

## FLY FISHING GUIDING IN SOUTH AFRICA

As a federation FOSAF is interested in the wellbeing of all facets of fly fishing in the country. Guiding is no exception. We have added this section to our website to provide guidance to those of you who would like to take up guiding or guide training at a professional level. Unfortunately, this is not an easy process so prepare yourself for a long and frustrating tussle with red tape and government officials.

To be a legal guide you must be registered with:

1. THETA which is the Tourism, Hospitality & Sports Education & Training Authority, and
2. The Province in which you are guiding. If you guide in different provinces you must be registered with each. (This is the first problem. Most guides will never be able to make living by fishing in one province or one location. It all depends, ofcourse, on where you are located). To register with either of the above you must have successfully completed a (fly fishing) guiding course.

To be registered as a guide you must have done some kind of training – nothing international is acceptable, your course must be registered with THETA ([www.theta.org.za](http://www.theta.org.za)) and the course must have been presented by a registered training service provider. It is a separate process that you must go through to be registered as the latter. As I have said above, if you wish to become THETA accredited be prepared for a long haul. Keep in mind that your operation is basically illegal if you are not accredited.

To train as a fly fishing guide you must register with a service provider that specialises in fly fishing. Unfortunately such providers are few and far between. At this point fly fishing is a specialized course which is part of the greater guide training syllabus. Another problem! There are those of us who believe that a separate course should be developed specifically for fly guides. However, it is the professional fly fishers who must take this further with THETA together with the Standards Generating Bodies (SGB) that exist for each discipline in guiding.

There are two ways of becoming an accredited guide. Firstly, one could do a complete course as outlined above. If you are already an experienced person and have been guiding for a while you can request to THETA, or a training service provider, to follow a process known as Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

If you complete a full guiding course you will be qualified for to take guided vehicle tours along with the “jeep jocks”, which is not really what we want as fly fishermen. Specific fly fishing courses do exist but there are not many in South Africa and these do not give you a full guiding qualification. There are skills programmes but that is another story.

Before a course may be designed it must be structured according to what are known as a Unit Standard. A collection of unit standards together give you enough points to achieve your qualification. Unit Standards for fly fishing do exist; please use the link

[http://www.theta.org.za/etqa/default.asp?thepage=qualifications/index.asp&TheSec=SP&TheFrame\\_ID=6&TheSP\\_ID=32](http://www.theta.org.za/etqa/default.asp?thepage=qualifications/index.asp&TheSec=SP&TheFrame_ID=6&TheSP_ID=32) to access them. The suggested

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framework of a freshwater fly fishing course is provided below and was developed using the Unit Standard during its development.

We have provided this information for the fly fishing community to assist those who wish to pursue a professional career in fly fishing guiding. It must be noted that the Unit Standard is only a guide and depending on your own strengths and knowledge a course can look very different to the one we provided.

If this seems very confusing to you, do not be deterred, it is confusing to us as well - as has anyone who has tried this process.

## SUGGESTED CONTENT OF A FLY FISHING COURSE

### CONTENTS OF COURSE

#### **1 Introduction to freshwater flyfishing**

- 1.1 General introduction and history of freshwater flyfishing.
- 1.2 History of flyfishing in Southern Africa
- 1.3 Broader scope of flyfishing opportunities and importance of the flyfishing industry
- 1.4 Introduction to main freshwater species and an introduction to saltwater flyfishing

#### **2 Introduction to guiding as a career**

- 2.1 The role of the Guide
- 2.2 Guiding and its role in broad-based tourism
- 2.3 Career opportunities emanating out of an accredited qualification

#### **3. Provide client with basic advice on flyfishing approach and fly selection**

- 3.1 General duties towards client.
- 3.2 Basic knowledge of flyfishing tackle applicable
- 3.3 Common approaches to fly selection
- 3.4 Basic knowledge of flyfishing techniques
- 3.6 An introduction to fly casting

#### **4. Demonstrate a basic knowledge of the specific geographical area and associated hazards**

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4.1 Basic knowledge of a specific geographical area

4.2 Land ownership, owners, boundaries and access to be correctly identified and acknowledged

4.3 Basic ability to "read" weather conditions & associated fishing variables.

4.4 Basic ability to "read" a water.

#### **5. Direct client to good fishing areas**

5.1 Identification of suitable venue within area

5.2 Knowledge of suitable access routes

5.3 Access requirements, closing gates and acknowledged land-ownership

5.4 Explain the plan.

#### **6. Identify and report environmental problems in geographical area affecting water quality**

6.1 Dirtying of dam or river, poaching, soil erosion on dam or river bank, pollution and fish losses

6.2 Notify supervisor or authorities of problems

6.3 Understanding of fishing regulations in order at specific water

#### **7. Ensure record keeping of fish caught and released**

7.1 Data to be recorded verbally or in writing

7.2 Noting down regularity of catch, species and associated information e.g. proximity, time, fly, method

7.3 Catches and releases are measured and recorded correctly

7.4 Reports submitted to regularly to correct sources

#### **8. Provide a fish handling service**

8.1 Ability to properly handle fish caught

8.2 Despatch and cleaning of fish.

#### **9. An assessment of client's needs and flyfishing abilities**

9.1 Client needs: physical ability, flyfishing goals, flyfishing morality, other interests e.g. birding

9.2 Client flyfishing ability: experience of flyfishing in general, fly casting, fly selection, techniques

9.3 Assessment of flyfisher's tackle range

9.4 Noting of any safety features that need to be assessed e.g. mobility, boating experience

## **10. Advise on suitable tackle, knots and clothing**

10.1 Client's equipment is appropriate to species and conditions i.e. rod, reel, line and terminal tackle

10.2 Client dressed correctly for weather and conditions

10.3 Tackle assembled correctly: primary tackle, fly line, leader and appropriate knots

10.4 Essential food and water, comfort items available

## **11. Apply correct selecting, casting and presenting techniques**

11.1 Adaptability of appropriate techniques to species and conditions concerned

11.2 Presentation techniques appropriate to conditions & fish

### **Summary**

**We wish to stress that merely reading the course does not enable the reader to claim that he/she is in any way a legal fly fishing guide. As stated above the course must be done through a registered service provider, the person must be registered with THETA and the person must also undertake the requisite first aid course.**

## **1. AN INTRODUCTION TO FRESHWATER FLYFISHING**

### **1.1 Introduction to the history of freshwater fly fishing**

Flyfishing has a long history going back over fifteen hundred years. Indeed what has attracted many to it, is a foundation, tradition and background that has developed through the ages. Each flyfisher feels part of a larger order, so much so that it is often referred to as the Brotherhood of the Angle.

Then recorded instance of artificial flies being used was noted in Macedonia in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century AD when a Roman rhetorician gave details of a strange practice displayed by certain anglers. This at a time when most fishing was done by netting or bait-fishing and the notion of recreational angling was not greatly appreciated. Today flyfishing is popular around the globe and a vast literature on it has emanated from the UK and USA in particular.

Of particular interest in early literature was the publication of the "Boke of St Albans" in 1496 when Dame Juliana de Berners included "A Treatyse of Fyshinge wyth an Angle" therein. In giving much advice, in it she outlined 12 fly patterns for use throughout the year. Another classic, a few decades later was Sir Isaac Walton's "The Compleat Angler". To this day it finds a place in most flyfisher's libraries.

Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century the cult of the dry fly emerged strongly with a rationale for the basis of flyfishing. Here it could be likened to hunting in that an angler was expected to stalk a fish that was feeding and then deceive it with a fly that was reminiscent of the natural fly it was feeding.

What is of great interest was the reasoning that true flyfishing was regarded as the art of fishing with a close resemblance of a natural adult fly. Thus any representation that did not closely resemble a natural adult fly was - in fact - not a fly; nor was a representation (even close) of an aquatic creature that was not a fly e.g. a shrimp, frog or small fish. The angler who did not conform was not flyfishing.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, American anglers who had started their flyfishing for the native brook trout were confronted with the introduction of the more subtle-taking German brown trout. At this time, they started to take note of the magic of the more imitative approaches of the English anglers.

By this time trout as the prime fly fishing fish, had been translocated around the globe to South America, New Zealand and Africa. However, while each played a role in the development of that country's own flyfishing, the advent of international flyfishing has pointed to the fact that some of the most skilled exponents of flyfishing are to be found near the birthplace of flyfishing - Poland, Czechoslovakia, France and Belgium.

There is thus much to learn and one would do well to observe the truism that "the more you think you know, the more you realise how little you know."

## **1.2 History of Flyfishing in Southern Africa**

As with most other destinations around the globe, flyfishing in South Africa, principally the Cape Colony, revolved around acclimatisation of trout

towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The introduction of brown trout was arduous and it took a number of attempts to bring trout ova from overseas and a period of abstinence to allow the fish to secure a foothold in the streams of the Cape Colony.

Initially the trout were brown trout, but soon the attractions of rainbow trout gained popularity. The wiliness of the browns and the natural inclination of the more aggressive rainbows saw a diminution in the brown trout stocks and the rainbow trout became the principle fly-caught fish throughout the country. This is a trend that has continued to the present, although in the last decade or so, the brown trout has made a comeback in stillwater venues.

Initially too, the early writers focused their efforts on fishing the rivers and their influence which was predominantly out of the United Kingdom played a major role in the fly boxes of our trout fishers up until the 1970s. The traditional patterns such as Wickham's Fancy, Connemara Black, Invicta, Peter Ross, Jock Scott etc were extremely popular to begin with. With more American tackle emerging make inroads so too did some of the flies change. Muddler Minnows and Woolly Worms (later Buggers) vied with a number of New Zealand patterns such as the Red Setter, Hamill's Killer, Parson's Glory and a famous adaptation of the Kilwell's No 1 - the Walker's Killer.

In the mid-Eighties more attempts by SA flyfishers to develop home patterns based on a more imitative approach became evident.

It was also in the mid-Eighties that attention was turned to catching other species on fly. British army officers during the Anglo-Boer War had caught yellowfish near Potchefstroom with some success. However, in those days catch-and release was not practised and the yellowfish, despite its other qualities, was not regarded as a good eating fish.

By this time tiger fish and tilapia techniques were developing and more interest was shown in the bounties around our coastline. Indeed, the Southern African coastline is fast attaining a very good reputation for saltwater flyfishing and Mozambique in particular is regarded as a world-class destination

Although South Africa may never attain the status of the "world-class" waters there is an immense amount of variation for different species in Southern Africa and some excellent angling, including trout. Southern Africa may soon become a very sought-after destination for anglers around the world.

### **1.3 Broader scope of flyfishing opportunities and importance of the flyfishing industry**

Prior to the 1980s, there was relatively little literature on South African flyfishing. The flyfishing market was small and comprised of pockets of flyfishers dedicated to their particular trout areas. Many anglers used personal relationships with riparian owners to gain access to waters. Before then, a few established clubs such as the Cape Piscatorial Society were in the forefront of the flyfishing movement in procuring additional waters for their members. In Natal, the Underberg-Himeville Club and later the Natal Flyfishers Club also encouraged the art of flyfishing. Syndication had raised its head in the then Eastern Transvaal, but later the Club concept burgeoned as syndicate fees grew more expensive. Clubs in and around Belfast, Lydenburg, Machadodorp, Waterval Boven and Dullstroom were formed when it was realised that the concept of flyfishing was a very attractive one. The numbers of books by writers accelerated the desire to try out this "new pastime" especially amongst professionals and executives plus the growth of specialist flyfishing magazines such as *The Complete Flyfisherman* and *Flyfishing* added fuel to the fire.

