, if that's what you want to learn. Or see what happens if you tie on streamers and nothing else, no matter the river and weather conditions.

Even when we do have a fully developed set of fly fishing skills, it's easy to screw up the transition between styles if we aren't purposely aware and thoughtful about what we're doing. I know how to fish nymphs and streamers. I'm good with both. But all too often, something is lost in the switch. Sure, I can blame it on the fish. I can say that a bite window closed (and maybe it did). But I often leave the river knowing that I did something wrong — and sometimes knowing for sure that I messed up a good thing.

**And you may find yourself . . . And you may ask yourself . . .**

You may spend the better part of an early summer afternoon casting to rising fish that eagerly chase down mayfly emergers. When the hatching activity ends and you want to switch to nymphs, it'll serve you well to take an extra moment to pause, to think about shortening the range of your casts. Because whether tight lining or fishing with a suspender, better nymphing happens at close range.

And when dusk settles in, when the harsh angular light softens into orange and purple glows over grey water, your trigger finger may be itching to strip streamers through the last remaining light, hoping to fool a large trout who's just a little early on the prowl. In that moment, it pays to slow down and think about covering less water than you did with the nymphs, to target only the spots where you expect to find a cruising Whiskey.

Whatever the situation, it helps to be thoughtful about every transition, every time you alter your rig or tactics on the water. Is the change a good bet? And if so, what adjustments need be made?

Fish hard, friends.



*Tensions are high in the produce section  
as no one dares to lick their fingers*