Around that time, as the Flyfishing Club as a concept once again experienced a surge of enthusiasm as threats to flyfishing, particularly trout fishing came to a boil. In the light of anti-trout sentiment springing up, it was realised that a larger umbrella body of flyfishers was required to deal with matters that affected flyfishers on a national basis. From a meeting near Stutterheim, the Federation of Southern African Flyfishers was born and since then aspects of flyfishing too extensive for individual Clubs to handle have been taken on by FOSAF. This included resolving the relationship regarding trout in the Western Cape; reclassifying of the Mpumalanga trout region as flyfishing waters where trout may be stocked; sponsoring educational and research projects; initiating the Yellowfish Working Group and Saltwater Working Group. In conjunction with Nedbank, FOSAF has also published the Nedbank Guide to Flyfishing in Southern Africa, which is published every two years.

More impetus came with the development of the commercial flyfishing industry as well. The more anglers, the more tackle shops started up, and the demand for tackle increased. In exponential fashion the number of lodges providing accommodation and fishing burst on to the scene e.g. in 1974 Malcolm Meintjes drew a map of the Eastern Transvaal fisheries to which the public had access - there were 12. Today the number would be over 100.

Another aspect of this growth is illustrated in the resurrection of the town of Waterval Boven when the town as a whole was in dire straits. It was due to the endeavours of the Boven committee members to build dams and improve the Elands River, that attracted over 500 members, many from the Reef. Some even brought property in the town. Another example is the story of Dullstroom, which has been transformed from a one hotel hamlet into a thriving week-end metropolis.

Throughout South Africa, the trout areas have enjoyed some prosperity in being able to offer flyfishing and with this, the opportunity for good guides has started to emerge. The lifting of sanctions also brought with it increased numbers of overseas visitors and, within their ranks, are many flyfishers who are more inclined to see value in a good Guide since he can accelerate the time it takes for a casual tourist fly-fisher to catch fish.

The flyfishing industry has become an important tourist service provider and a generator of job opportunities. As with all industries, jobs with service excellence provide beyond the immediate families and for the community. The overseas flyfisher who comes to Dullstroom to enjoy the skills of a guide will end up buying goods at a number of stores in the town. The economic impact of this when added up at the end of the year is immense.

e.g. Two fishermen visit Dullstroom for a week-end with a guide. They negotiate a fee with the guide which helps him to increase his wealth and thereby enjoy the better things in life. They, however, spend on other matter during the week-end:

They stop at the local garage and spend R 300 filling up.

They book in to the local accommodation at R 250 per person per night.

They spend R 75 on licences

They buy general goods such as cold drinks for R 50 during the week-end

They visit a tackle dealer in town to buy flies and some leader material ( R 75).

They eat out at a restaurant that night with drinks ( R100)

They buy some souvenirs for their wives and children on the way home ( R 150).

One fishing trip generated: R300 + R1000+ R150 + R50 +R150 + R200 + R 300 = R 2150

If only 100 pair of anglers did this throughout the entire country each week-end. That would be R215 000 per week-end and over R 10m per annum. Imagine if only 10% of those came to your area - a generation of R 1m in and around your community.

#### **1.4 Introduction to main freshwater flyfishing species & an introduction to saltwater flyfishing.**

Southern Africa is blessed with a wide variety of freshwater fishes, some introduced to the country through the years, but many indigenous to the country and endemic to particular regions. Most of these are small minnows etc which do not generally pose any great interest to the flyfisher, though some such as the threespot barb, slender and silver robbers have been known to pick a fly up. Where this can be significant is that these can act as additions to the angler's specimen list.

Given the fact that fly tackle has been designed to cater for the smallest and largest fish species, many more species come into the picture and to the fore as being worthy prey even though size may not be their most distinguishing factor. This potentially makes Southern Africa a wonderful destination for flyfishers wishing to try something new - and to enjoy something old.

The following are some of the more common species fished for on fly in Southern Africa:

### 1.) Rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*)

Traditionally, the rainbow trout still holds the attention of most flyfishers. The reasons are simple. It has an international reputation based on fighting ability, beauty, edibility and an extreme willingness to take a fly under most conditions. It has been studied in minute detail and techniques have been developed to give flyfishers many options on how to catch them. Such has been the demand for trout fishing that it has generated an entire industry based on producing fish for dam, river and the table.

**Distribution:** Most high lying areas aligned to the Drakensberg range from the Western Cape to Zimbabwe highlands.

**Water preferences:** Cool water i.e. less than 21degrees. More tolerant of warm water than brown trout

**Breeding period :** June - August (running water essential, thus many stillwaters need to be stocked)

**Growth rates:** After one year 150 - 180 mm and up to 260mm after two years

**General life span :** 4 - 5 years

### 2.) Brown trout (*Salmo trutta*)

Present in smaller numbers and less well-distributed than the rainbow. Only a handful of brown trout-only rivers remain in Southern Africa. While not regarded as determined a fighter as rainbow trout, it poses a greater challenge to the flyfisher. They are extremely wary and guides will appreciate the benefit of good bankcraft when they target brown trout.

**Distribution:** Similar to rainbow trout. Of interest that the brown trout is indigenous to Africa and is found in the Atlas Mountains of North Africa.

**Water preferences:** Less than 21 degrees C and less than 16 degrees C for breeding. Does not tolerate warmer water conditions, becoming sluggish.

**Breeding:** In Autumn or early Winter and requires running water and gravel beds

**Growth:** Slightly slower than rainbow trout, they have longer longevity going to 7 years.

### 3.) Vaal-Orange Smallmouth yellowfish (*Labeobarbus aeneus*)

The most sought-after fish in the Vaal triangle area all the way down to where the Vaal meets up with the Orange . Its popularity has been growing as first a small number of flyfishers targeted them and then as techniques improved, so too has a strong and enthusiastic following taken up rods. The smallmouths are distributed close to major centres and within an hour's drive of many Reef flyfishers' homes. The cost of access is usually reasonable. It is a fine looking fish that grows to a good size, a great fighter and is being more widely understood technique-wise.

**Distribution:** Orange-Vaal system, but has also been translocated to Cape coastal rivers such as the Gouritz, Great Fish and Kei. Also found in the Limpopo.

**Breeding :**Breeds in spring through to mid-summer after first good rains of the season. Matures at 200 mm in males and 240 mm in females

### 3.) Vaal-Orange Largemouth yellowfish (*Labeobarbus kimberleyensis*)

Less targeted is the scarcer Largemouth yellowfish which is extremely predatory, an attribute apparent in its features. It can grow to a huge size i.e. in excess of 40 lbs.

**Distribution:** Vaal-Orange system but generally found in larger tributaries and dams

**Breeding:** breeds in mid- to late summer over gravel beds in running water

**Growth:** is slow reaching 100mm after two years and 300 mm in five years. Males mature at 6 years and females at 8 years. Individuals may live to twelve years and more

**Conservation status:** Vulnerable. Is being artificially cultured and restocked.

### 4.) Lowveld large-scale yellowfish (*Labeobarbus marequensis*)

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The largescale is rapidly gaining a reputation as a good fly-taking species and a hard-fighting fish. All catch-and-release. Some rivers hold surprisingly good average weight of fish in ample numbers.

**Distribution:** Widely distributed from the middle and lower Zambezi south to the Pongola system

**Breeding:** Breeds in spring and summer migrating upstream after rain to spawn in rapids

**Growth:** Males mature at 70 mm while females at 280 mm. The latter grow larger and live longer

### 5.) Bushveld small-scale yellowfish (*Labeobarbus polylepis*)

These fish have a reputation for being extremely delicate in their ability to mouth a fly. Those anglers who don't believe that fish can do this without being hooked will find a day or two fishing for small-scales a huge education in honing their techniques. A good fish will be in the 3 - 5 lb. bracket while many are between 1 - 2 lb.

**Distribution:** Restricted to the southern tributaries of the Limpopo and the Incomati and Pongola systems. Also found on the Highveld in the Crocodile and Jukskei rivers

**Breeding:** Breeds during spring and summer - a cool water species not found below 600m

**Growth:** Males mature at 170 mm and females at 300 mm

### 6.) Kwazulu-Natal yellowfish (*Labeobarbus natalensis*)

**Distribution:** Kwazulu-Natal from the Mkuze to the Umtamvuna (Eastern Cape border). Translocated to the Save in Zimbabwe.

**Breeding:** Breeds in summer. Migrates upstream and spawns over in gravel beds

**Growth:** Similar to Bushveld smallscale yellowfish.

### 6.) Clanwilliam yellowfish (*Labeobarbus capensis*) Sawfin (*Barbus serra*) and the Berg-Breede Witvis (*Barbus andrewi*)

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These are endemic to small regions of the Western cape. Because of their limited and often difficult-to-access distribution, these species do not have the same pressure of fishing on them.

### **8.) Tiger fish (*Hydrocynus vittatus*)**

This species attracts the most attention from overseas anglers. It is extremely predatory, feeding mostly on small fish, but can be selective at times. It can be caught up to 20 lbs in the Southern African region and is recognised as one of the hardest hitters of a fly of all freshwater species, an incredible fighter on fly tackle and has an aerial display second to none.

**Distribution:** Okavango, Zambezi and Lowveld reaches of coastal systems south to the Pongola. Found in the lower Komati and Lake Jozini.

**Breeding:** Prefers warm well-oxygenated water. Breeds during summer when large fish migrate to suitable spawning areas. Often spawning is done at night. Males mature at 2 -3 years (300 - 400mm) but most breeding females are larger and older fish. Live to 8 - 9 years.

### **9.) Tilapia (*Tilapia, oreochromis*) and Largemouth bream species (*Serranochromis*)**

In the same waters as the tiger fish exist a wonderful array of fish that can be taken on fly. The "tilapia" include threespot (*Oreochromis andersonii*), Kariba tilapia (*O. mortimeri*) and redbreast tilapia (*T. rendalli*) and (more widespread into Southern Africa) the Mozambican tilapia (*Oreochromis mossambicus*).

On the largemouth bream species side there is the very popular, nembwe (*Serranochromis robustus*), the thinface largemouth (*S. angusticeps*) and the humpback largemouth (*S. altus*). Several smaller species on both sides will also take a fly as will the often sought-after African pike (*Hepsetus. odoe*).

In the Zambezi and Okavango regions it is possible in the course of a trip to catch a dozen different species on fly.

### **10.) Largemouth and smallmouth black bass (*Micropterus salmoides* and *M. dolomieu*)**

Probably one of the most common fish caught on fly and yet not targeted that often is the largemouth black bass. The former are popular in farm dams and also often infiltrate into trout waters. The largemouth can be a nuisance when many 3 -4 inch fish attack a fly. However if proper bass fly tackle is used i.e. large flies, excellent sport can be had with specimens of between 2

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- 8 lbs. The smallmouth bass is less widely distributed, often prefers running water, but it has a reputation of being an excellent fighter.

**Distribution:** Largemouth widespread throughout the country - warm water species

Smallmouth also distributed throughout the country but less widespread

**Breeding :** Spring and early summer

#### 11.) Sharptooth catfish (*Clarias gariepinus*).

Despite its looks, it grows very big indeed and is therefore an attraction to a band of anglers who enjoy the tussle with a heavy fish. A great attraction in the Okavango is the annual catfish run when thousands of catfish migrate up the river in packs causing general chaos in the region and a wonderful fishing opportunity for tiger fish.

**Distribution:** Widespread

**Breeding:** In spring and early summer. Is vulnerable in some rivers at this time as large fish move into the shallows in numbers and are oblivious to everything around them

**Growth:** Has been caught over 50 lbs. (20 kg) and specimens over 20 lbs are not uncommon.

#### 12.) Carp (*Cyprinus carpio*)

Another large fish species with a specimen of over 80 lbs caught in Bon Accord dam many years ago. Also targeted by a band of flyfishers who are designing techniques for catching carp.

**Distribution:** Widespread throughout the country

**Breeding:** Spring and early summer

#### 13.) Other flyfishing species

While there are not many who fish specifically for them, a very underrated fighter is the Orange River Mudfish (*Labeo capensis*) which is often caught while fishing for smallmouth yellowfish in the Vaal. They may lack some colour in their garb, but some say they are harder fighters than the Labeobarbus.

A wealth of flyfishing can be enjoyed by fishing for both exotic species e.g. trout, bass and indigenous species e.g. yellowfish, tiger fish and "bream". However, while there have been attempts to avoid the spread of exotic species into sensitive areas, it should be noted that the concept of "alien" should refer to any fish that is found outside of its natural distribution area e.g. smallmouth yellowfish are found in certain eastern Cape river systems and are therefore not endemic to that area even though they may be indigenous to the country. A further problem arises in the case of indigenous fish translocated and may also interbreed with another species, creating hybrids and losing the original strain of fish.

Sundry other species such as the papermouth (*Barbus rapax*), the Incomati chiselmouth (*Varicorhinus nelspruitensis*), grass carp (*Ctenopharyngodon idella*), bluntnose catfish (*Clarias ngamensis*), moggel (*Labeo umbratus*) as well as a number of mini-species e.g. silver and striped robbers, threespot barbs have been known to take a fly, but are less favoured with the angler's attention.

While the ambit of this course does not include saltwater flyfishing, it is clearly evident that there are many opportunities along our coastline from Namibia and its bounty in the Atlantic Ocean to the Mozambique coastline washed by the warmer Indian ocean.

There is a huge range of species such as:

A wide variety of various kingfish (known as trevally elsewhere) including the giant kingfish, greenspot, yellowspot, bludger, brassy, big eye, bluefin and amongst the most popular.

King- and queen mackerel (couta and Natal snoek)

skipjack

queenfish

pickhandle barracuda,

kawakawa (also known as eastern little tuna)

grunter

garrick

shad (elf)

bonefish

cobia

dorado

dolphin fish

leerfish

indian mirrorfish

pompano

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prodigal son

mullet

rainbow runner

river roman

and even sailfish and marlin, to name but a few.

Within the scope of freshwater flyfishing species, while there is a great deal of overlap especially using imitative methods, each species should be looked at separately in terms of techniques. This however merely creates more opportunities for the guide to expand the range of services at his disposal.

## **2. INTRODUCTION TO FLYFISHING GUIDING AS A CAREER**

### **2.1 The role of the Guide**

The role of a guide as a whole is to enhance a particular tourism experience of a client. In the flyfishing context, it goes further in that it is not enough for a client to visit a place where a particular species of fish exists or even to see the fish in the environment such as in birding, but to then apply a level of skill to induce the fish to be deceived into taking an artificial fly. Of course, the entire experience extends into more esoteric issues e.g. game viewing, historical aspects as we will discuss, but the capture of a fish (es) is the crux of the whole business. On more basic level the experience requires a great deal of expertise and it involves cutting down on the amount of time

South Africans are, by and large, outdoors people, but reasonably comfortable with an outdoor environment and with ample access to many fishing areas, they are only now coming to grips with the concept of using the services of a flyfishing guide. This is in stark contrast to overseas practice especially as regards Americans who are quite accustomed to using such services and paying a going rate for them.

For overseas anglers unused to African conditions, the lack of experience in the bush and a desire to experience some of the best flyfishing has created opportunities for guiding and a greater premium has been placed on having a good flyfishing guide, since this requires skills which vary considerably from that of a normal tour guide.

Southern Africa has always been a tourist destination, but insight into the fishing it has to offer has simply by-passed many. With endeavours being made to change this perception, the market for a flyfishing guide will continue to expand, although the overseas angler expects a lot more than just a companion or boatman on his day out.

## 2.2 Guiding and its role in broad-based tourism

South and Southern Africa are acknowledged tourist destinations. Tourists come from diverse parts of the region, other countries in Africa, as well as all other continents to see the many attractions that the sub-continent has to offer.

As above, "Tourists" should be seen as those visitors from another region of South Africa e.g. Cape Town who would like to visit Mpumalanga or vice versa, as well as those who fly in from Europe, the United Kingdom, the USA and other countries such as Japan and Australasia. The internal market of tourists is not a market to be ignored as "home" visitors have very similar needs to those who come from further away.

Traditionally we have viewed cross-border tourists with a great deal of interest since historically they have more funds to spend - though they are equally more demanding of the experience they desire. Fortunately for flyfishing guides, a breakdown of our flyfishing resources reveals that at many of the acknowledged tourist areas, there is some flyfishing to be had and so opportunities have arisen and, in fact, increased.

The natural, historical and cultural resources of Southern Africa have been the foundation of substantial tourism prospects. For many years the attractions which have lured people from far and wide include Table Mountain (Cape Town), the Cape Winelands, the Garden Route, the Drakensberg resorts, Kruger National Park and many more. Added to these and many other splendours is the excellent weather that allows for the full enjoyment of a host of outdoor pursuits. Indeed in the early days of travel from Europe, many visitors came here purely because their doctors had recommended time to be spent in the drier air regions for lung conditions, rheumatism and arthritis. Many current day travellers still plan their vacations around avoiding the wet and chilly winters of their home countries. However, they nowadays prefer to lie under a tanning sun on some of the world's best beaches.

Overseas visitors are also intrigued by our history. From the days of the bushmen (San) to the present post-Apartheid era, there are many reminders of our past and conflicts hidden in the hills and valleys. Mpumalanga itself saw a criss-cross of Boer and British regiments, Kimberley and the Witwatersrand in particular have a wealth of history both cultural (the discovery of diamonds and gold) and in the battlefields (Anglo-Boer Wars). In Natal and the Eastern Cape visitors are enthralled by the conflicts between Boer, Brit, Zulu and Xhosa in particular, but there are many other tales to be told under a rich tapestry.

Game viewing has also always been high on the list of attractions from the Addo Elephant Park, through the Northern Kwazulu-Natal game reserves (Umfolozi) to the renowned Kruger National Park.

South Africa is rich in birdlife too, but this is compounded by superb viewing in Botswana's Okavango and the upper Zambezi where the river follows the borders of Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. And what better coastlines to have apart from those within our own borders than that washed by the warm currents off the coast of Mozambique?

All of these factors have persuaded many to travel to South Africa and now it is believed that flyfishing can play a role in expanding tourism even further.

### **2.3 Career opportunities emanating out of an accredited qualification**

In the South African context, the institution of different levels of registered and accredited flyfishing guides provides a definite progression that a guide can work towards in his career. The first level is that of being able to assist a client with a flyfishing experience (Level 2 THETA). This has been the foundation of the skills program concerning a person accompanying a flyfisher to a localised spot (Specific Geographical Area) and assisting him with the experience. However, it is intended that this level of competence can be upgraded to both Level 4 and 6 i.e. a guiding and an advanced guiding status, in due course.

Thus, the guide can work towards providing an actual guiding trip (as opposed to assistance) where the level of expertise extends to including some advice on tackle, tips and techniques. Finally, with the advent of more knowledge of different species of fish, the guide can strive to become providing an advanced guiding experience throughout the country as opposed to a Specific Flyfishing Area.

It should not be forgotten that there is a wider tourism guiding vision as well i.e. there is nothing to stop a flyfishing guide from including other tourism elements in his repertoire if he wishes to make the effort. Here he can make the transition towards a full tourist guide and cater for the needs of tourists who come to Southern Africa to enjoy full ambit of the African bush. In between game, birds, fauna and flora and historical sites they could include some flyfishing with the services of the same guide.

## **3. PROVIDE CLIENT WITH BASIC ADVICE ON FLYFISHING APPROACH AND FLY SELECTION.**

### **3.1 General duties towards client**

The Flyfisher's Club in London espouses the maxim "Piscator non solum piscatur", often translated as "it is not all of fishing to flyfish". It means that

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there are elements, physical and mental, outside of the mere catching of fish that constitute the appreciation that people have when going flyfishing. Do not always assume that a flyfisher has only one goal or objective and that those goals only pertain to the catching of a fish. There are examples of diverse goals and objectives which various clients may espouse :

- the capture of fish
- the capture of big fish
- the capture of many fish
- the capture of a particular species of fish.
- the capture of a variety of species
- the capture by using a particular method
- the experience of fishing in an unfamiliar environment
- the simple enjoyment of fishing in the outdoors and sharing the experience with nature
- the enjoyment of fishing with others who share the same passion

The astute guide intends to create and foster a relationship which should be fulfilled on a friendly and cordial basis. Out of it will arise rights and obligations i.e. to pay the guide and in return receive an enjoyable period of flyfishing.

### 3.1.1 First impressions

First impressions are always the most important for, as the saying goes, you only have one chance to make a first impression. Analyse therefore what the first impression the client will have of yourself and when this will occur.

Don't automatically think that the first impression is necessarily the first time you meet. Very often, first "contact" is as a result of a marketing strategy e.g. a brochure that you, or an organisation supporting you, has distributed at tackle shops or the information centre. The presentation and content of that brochure or leaflet will create an impression in the client's mind long before he has spoken to you. Ensure, therefore, that whatever message is contained therein creates a favourable impression and correctly outlines the type of service you intend to deliver.

Note: There are various marketing approaches which "describe" the guide to the client before they have met face-to-face. Another example is by way of telephone (cell phone). If a cellphone number is given, ensure that the message thereon or greeting conveys a favourable impression.

e.g. it should give an accurate description of the service, the fishing and the fish, the waters available and the costs (if practical). These facts will assist a potential client in deciding whether or not to use you. Avoid exaggerated promises or unreasonable expectations.

Guiding is a personal service involving an obligation to pay the guide the agreed amount in return for a flyfishing expectations to be realised. In so doing, the degree of trust with both parties feeling comfortable dealing is important. Don't, for example, overestimate the number or size of fish you feel can be caught, unless you qualify your statement. All going well, the client may well book the guide again or refer friends to him.

Possibly a client has been referred to you by another entity e.g. a lodge, or you have been recommended by a previous client or a guide in another region. While any recommendation helps soften a "cold call", visual impressions when you arrange to meet the client is still critical. Treat the meeting in a cordial fashion respectfully, ensuring that your outward appearance pleasing without being overbearing. Convey a friendly yet professional approach and be polite without being too formal or obsequious.

In this initial meeting (which may be a preliminary get-together or the prelude to actually going fishing on the day) an opportunity exists for both parties to assess one another. While the client will be looking you through, it is equally important that you begin making your own assessment of him. You will find this opportunity invaluable in planning for the day.

If you have been recommended, correct any misconceptions that might arise. Don't accept claims that would be hard to substantiate in practice. If you feel a misconception exists, straighten that out up-front to avoid disappointment.

e.g. some clients may have unreasonable expectations about the type of size of fish they are likely to catch. Establish their major objectives and expectations and then judge how you will be able in achieving those. If there is an unreasonable expectation, make it clear what the likely position will be.

e.g. a client has heard about a 10lb + fish caught in your waters. He informs you that he also wants to catch a trophy fish like that. While you may feel it can be done, the chances at that time of the year (or on the day) are not good. Without being negative, be honest and tell him there is no guarantee, but you'll do your best. One or two clients may go away disappointed, but none can accuse you of misleading them.

Clients expect a better flyfishing experience with a guide than they could have on their own. Expectations are usually high as they are relying on your expertise to cut down on unproductive time. While few guarantees can ever be given (some guides guarantee a no-fish, money-back basis), the guide can always offer an enjoyable flyfishing day with the possibility of achieving

goals. It is critical that the informed client knows and appreciates that the guide has worked towards achieving his objective(s)

One of the possible general duties of a guide is to arrange a "meet-and-greet" to take the client fishing. This arrangement can vary from meeting the client at the waterside to picking him up at his accommodation and taking him to the waters, providing the necessary driving skills have been obtained. This period provides another chance on the day to discover more about the client's ability and fishing experience.

The guide needs, as best as he can, to assess the client's mobility, health and stamina in being able to stand up to the day in question e.g. to walk along a dam bank, up a river or sit in a boat for a long period. Apart from the general duty of care to a client, matching a physical assessment to the day's experience will determine a successful outing.

Enquire tactfully about any ailments or special requests - medicine that the client is taking or allergies. Remember too that dehydration is inevitable and this can affect clients unused to a harsh sun or dry conditions - more so because dehydration or sunburn often goes undetected until later. Both can upset a week-end or longer trip that the client had in mind.

Don't make a client struggle to reach water where, though there may be good fish present, he is going to be unsettled e.g. having to wade across a strong river.

Consider beforehand designing different fishing experiences for specific client groups, rather than to have one itinerary for all. It's an idea to divide the fishing experiences you offer into "menus" for beginners, unfit anglers, average anglers and experienced anglers. This way you are not caught short when having to come up with a special flyfishing experience for a disabled flyfisher at short notice. Of course, you can always ask the client about their preferences and whether they wish to undertake the particular difficulties of one item on your "Menu".

e.g. if you assess the client to be a total beginner, avoid choosing a difficult "beat" on a river where he will struggle to cast, or in having to fish into a strong wind. Unless there is consensus beforehand to combat these difficulties, this will create a relationship strain and the client will not enjoy his outing.

Before setting out, remind (and even provide) the client about taking effective sunblock measures as well as double-checking that a good hat and sunglasses (polarised) and boots are present. You may be surprised how many anglers take a risk or are unprepared.

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After your physical assessment of the client, structure your own plan accordingly and ask about his preferences e.g. if you would like to take him to a secret pool but which is half-an-hour's strenuous walk away. Give him the option and let him make his own decision. Clients who are unexpectedly exhausted by the time they get to the "secret spot" probably will not appreciate the fishing when they get there - and certainly they will not be happy about the walk back.

Secondly, try and establish the flyfisher's ability and acumen. Your impression of what constitutes a good angler and the client's vision of himself may not be the same. Before proceeding too far, let him cast at a spot so that you can assess for yourself how he may or may not cope with what you have in mind.

Most anglers are happy to share flyfishing thoughts, so early on, pose some questions under general conversation that will give additional information on the client's background e.g. where he normally fishes, what he has caught in the past, what methods he has used and so on.

Note: a satisfied client is always a source of further business, whether by way or returning for another day or from word-of-mouth to others. Satisfaction comes from not only catching fish, but also from enjoying the entire experience and the environment.

Another duty usually included in the arrangement relates to providing refreshments. Many guides provide lunches, which may go beyond sandwiches and a cold drink, to a sumptuous meal. However, this break in the day's fishing does provide rest and sustenance, which often is very welcome - even if it does take away fishing time. Even if there is no such arrangement, always take along some provisions even if a bottle of water or a chocolate bar.

Some keen clients may wish to get their money's worth by fishing all day, but there is a danger that by the time the late afternoon rise begins, they are tired. Caution about fishing too much at an unproductive time and use that time for a rest and refreshments.

Do not be surprised at the beginning if the client asks you questions about what he is likely to encounter. This is all part of the enjoyment - a realistic anticipation. Giving him an idea of your "itinerary tells him that you have given some thought to his having a special day and not just another cheque in the pocket.

### 3.1.2 Duties while fishing

Always err on the side of caution with clients, as it is better to be safe than sorry. Assist by carrying extra items e.g. bags, jerseys, waterproofs in a rucksack which allows you to keep your hands freer to help with wading or walking in unfamiliar conditions. More than one guide has fallen in the water before now, so accidents can happen to the best. Consider advising a change of clothing on hand in the car especially if wading is intended. Always be close at hand with the client without being too intrusive.

When walking to the water, walk ahead of your client showing him the way, where to step through long grass or marshland and the safest way to negotiate rocks or wading across streams. Keep your eyes open for obstacles, such as holes in the veld or other possible dangers such as snakes, ants and bees to mention a few.

Design the outing logically isolating different spots to try, which you know may become productive during the day. At each spot, give him as much information as possible on 1.) where you think the fish are e.g. under a bush on the far bank 2.) what approach to try 3.) what fly is recommended.

Always keep an eye on the attitude of your client while he is fishing a spot. Avoid getting to the stage of "flogging away", because in all likelihood he is patiently (or impatiently) waiting for you to tell him when it is time to move on. Don't wait until you see him looking round to see what else he should do. Either suggest a change in technique or a move. Loss of concentration is usually a sign of irritation creeping in - he has lost confidence.

Throughout the day, be constantly aware of changing weather conditions and variables, even pointing them out to the client so that he can see you are thinking as you go along. Suggest a change every now and again to the fly or technique. In reality, although you may not be casting a fly, you are "fishing" with him.

If satisfied that a spot will not produce anything, suggest or qualifying the comment if he is fishing steadfastly on e.g. "Let's give this another five minutes, I think we may still get one out of here". Only demanding clients get upset when unsuccessful, but most realise that you are trying your best if you are seen to be constantly thinking.

Suggest a mini-break after a longer period of inactivity or when you see the client starts to tire. This also allows both of you to gather thoughts and discuss alternative strategies. Make provision for a couple of breaks, especially if out for a long day. Clients often get thirstier as the day progresses and they dehydrate especially early on a hot afternoon.

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Give useful (though not obtrusive) advice, help with the, playing, landing and releasing or despatch of the fish. Make sure you know how the camera works before he has a fish on the end of the line.

Towards the end of the day, keep in mind the return trip especially if fishing a river. It's one thing to venture out excitedly with dreams of catching fish, but a long return trip can sour a day if the client is exhausted.

When at the car make a policy of check-listing all the client's tackle that you may have been carrying. It's an embarrassment if he leaves something behind in your car or on the river bank. Even worse if you can't find it.

While a cordial and friendly atmosphere should be maintained throughout the day no matter how things go - and some clients can be irate when not catching anything - there should be no debate as to what you are charging. Although you may only invoice at the end of the day (which may also include a tip) it is better not to wait to sort out any misconceptions.

### **3.1.3 More Detail on the extent of giving advice**

While advice is part of the deal, a balance must be kept between being useful and becoming an overbearing nuisance. Some clients like to talk, others prefer a minimum of advice and to fish the way they enjoy. Being able to communicate with a wide variety of personalities is the secret of good guiding, so control the day, but don't intrude on it; this balance can be critical.

### **3.1.4 Giving help in setting up**

How much help does a client require in setting up his tackle? A beginner generally will expect you to show him the basics and set up an appropriate leader, suggesting fly choices throughout the day. Should you wish the beginner client to alter an approach, make the recommendation and help to implement the change.

However, with a beginner, don't fall into the trap of taking over the fishing by wanting to do it all for the client i.e. catch his fish for him. Instead be tactful, realising that though the goals may be lower, whatever HE accomplishes will be an achievement for him, if not for you. If you feel a demonstration necessary, ask permission to demonstrate and be helpful in clearing up what it is you would like him to do e.g. show him how to mend the line while river fishing.

Note: In South Africa, there has been some debate as to whether a guide should also fish or not. Many argue that although it is difficult to know what

the fish are doing unless you fish, it is better not to fish at all (or even set up a rod), unless invited. The Professional Flyfishing Guides Association recommends that the guide should not fish unless insisted upon by the client - and then only for a short period or for instruction purposes.

### **3.1.5 Assisting in playing and landing a fish**

A guide may give advice when a fish is played to help land the fish, but avoid touching his fly rod while a fish is on. When the fish is close at hand, ask whether the fish is to be released or taken and whether help is needed in landing it. Obviously, one must adhere to the rules of the water or the custom with regard to the different species of fish - most indigenous or wild fish ought to be returned to the water. Also ask if the client wishes a photograph before the fish is released.

Note: with photography, one must have a reasonable idea of the workings of the particular camera before a fish is hooked. Invariably the request for a photograph comes while the fish is being played and disaster may strike if the client has to lose concentration on playing the fish to explain how the camera works.

The guide must be proficient in the landing of fish whether by hand, net or with a bogagrip and also the best methods of returning fish with the least amount of harm. The client must see that the guide has respect for his fish no matter what the size and that all possible efforts be made to resuscitate in need.

### **3.1.6 Releasing a fish**

Many anglers prefer to release their fish rather than keep them, even though keeping them may be allowed under the rules (Some overseas fisheries insist on keeping of all fish). However, the decision to release ideally should be made earlier on e.g. at the outset or when the fish is being played. This will allow the guide to plan the release in advance e.g. how it should be played, where it should be released.

Importantly, the mere return of the fish to the water is not the only consideration - it is the way the fish is released that determines a better chance of survival. A general rule is that the more a fish is out of water, the less chance it has of surviving. Excessive handling or the fish coming into contact with dry items should be avoided. e.g. touching it with dry hands or placing it on dry land. This could remove the protective slime from the fish making it more prone to disease.

Here are some guidelines for releasing of fish, always bearing in mind that they may not always be possible to undertake:

1.) Barbless hooks - a common guideline is to use barbless hooks. Most anglers do not fish with true barbless hooks, but with hooks that have had their barbs depressed. This is to make it easier for the fish to be unhooked, especially if the fish has been hooked deep. However, these days hooks with barbs are also not difficult to remove if the right technique is followed. Damage is caused to the fish by other aspects, than with the use or non-use of depressed barbs.

2.) A good exercise in releasing trout with the minimum of touching is to slide your hand down the leader while the fish is in the water until your hand reaches the fly. Grasp the fly and lift slightly. Often the fish will wriggle or the hook will drop out and the fish will swim off without a hand laid upon it.

If the hook is stubborn, again slide your hand down the leader to the fly, wet your other hand and hold the fish's lower jaw gently but firmly while reversing the fly out. This also ensures that the minimum of touching (with a wet hand) is achieved.

3.) The guide can also give guidance while the fish is being played to avoid overplaying. There is a fine art in this, for excessive pressure on a fish that is not ready may result in it being lost or leaving a hook in its mouth - as well as a very upset client. When you sense the fish is ready to be netted or released, convey this to the client. For this reason, it may be better for the guide to have a net (soft mesh), which he can use to accelerate the release, by timeously instructing the client to lead the fish over the net. Then he can slip the net under its head and secure it.

Some fish need time for revival after capture and this is done in still water by gently holding it upright with wet hands and "waving" water in front of it to give it oxygen. After a while, when rested, it will swim away of its own accord. Ensure that the spot where you release it, will allow it to swim into open water. Many fish die after release when they are snagged by marginal weed. There they may battle to get oxygen. In a river the same approach as above can be used to release a fish in quieter water, where it can then rest behind a rock. The current will bring oxygen to it.

4.) With colder water species like trout, hot conditions pose a great danger to their safe release. In the heat of summer, they are often caught deep down where the water is cooler and better oxygenated. They are then played for a period of time in the surface layers that are de-oxygenated. The danger then is that they are often released back into de-oxygenated water and being tired are unable to get sufficient oxygen. Also, normally in summer there is a lot of marginal weed and should they swim into the it they can suffocate.

It is important that summer fish are released into clear water where they can get down into cooler water without much trouble.

### **3.1.7 Keeping fish**

If the decision is taken - and it is allowed - to retain fish, then it is the custom with trout to be killed with a "priest", immediately after landing it. "Priests" are instruments which are blunt and narrow. The fish should be hit on the head between the eyes. This kills it rather than stuns it. Fish should not be allowed to thrash around on the bank until they die.

It is also usual to clean the fish reasonably soon after despatch, but the rules of the fishery may dictate how this can be done e.g. sometimes a cleaning room is provided; some fisheries may not wish the entrails to be thrown back into the water. Some require the fish to be weighed first.

There are other customs with some species where keeping fish alive in a keep net is accepted. In the hotter areas such as on the Zambezi or in the Okavango, bream are not killed immediately but placed in a "keep net". This is because if they are killed straight away, they may "go off" before the anglers have returned to their base camp.

Never wait too long before cleaning the fish and learn how to do it quickly and efficiently. Trout are usually the easiest of all the fish to clean.

### **3.1.8 Recording fish**

A clever guide uses all the fishing information at his disposal, keeping detailed records for both the fishery and his personal use. This is a valuable source of information, ultimately assisting in him seeing "the bigger picture". On a daily basis, if you do not carry a small diary, then keep a mental note of the fish caught; where they were caught; how they were caught and with what fly they were caught; their weight and length (sometimes this is done by estimates).

Then transfer that information to a catch return or book before the info is forgotten. All this information will be useful in the future when properly analysed.

Many fisheries insist on a catch return to be filled in. The guides should keep note and thereby assist the client who is concentrating on his fishing.

### **3.1.9 The finishing touches**

In between the fishing, it has been mentioned that the guide must also keep in mind the general welfare of his client i.e. breaks for drinks or eats or even just a rest. This break can be used to fill unproductive times giving everyone the chance to think about a new strategy. Sometimes it is better to take a step backwards in order to be successful.

However, it is also an opportunity to talk to the client answer questions or simply tactfully make him aware of situations where you could catch more fish or enhance the flyfishing experience. Relaise that not all flyfishing days are going to be taken up by catching fish yet the client should walk away having enjoyed the experience. Much of this will have to do with the guide's attitude and ability to "entertain" .

At the end of the outing, the client must be safely delivered to his vehicle or place where he is staying. Here the final financial arrangements are concluded as agreed at the beginning of the day. Give him an invoice in return and also your business card so that he can contact you in the future or give you a good reference to one of his friends.

### **3.1.10 Assessing the overall success of the flyfishing experience**

Some say that every day's fishing is in itself a learning experience and that something new, even from a poor experience can provide for future learning. However, the best way of accelerating learning will be to assess the overall flyfishing experience and put into action some steps to ensure that mistakes are corrected and that what is learnt can be used productively in the future. There are a number of ways of doing this:

- listen to comments made during the day's fishing especially if you are out with an experienced flyfisher. Even encourage comments without making the client feel that he is teaching you. This can be done tactfully especially where a client questions a decision that you have taken e.g. the position taken to cover a fish in a river. If this happens ask politely for the reason and listen to the answer.
- set out a short customer questionnaire and ask the client to fill it in or even verbally ask for feedback on how the client enjoyed his outing. Since this is a form of criticism that you are asking for, be prepared to swallow constructive criticism even where you feel it is perhaps harsh. More commonly clients will be reluctant to criticise. This can be even worse in that you will not be aware of dissatisfaction which may be constructive e.g. you may have inadvertently suggested a fly pattern that the client feels is not sporting within his own flyfishing morality e.g. egg patterns or that you are fishing to spawning fish.

- evaluate your performance in your own eyes given the various headings that we have covered in this course e.g. did you take sufficient cognisance of the client's physical condition before you set out. Did you feel that the day went well as regards purely flyfishing decisions that you made? In retrospect would you have done anything different on the day that could have enhanced the entire experience?
- once you have analysed the client's feedback and your own impressions of how you had performed, set down a list of actions that will flow out of that report and assess how those actions could improve your productivity in the future e.g. perhaps the ability to cast a longer leader would have caught more fish or improvement in the ability to fish a dry fly; a more comprehensive first-aid kit or carrying a bag with a spare hat when the client's hat was blown into the river.

### **3.2 A basic knowledge of fly tackle applicable for general flyfishing skills**

To be considered conventional flyfishing, one must use recognised fly tackle i.e. a fly rod, non-multiplying reel and tapered fly line, together with a leader and an artificial fly. This may sound basic, but it is possible to use a spinning reel and bubble float to cast a fly out. This is, however, not regarded as true flyfishing and most venues will ban such an attempt to fish their waters "with a fly".

Originally, as the name suggests, "fly fishing" revolved around the imitation or suggestion of a natural aquatic fly, but over time, the definition has been expanded to include the imitation of many other aquatic creatures. Indeed, there is no pre-requisite to imitate any particular food item anymore, let alone a natural fly e.g. "egg" and "flesh" patterns for salmon in the USA.

While flyfishing is synonymous with trout fishing, nowadays, as mentioned above, many other species of fish (including saltwater species) are caught on fly. In the Southern African context, we have a remarkable cross-section of species in freshwater alone that provide excellent sport for flyfishers in rivers and dams. This in itself has led to an appreciation of how different tackle can assist in catching a variety of species.

#### **3.2.1 Fly rods**

Modern day fly rods are made of carbon fibre (graphite) replacing fibre-glass and split cane as prime materials. However some anglers still prefer to fish with the older materials in order to capture the tradition of flyfishing.

While most flyfishers have one or two rods which have to cater for all their fishing, as a guide you need to be aware that certain fly rods perform

specific functions. Because of budget constraints, anglers try to adapt to different conditions as best they can, but a guide must ensure that his client is adequately tackled-up ensuring a complication-free day.

Here are some examples of how the length of a fly rod is regarded as being ideal for different tasks.:

Medium to big stillwaters and bigger rivers : 9 ft  
 Small stream and brook : 8 ft  
 Loch-style fishing off a boat : 10 ft

A fly rod can be described as having an "action". This means that it can be whippy or stiff, also known respectively as "slow" or "fast", or "butt" or "tip" action respectively. A stiff (tip action) rod comes into its own with distance casting, while the whippier (butt action) rod is excellent for maneuvering around a river where there is less space to cast and where roll-casting may come into play.

Generally the lighter rods i.e. AFTMA rated 2 - 5 rods are inclined to be medium action. Heavier rods i.e. 5 - 9 weight tend towards being faster action. However this is not a hard-and-fast rule, but the action of the rod has implications for the type of leader and water that one fishes

Trout and yellowfish: 2 - 5  
 Tiger fish : 8  
 Black bass: 8  
 Tilapia: 5  
 Saltwater species : 8 - 12

### 3.2.2 Fly reels

There are automatic fly reels in existence, but the vast majority are centre-pin type reels. The better ones have a good drag system (disk or click-and-pawl) built in with a reasonable capacity for holding the line. This allows the reel to store both fly line and an adequate length of backing i.e. the braided line or other material attached to the reel and the back end of your fly line.

For the most part, the reel is not used directly to fish by casting and retrieving, for in stillwater the angler strips off fly line prior to casting, then retrieves the fly back by hand depositing the line on the grass in front of him. Then, having hooked a fish, he has the option of reeling in the loose line and playing the fish on the reel, or playing it by hand. However, when a bigger fish takes line out, the angler has little option but to let the reel's drag tire the fish out. In tiger fishing and saltwater fishing, this is more often the case, while with trout under 2 -3 lbs in stillwater, one more often plays fish by hand.

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A reel must have the capacity to hold a full fly line ( +- 30 m) and a reasonable length of additional line (backing) e.g. 50 metres for trout and 100 -150 m for saltwater fish and tiger fish.

Backing gives the angler more security in playing a big fish while the drag system can be set to exert pressure on the fish without breaking the leader.

Another practical reason for having sufficient backing is that it fills up the reel and minimises the actual fly line's propensity to retain "memory" i.e. where the line when taken off the reel continues to coil, rather than lie straight.

There is some debate as to the amount of flash exhibited on the water from one's tackle. Many fly reels, for this reason, are dull in appearance. Even some rods have a matt finish.

Reels also can be bought with spare spools and this, from a guide's perspective, is important in considering compatibility, especially if you also have to provide tackle for your client. Having a range of reels that are incompatible will not help should a reel be broken or if you wish your client to change a line quickly. Compatibility in carrying along one system, also cuts down on the weight of gear taken along on the day - even if it is just your own.

Reels and spools can therefore offer compatibility with spare spools being interchangeable. Should anything happen to one reel, another can replace it with minimum fuss.

In the past, reels had to be "matched " with the rod, but today a reel should not be outsize or diminutive for the rod. Ratings on the box or reel itself (which match up to the rod's AFTMA ratings) will help you in need.

#### 3.2.3 Fly lines

Fly lines provide the means by which our flies reach the fish - distance wise and depth-wise. Fly lines are designed to cast a certain distance and to present the fly at varying levels - from right on top, to bottom, and in-between.

A fly line comprises tapered cored plastic or polymer of 10 - 40 metres in length. It is tapered from thick to thin, thus providing the "weight" to cast a fly. The two most common forms of taper are a "double taper" (DT) and "weight forward" (WF) line.

A "double taper" line (DT) tapers from the centre of the line where it is thickest down equally to both ends. The DT is said to be advantageous for casting short lengths of line delicately and in being able to be reversed on the reel when the front half shows sign of wear and tear.

A "weight forward" (WF) line tapers at the front (casting) end to where leader and fly will be attached. The rear section is thinner and level and this "running line" provides an advantage in casting longer distances.

While most fly lines are +27 meters long, it is possible to buy a manufactured "shooting head"(ST for "shooting taper"). This is a shortened length of tapered fly line (approx. 10 - 12 metres long) which is attached to a special running line. This allows the "head" to be cast some distance with practice. It is a specialised outfit when fishing for trout, but popular amongst South African saltwater flyfishers.

Fly lines also have ratings, which help one to match the line to the rod. A 5-weight rod is designed for a 5-weight line, although some rods may have an AFTMA rating of 5/6, which means that both 5 or 6-weight lines can be used.

Some experienced anglers overweight their rods, others underweight them. This has the effect of changing the rod's action, but while there is leeway allowing use of lines outside of the recommended range, until you work out your own preferences, it is better to take the manufacturer's recommendation.

Fly lines have variety of uses. Some float, some sink, some sink very slowly, some very fast and some even sink with one part of the line and float with the rest (sink-tip)

One can catch fish by having one or two lines on hand, but it does limit one and having options can make a difference on a day. The answer to how many different lines are needed, depends on your variety of fishing and the conditions which you generally fish in

#### *(a) Floating lines*

A floating line allows one to present a fly on, in and just under the surface as well as deeper with a bit of adaptation. Because it floats, it provides visual fishing and movement of the line when the fly is taken by a fish can often be seen (but not always). It is a critical line for fishing in, on or just under that important inch of water, the surface (meniscus).

The floater is adaptable and can be manipulated to fish a fly at a deeper level. It is often used with a fairly heavily weighted fly on a long leader.

Floating lines, with a few exceptions, are manufactured in brighter colours such as white, yellow, lime, apricot and pink as opposed to the duller blacks, browns, olives etc. of the sub-surface lines. Only a few floating lines are manufactured in duller tones for those angler concerned that the fish can see the line as it is cast over shallow-lying fish.

***(b) Intermediate lines***

An intermediate or neutral density line has become popular. Mostly they are also lighter in colour and many are almost transparent (affectionately known as "slime lines")

It has a gradual (slow) sink rate, allowing one to fish slowly. Since it breaks through the surface film it avoids the herring-bone wake on the surface caused by a floating line, which can be off-putting. In a strong wind it also avoids being blown around and maintains more direct contact with the fly - aiding in feeling for subtle pick-ups by the trout.

As with floating lines though, it is often used with a heavily-weighted pattern, allowing it to fish over water of medium depth and areas carpeted by sub-surface weedbeds.

***(c) Medium and Fast sinking lines***

Faster sinking lines are often colour-coded according to rate of descent. Slower sinkers are lighter in colour (green) and a black line generally plummets to the bottom.

In our sunny climate, many of our fish are found lying deep during the greater part of the day and during the hotter months, hence the need for sinking lines. Though fishing a sinking line is often regarded as requiring less skill (a fallacy), they account for many fish.

For smaller dams, a medium sinker is all that is required from the bank, but on larger deeper waters, or if you are a boat angler or float tube angler, a fast or even extra-fast sinker will get the fly down deep without delay.

***(d) Sink-tip lines***

The sink-tip line has a front portion that sinks, while the rear section floats. This is ideal for fishing over weedbeds close to the margins.

A drawback lies in it being constructed from two lines with different densities (the light floating line and heavier sinking tip section). Casting often produces a hinge effect and the front end falls awkwardly.

There is a practical compromise. One can purchase tapered braided leaders, PolyTips or Polyleaders (see later), which are respectively lengths of tapered braid or polymer which can be looped to a normal floating line. Since these leaders are able to sink at varying speeds, from floating to extra super fast sink (6.5sec/metre), they achieve the same effect as a sink-tip when attached to the floating line. They also cast lot better for the hinge effect is almost eliminated.

The sink-tip is highly productive in a number of specific instances.

### **3.2.4 Extraneous Tackle Items and Clothing**

A brief mention pertaining to the guide's clothing can be made here. A guide should always be neat, clean and appropriate in his appearance, but more importantly than adhering to fashion (however dashing one may look) is that the clothing generally blends in with the surrounding countryside. While there are a number of views on just what constitutes awareness of an angler from the fish's point of view, take note that clothes that stand out starkly against the general background should be avoided e.g. avoid white or garishly coloured shirts or pants.

Leaders and flies are covered in the following sections, but there many other items of tackle that can accompany an angler on his day out.

The more essential elements are:

a set of polarised lenses

a hat or cap which affords sufficient protection from the sun

a soft mesh net or bogagrip for landing fish if you do not wish to land by hand

and most importantly if fish are to be taken, a proper priest.

a pair of pliers for extracting troublesome hooks

a spare pair of clippers for cutting nylon can never go astray.

for fishing from a boat or the surf, a stripping basket ca be invaluable.

### **3.3 Common Approaches to Fly Selection**

There are a number of theories used by anglers when it comes to choosing a fly. When this becomes the task of the guide though, it is useful to assess the client's knowledge of flies and establish which school of thought he may belong to and how open he will be to your fly suggestion e.g. fishing "boobies". If a total beginner, the client generally is willing to accept the guide's recommendation openly. Where it is a more experienced angler, the guide must not assume acceptance and be sensitive to the fact that acceptance will be based on his being able to give a reasonable rationale for the suggestion.

Fly selection is not just about choosing a fly; it is closely aligned to choosing a strategy.

#### **The Confidence Fly**

Many anglers place faith in a favoured fly of their choice - usually one that has been successful in the past. If they have fished in your SGA and have some knowledge of the conditions, that confidence will play a role in

success. You must be able to exude confidence of your own into a suggestion, so that the client can share that confidence. He will fish better if he feels it will catch fish.

### **The "Recommended" Selection of Flies**

Most flyfishers, after a short while fishing, build up a list of flies. Some of these are personal confidence patterns, others may be recommendations from a tackle shop or friend's recommendation based on prior information or previous success. This approach offers more options to the angler as to what to try. The guide can still go outside of this selection, but he would do well to see what is in the box that might closely resemble his own recommendation.

The general approach with a "short list" box is to use a favoured pattern first and if that doesn't work, then to move on to another fly. The angler fishes through combinations until he finds the fly that works in specific conditions. This works but can be time consuming and difficult to manage when the number of flies in the box increases beyond a dozen (12) patterns.

The longer an angler has been fishing, the greater the number of flyboxes that he carries around with him. Thus the combinations of flies that can be used increase. At this stage the process of elimination is cumbersome and must be supported with some alternative philosophy.

At a point in time, presuming the angler has a good memory, he will start to notice certain trends. By using this experience or prior knowledge, he will begin to adapt his fly selection to it and will come up with "bright day, bright fly", "dark day, dull fly" or other theory to support his selection. It is likely that he will either continue to stand behind his theories, or he will move to suggesting or imitating the foodsorts of his prey.

### **The Suggestive and/or Imitative Methods (basic)**

All fish feed on food items found in or around the waterside. This fostered the concept of imitating or suggesting natural insects or items to make the fish think that the fly was real and could be eaten. Many flies (favourites or "recommended selections") usually therefore have some characteristic that may well be recognised by a fish (a releaser).

Guides should therefore make detailed lists of the main food items in their waters that fish feed on at various times of the season or during the day. This list will give one general clues as to what flies to use at those times.

A good way to acquire your list is to walk around the dam or along the river making notes of all the natural insects you see and writing these down in a diary. The diary then becomes useful because it allows for analysis of all the information over many such trips and throughout the months.

Many insects can be easily observed flying around or in the grass at the bank side (terrestrials). Most you will find in the water under rocks or in the weed. Take careful note of what they look like: size, colour, form and movement will contribute to a picture being built up of the sort of fly that might represent them. This will become important when you get around to tying up your own flies.

We do not know precisely how fish "see" the flies that we present to them, but it is probable that because of the tainted medium in which they see the flies, they do not appreciate them as we do on the tying vise. It is also likely that they could see them as an entity (full imitation), or be attracted to them because of a small aspect (releaser) that is recognisable through some other creature (suggestion).

Even many of the old English traditional patterns which are over 100 years old and which may look like nothing one might see on the water, often have "triggers" built into them which the trout recognise

It is not only the pattern that makes a difference but also it's overall looks, texture, form and size amongst other characteristics. Never neglect how it is fished because the movement given to it (or non-movement) will also play a part in deceiving the fish.

In general a fly that looks like something the fish are accustomed to feeding on and moves like it, will have a very good chance of catching fish.

### **Using prior knowledge mixed with experience**

No matter how a flyfisher starts off, over a period of time, he begins to formulate theories of his own based on the experience he has gained. Some anglers believe that when the sun is shining a fly that has silver in to will work well, or that water that is slightly murky should be approached with fluorescent flies There are diverse theories that work for groups and who have confidence in them.

From such background, a guide develops a feeling about the patterns to try on a day from the conditions he sees, though when asked, he may only answer that, in his experience, this is what has worked in the past. Although it is always preferable to have a rationale for a particular fancy, many good anglers also do not neglect their instinct.

### **Considering Flies relying on Aggression**

Most fish reveal a tendency towards aggression at some stage in their make-up or at some stage in their life-cycle. Some are naturally aggressive e.g. tiger fish, while others more passive show aggression at times e.g. carp at spawning time. Some anglers rely on this aggression to induce a fish to take a fly that usually is big, flashy and moved fast. The fish attacks the fly to subdue or kill it, rather than eat it. These flies are called "lures" or "attractor" patterns.

The decision to recommend patterns throughout the day may be based on one or more of the above theories. As conditions change so the angler must be aware of such changes and adapt to them.

That is why, in a day's fishing, the fish may take a variety of different patterns. It is therefore dangerous to assume that only one pattern will work all the time. Flyfishing is a dynamic pastime and is constantly changing from moment to moment.

### **A Basic Categorisation of Flies**

There are literally thousands of commercial flies on the market and it is impossible to name all of them here. However, they can basically be classified into Deceivers (meaning a degree of imitation and/or suggestion) and Attractors (meaning an attempt to induce the fish into attacking the fly through aggression).

Various overseas schools of flyfishing have played a role in influencing our own approaches.

### **British Traditional Flies**

The introduction of trout into our waters was instigated mainly by British anglers at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, meant that many of S.A.'s first fly patterns were salmon flies or traditional wet flies. They were successful, though used in sizes perhaps a little larger than in their home waters. To this day, however, one will find these in anglers' flyboxes although their influence has diminished quite radically over the last decade. Some of the more famous ones were:

Connemara Black, Invicta, Peter Ross, Zulu, Teal and Red, Coch-y-bundu, Butcher, Greenwell's Glory, Wickham's Fancy, Mallard and Claret, Silver Wilkinson, Thunder and Lightning, Alexandra, Coachman, March Brown, Watson's Fancy, Dunkeld, Dusty Miller, Pheasant Tail, Gold-ribbed Hare's Ear, Professor, Black Pennell, Jock Scott.

Later, a surprising New Zealand influence lent us some well-known tyings such as the Walker's Killer (Kilwell's No 1), Walker's nymph and Walker's Black Widow. However, other patterns which also made an impact were Hamill's Killer, Red Setter and Parson's Glory.

Pretty much at the same time, the sale of American tackle also saw more USA patterns introduced. Of these, the Muddler Minnow is arguably the most famous as well as the Woolly Worms and Woolly Buggers. A growing number of dry flies have also immigrated and have proved to be very successful e.g. Adams, Irresistible and Royal Wulff.

In the Eighties, original South African imitative patterns emerged as anglers realised the benefit of using flies that emulated natural creatures found in home waters. Today, commercial tying patterns dominate with caddis, midge and mayfly suggestions Dragon- and damselfly nymph imitations also play a huge role. Not only imitations of natural fly are popular: fry, frogs, tadpoles, shrimps, corixa, crabs and a host of terrestrials are also represented.

### **Fly Selection using Observation**

I have mentioned that walking around a dam is useful in building up your list of aquatic creatures; similarly in determining a fishing strategy it's a very useful exercise to walk without a rod in hand as a distraction. Obviously, as you walk, note down aquatic life that may fly, crawl or hover around near the water or in the weed (even take a small-mesh net if you like).

In addition, keep an eye out for trout moving. Not only those that swirl away should we scare them, but those that rise. Watch closely and try and describe the way in which they rose.

Move quietly and you will be surprised at how many fish are close in to the side. This also demonstrates how good bankcraft is essential for catching those more accessible fish that are within casting range and useful for your beginner clients.

Remember that, for the first few casts at any spot, stand back from the side to avoid scaring a bankside feeder.

### **Examples of common aquatic life observed**

Here are some of the aquatic creatures that you may observe

e.g. tiny pale fluffs of caenis

e.g. Fluttering adult sedges dancing erratically at the waterside. Pick up some half-submerged rocks and scan for tiny tunnels of sand on them. These are the homes of the larvae.

e.g. Terrestrials, such as grasshoppers and beetles

e.g. Hovering dragonflies

e.g. Stick-like, electric-blue damselflies darting around.

e.g. Small dark water-boatman, the corixa, scuttling around with its distinctive oars

e.g. The black heads and wriggling tails of tadpoles.

e.g. Midge pupae hanging motionless in the surface film

e.g. Midge larvae in the weed

e.g. Adult midges whining above your head in the afterglow of dusk.

e.g. Frogs jumping in alarm at your approach

e.g. Belligerent crabs frequenting dam walls or rocky areas

From such an exercise, without having moved far and using general knowledge, we have listed a reasonable number of creatures currently present that make up the trout's diet and which gives great clues as to the fly to be selected.

Each of these observations also provides the basis for at least one technique.

In this way our first exercise in basic entomology is accomplished providing food for thought in selecting a fly. This is not the end of the story, for more observation of the trout we saw moving can aid us a little more.

### **Observing the Moving Trout**

Many aquatic flies and other creatures appear near or on the surface of the water at certain times of the day, which can result in the trout rising or moving to them.

However, from the low level of the bank, many of these rises are near-impossible to see properly by casual scanning of the water. Close scrutiny is required to spot what might be the reason for the rise near the surface, since many life forms are tiny, low on the horizon and their duration on the surface often short-lived.

A bank angler is often at a disadvantage, for even though trout are rising fairly close to him from his vantage point he cannot see what they are taking. We therefore need to be more aware of fish movements because they can give clues .

Most people only recognise rises if there are unmistakable visual/audible signs, such as splashes - given that the movement is not due to a frog, coot, dabchick or even insects hatching.

Spotting a true rise (or movement) establishes the whereabouts of the fish and, if within range, it can be cast to. Don't think this is a fruitless exercise, providing the right deductions are made and the right tackle is at hand, the fish can be caught.

Many rises to insect life lying on the surface go unnoticed by the beginner so you need to become more attuned as to what is going on. More experienced anglers will spot the movement which in many cases is accomplished with little fuss. Brown trout, in particular, are past masters at picking tiny insects up almost without any disturbance.

Many rise forms are distinctive and reveal more precisely:

- 1.) the level of the fish in the water
- 2.) what it might be feeding on;
- 3.) what fly one should try
- 4.) and what technique to consider.

e.g. the silent swirl or boil.

e.g. a flat patch which suddenly appears on a wind-ruffled surface.

e.g. a shimmer across the ripple - a cross pattern going the opposite way to the ripple.

e.g. a bulge or bow-wave in open water

e.g. bow waves **close in to the bank.**

e.g. the splashy rise

Note: often while there's a very splashy rise there is a very poor conversion of rises to hooked fish. Sometimes the trout are only foul-hooked. The trout, tries to drown it at the first pass and only when it is helpless that they take the fly properly.

e.g. trout leaping full into the air.

e.g. porpoising or head-and-tailing trout.

e.g. the sipping trout

e.g. there are a number of less identifiable trout movements often difficult to categorise in practice, but if we understand the philosophy surrounding the

recognition of rises, this will make the difference in choosing a method and fly based on reason.

### **An example of the feeding trout's diet make-up in stillwater (Can vary from province to province and water to water)**

	%		%
Daphnia	15	Corixa	8
Midge pupae	13	Olive midge larvae	8
Dragonfly nymphs	11	Sedge (pupa/larvae)	6
Caenis	10	Mayfly nymphs	6
Damselfly nymphs	9	Terrestrials	5
Bloodworm	9	Tadpoles and frogs	4
Snail	9	Fry	3

### **More Imitative Fly Selection in Accordance with food items**

#### **Name : Daphnia**

Description : Pin-head size water fleas recognisable to the naked eye as grey-white transparent blobs.

Recognition points: Under a microscope these have a rust coloured sac in summer, but can show a greenish hue.

Flies : Red Setter, Whisky fly, Hot-Spot PTN, Aberdare nymph, Cat's Whisker and Viva.

Technique: Sink-tip or slow sinking lines with a brisker retrieve.

#### **Midge Larvae (Bloodworm and Olive larvae)**

Description: Thin worm-like apparitions, though they can be as long as an inch-and-a-half. The bloodworm is instantly recognisable by its bright red colour, though in mud they are not quite so clean and pretty looking. The olive larvae are usually slimmer and anaemic perhaps with specks of haemoglobin.

Recognition points: Apart from the long straight form (though there is a small head), the most obvious point is the colour - bright red and olive. A combination of olive and red is very useful in spring.

Flies: Digger's Red or Diggers Olive, San Juan Worm (bloodworm) and Plewman's Killer (olive larvae with scarlet and pearly head), Peter Ross, Olive nymph.

Technique: A medium sinker over deeper water for bloodworm in Summer. In Winter, a floater and long leader targeting old weedbeds. The retrieve is a very slow figure-of-eight.

**Name : Midge pupae (buzzer)**

Description: Small, slim segmented pupae with a fuller thorax usually seen hanging from the surface film. They have a white tuft at the head and tail. Black is most common, with olive, lime, dark green and brown as well.

Recognition points: The overall form has a distinctive curve to it, but can be straight when lying in the surface. Look for the white tuft at head and tail, but under a microscope, there is an orange fleck at the thorax and a suggestion of haemoglobin between the segments.

Flies: Goddard's Suspender midge (for surface fishing), Epoxy buzzer, Cove's Pheasant Tail Nymph, Midge pupa (various), Coachman, Hot-spot PTN, Deer-hair buzzer, Shipman's buzzer.

Technique: Generally fished with a floating line in or near the surface where the buoyant patterns can be hung.

The patterns can also be retrieved up from mid-water with a floater or intermediate by using a sinking pattern such as the Epoxy buzzer, Hot-Spot PTN or Cove's PTN. For deeper buzzer fishing, try a sink-tip. Another approach is to fish it static on the surface (Shipman's buzzer) or, at most, by taking up slack.

**Name : Dragonfly nymphs**

Description: Rotund nymph with huge abdomen, bulbous thorax and large black eyes. Has three pairs of legs.

Recognition points: Overall form which, once seen, is not forgotten. Size can be from small to a couple of inches in extent and the abdomen, thorax and eyes are evident. Colours range from a shade of bright green through to almost black, though I have seen nymphs with a yellow band on the abdomen.

Flies: Hoverdragon, Hamill's Killer, Walker's Killer assorted Dragonfly nymphs, Lake Dragon.

Technique: Use a dragonfly nymph on a floater in fishing weedbeds or into channels. To emulate the peculiar motion of the dragonfly nymph, I prefer a double-twitch retrieve.

**Name: Caenis**

Description: Tiny up-winged member of the mayfly family. Usually found in great numbers together.

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Recognition points: Very small, grey body (dun) and pale yellow body (spinner). Typical nymph outline with darker brown wingcase.

Flies: Caenis nymph, Walker's yellow nymph

Technique: A floating line/long leader fished singly with the Caenis nymph. In the evening, tippet should be decreased and the fly lightly smeared with floatant.

Where a dropper is allowed, use the caenis nymph in tandem with a small Muddler minnow/ Suspender midge pupa on the dropper.

Target sipping fish and fish the fly static, keeping in touch with a very slow figure-of-eight. This cannot even be called a retrieve.

### **Name : Damselfly nymphs**

Description: A longish, slim nymph with a prominent head and eyes, thereafter tapering down to a wriggling tail. Has three pairs of legs.

Recognition points : The overall slim shape and the wriggling motion of the fly are distinctive. They appear in a wide variety of colours ranging from dark green (almost black) to pink. Normal colours are black, lime green and brown.

Flies: Marabou and Copper in assorted colours, Red-eyed Damsel, Mrs Simpson. Assorted damselfly nymphs.

Technique: Use a floating line and long leader with a lightly weighted Marabou and Copper in the shallows and around weedbeds. Watch the leader closely as it sinks and let the entire leader submerge before retrieving. Try a long, slow, constant pull; others prefer a figure-of-eight retrieve.

### **Name: Snail**

Description: Small round dark shell-like object.

Recognition points: Largely oval dark brown or black shape. They float to the surface so achieving some vertical movement, after which they are at the mercy of any wind.

Flies: Coch-y-bundu, Black and Peacock spider, small Walker's Killer. Various deer-hair, cork and plastazote patterns.

Technique: A floating line with Coch-y-bundu/Black and Peacock spider or a buoyant fly cast into a ripple line if head-and-tailers are seen. No movement need be imparted by the flyfisher apart from keeping in touch.

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A sinking line with a small Walker's Killer (10 or 12) seems to pick up a fair proportion of bottom snail feeders.

#### **Name : Corixa (water boatman)**

Description: Small oblong beetle-like swimmer with oars.

Recognition points: The corixa carries a bubble of air around with it and secondly, some specimens have bright red eyes on the underside of the head

Flies: Coch-y-bundu, Chomper

Technique: Floating line fished into the margins with a short twitch retrieve. Trout cause a intermittent flurries only a few inches off the side and then disappear.

#### **Name : Sedge (adult, larva and pupa) also known as caddis.**

Description: Most common description of the larvae is a creature surrounded by grains of sand and bits of weed which comprise its home. The pupa is a free-swimming creature best recognised from a photograph. Adult is an fluttering moth-like fly drunkenly weaving around knee and ankle height.

Recognition points: The larva in its case is small and long with lime and yellow heads peeping out from between the debris. The pupa is more compact. The adult a nondescript white, grey or brown fly.

Flies: Larvae - Stick fly

: Pupae - Invicta, Amber nymph, Malcolm's Joseph, assorted caddis pupa patterns

:Adult - G and H Sedge, Troutbeck Beetle, White Death, Elk-hair caddis, DDD

Technique: Dry sedge patterns skittered along the surface provide some success, but they can be fished static or given a twitch every now and again.

For larvae fishing, sink the fly well down and figure-of-eight retrieve it back keeping the fly close to the bottom. For the pupa, try the same retrieve but brisker.

#### **Name : Mayflies other than caenis**

Description: Small and medium sized mayfly nymph.

Recognition points : Overall classical nymph form with two or three tails and bulging wingcase

Flies: Sawyer's Pheasant Tail Nymph, Gold-ribbed Hare's Ear, Hare and Copper, Olive nymph (conventional and flashback), Caenis nymph.

Technique: Floating line with long leader. Allow the leader to sink, while watching for a take on the drop and then retrieve with a short slow pull-pause or figure-of-eight retrieve.

### **Terrestrials**

During a period of gusty winds, many terrestrials find themselves floating unexpectedly on the water. On a windy day, it's common to find hoppers being stranded and the fish feeding on the exhausted ones along the ripple line. Floating line and degreased leader with a Muddler fished statically or with the odd twitch will work.

### **Tadpoles and Frogs (Toads)**

Come November, observe the black heads and wriggly tails of tadpoles, taking up residence in the margins. A month or so later the platanna tadpoles have grown into a less-than-pretty mouthful of mottled grey head tapering down to a tail. The Rana, by contrast, is a pretty frog, dainty and with a light green stripe running down its back.

The tadpoles spotted in the margins are generally black and have a very lively tail action; the bigger platanna tadpole appear to be more translucent or grey.

Trout follow the same ambushing procedure as with corixae by rushing into the margins where the tadpoles rest in numbers. Do some ambushing of your own with a floating line and a Taddy or Tadpole fly moved briskly with a figure-of-eight retrieve.

### **Small fry**

This covers small fish from pin-head size through to specimens of a couple of inches in length. Generally speaking, the eye is the most obvious recognition point as well as red gills and a fair amount of silver or gold flash.

Many waters fished have gillieminkies, bass, carp and tilapia, but two opportunities have presented themselves with a degree of certainty - carp fry in early Summer and barbus minnows in Autumn. In both instances, visible activity occurs around dawn. Fry hang in clouds off the margins and attract marauders. From March onwards, there is activity with gillieminkies around KZN weedbeds particularly early morning and a floater or intermediate with

a Muddler Minnow is worth trying as the foraging trout leave some of the minnows stunned on the surface after their forays.

There is no shortage of patterns to try, Yellow Rabbit, Marabou and Copper (white), Grey Ghost, Parson's Glory, Muddler Minnow, Dunkeld. March Brown (silver) etc.

### **Flying Ants**

These vary from tiny black ants to huge wing-spanned choppers of brown and yellow. Most of the rises to the buzzing flying ants are those of frogs and not trout.

Good success can be had with a small Humpty (green) on a floater. No retrieve, just let it drift with the breeze. The dry Black Smut, which is an all-round dry fly for anything small and black, is also worth a try if there is refusal of the Humpty.

### **3.4 Basic knowledge of appropriate flyfishing techniques applicable i.e. basic river or dam**

The guide must always insist that recognised flyfishing tackle is used i.e. fly rod, reel and line and fly.

Here we are concerned with a basic knowledge of some of the more popular techniques on SA waters. As the guide progresses in his career, so more advanced techniques for niche situations will come into play.

The successful angler is usually an adaptable one, but certain waters have a reputation of fishing consistently with the use of certain specific methods and are amenable to a recommended list of flies. The guide must establish, given certain conditions, which of these general techniques will be more likely to help a client catch a fish.

As we have seen, weather and water conditions play an important role in determining the whereabouts of the fish and that as these conditions change, so may the methods used change as well.

Analysing the conditions and making considered changes during the day means also appreciating the role that a range of tackle and its tactical use.

Both presentation and fly selection are important for there are times when fish will take pretty much anything thrown at them. However, more often there are times (usually when a good guide performs well) when the fish become selective to a degree with feeding on specific items. At such times a specific group of flies will perform better than others. However, without the

right technique being used, the right fly may not perform e.g. the fish are on the surface but the right fly is being used with a fast sinking line.

Here are some basic commonly used techniques:

### **Floating Line and dry flies**

A floating line is designed to lie on the surface of the water thereby allowing the angler to fish on the surface, in the surface film and below the surface depending on how heavily the fly is weighted. In other words it is a very adaptable fly line for a variety of techniques.

However, dry flies (which are supposed to be suggestions of natural adult flies) and floating lines, go hand in hand, since the fly, by definition, also must float on the surface. The fly line should not sink thereby pulling the floating fly under. This technique of fishing a fly on the surface is called "dry fly fishing" .

To be successful in dry fly fishing, the floating line should float properly; the fly should remain on the surface and the leader should not glint or make movements on the surface.

Note : If the fly line does not lie straight i.e. it has "memory", try stretching it.

To keep the fly on the surface, treat it with some floatant and give a few false casts to dry it. Don't false cast over the fish.

Thirdly, use "mud" or sinkant, to take the nylon off the surface where it might be shining in the sun. De-greasing needs to be done regularly. The repeated rub-down also helps remove nylon shine.

If the leader shines and ripples as the wind blows, the trout may refuse to take the fly.

For stillwater fishing, a longer tapered leader of 12 ft. + is advisable. For river work a shorter leader can be considered.

### **Floating line - Nymphs and Wet flies.**

The floating line can be adapted for use with sinking flies such as wet flies or nymphs - in and just under the surface - as well as deeper.

Fishing a fly IN the surface film to emulate spent (dead) flies such as caenis, is similar to the dry fly method above, except that with the spent spinner, one is fishing in and not on top of the surface film. Good results can be achieved when casting to fish that are seen.

Another option to help keep your fly in the surface is to grease your leader to within a few inches of the fly and to oil your fly.

When trying to copy the movement of a nymph about to hatch (emerger), as soon as you have cast, retrieve with a figure-of-eight and wait for the fish to follow or bulge behind the fly.

In getting the nymph down deeper, floating lines, weighted flies and a long leader can be used to great effect to fish deep. This depends on how much weighting is used in the fly and the length of the leader, otherwise the end of the fly line will dip below the surface.

Water of average depth (1 - 2m) is favoured with such an approach because the fly can be retrieved close to the bottom without picking up weed all the time. Should a fish take hold, the fly line is also clear of any weed.

The retrieve for the weighted nymph depends on the type and size of fly used, but be patient. By retrieving faster, the fly will only come off the bottom.

By using a dropper, two small weighted nymphs can be fished, suggesting mayfly nymphs, midge or sedge larvae crawling on the bottom. In nature, there is often also a dual hatch going on e.g. sedge and midge or caenis

The floating line can also be used with any fly of buoyancy e.g. Muddler Minnow, Boobies, Suspenders

### **Sink-tip Lines**

You can choose to use a manufactured sink-tip line or loop a sinking PolyTip or PolyLeader to your floating line. This is a floating line with a sinking tip.

With a sink-tip the leader is usually around 8 - 9 ft.

The sink-tip has advantages when fishing over deep water, especially rocky or weedy water. It fishes the fly deeper and attains a unique angle of retrieve of the fly e.g. the trajectory is effective for daphnia feeding trout, which vary their levels in relation to the movements of the daphnia.

It is also used for suggesting flies that are ascending to the surface from deeper e.g. pupae or nymphs.

### **Intermediate lines**

An intermediate is a very slow sinker, though with different manufacturers there can be a variation in sinking speeds. A welcome advance has been to

produce a near-transparent line, (slime line) and even a see-through camouflage variation.

An intermediate is useful in maintaining specific depths while still retrieving slowly. One can also cast to shallow-lying fish without any surface disturbance from wind. Also when casting into a strong wind, it allows for better line control. A floating line can be blown around on the surface and by switching to an intermediate and allowing the line to sink just below the surface, one avoids wind “drift”, so maintaining closer contact with the fly.

An intermediate can also be used with a sinking tapered leader and is versatile when it comes to the length of leader used.

### **Faster Sinking lines**

Slow sinkers, medium sinkers, fast sinkers, super fast sinkers: all are available. Fish-catching with a sinking line is extremely deadly and catches many of the heavier trout each year .

The necessity for an extra-fast sinker is simply that when the trout are right on the bottom, one should get the fly down fast without wasting time.

Many South African dams are not excessively deep and so a medium or fast sinker (as opposed to extra-fast sinker) may be sufficient. It is also useful when boat or float tube fishing.

In general, sinking line leaders can be made up of level nylon and around 8 - 9 ft. but this can be as short as 18 inches.

A time-honoured sinking line technique is the count-down method, allowing an angler to fish an area systematically. Cast covering an arc in front of you and count down 5, 10, 15, 20 seconds etc. estimating the depths covered by the line's sinking rate. Once the bottom or weed is encountered, decrease the count so that the fly is retrieved just above it.

If nothing happens and you're still convinced there should be trout around, then try changing the fly or the retrieve i.e. a bigger fly on a faster retrieve or a smaller fly on a slower retrieve

### **Sinking lines - Nymphs and larvae**

Just as floating lines have become associated with dry flies and small nymphs, so have sinking lines been linked to lures and attractors. Neither is entirely true.

Try using a medium sinker over deeper water to fish larvae patterns slowly from just below the surface to the bottom e.g. bloodworm in summer.

Not all nymphs are small. Dragonfly and damselfly nymphs can be quite sizeable and can be moved quicker. Indeed bigger flies can be moved faster but always try to keep the retrieve similar to the way the real creature might perform.

### **Sinking lines and attractor flies**

A very common approach is to choose an attractor fly (sometimes called a “lure”), that will take a trout (or other species) mainly out of aggression. Often these flies simulate small fish, but their success lies in the tying which allows for a fast retrieve and provokes a reaction.

The retrieve can be described as a strip with an accentuated pause. The trout take hard as the fish has to move quickly to get to the fly, so be aware of “smash takes”.

Another effective retrieve that provides for constant movement (though not necessarily quick movement) is the roly-poly retrieve.

Then there is a unique retrieve designed to emulate the fly being reeled in.

Lures usually require an 8 ft. level length of slightly heavier leader – perhaps 8 lb. - to help absorb some of the impact of the take. If you decide on a longer leader, check out the movement of the fly beforehand so the correct action will be achieved on the retrieve. If it doesn't look lifelike, try shortening the leader.

### **Sinkers and buoyant flies**

Latterly a range of plastazote-eyed buoyant flies called “boobies” has emerged, though guides need to check with their clients that this method is in accordance with their ethics.

The “booby” flies have a highly buoyant plastazote head-cum-eyes. When submerged, they remain on the surface. When retrieved, the fly will dip and then float back towards the surface until held in check by the leader.

A common method is to shorten the leader depending on the extent of weed growth and allow the line to sink to the bottom. The fly then hangs suspended above the bottom and can be fished consistently at that depth. A variation is to use a longer leader and a dropper halfway up the leader.

The faster the retrieve the more accentuated will be the dip towards the bottom. On the pause, the fly will rise again.

“Boobies” can be used successfully on a very fast retrieve, so again there is no hard-and-fast rule to be applied.

## **Summary of techniques**

The above techniques offer a variety of ways for the guide to focus on catching fish mainly in stillwater or in some instances in rivers where there are long slow pools that have little current. Each method though effective, will not be the best in all circumstances.

## **Some notes on basic river techniques**

These are intended to be basic notes on approaches to flyfishing a Southern African river or stream with an ascertainable current. In some rivers where, for various reasons there is no current to speak of, the flyfisher may in fact use a number of the techniques outlined above. Thus, in this section we focus more on the effect a current will have on the approach of a river flyfisher.

The main challenge to a river flyfisher is to offset the effect of a current, or utilise the current to present his fly properly at the desired level. While all the attributes of casting i.e. distance, accuracy and presentation are important to a degree, the additional power of a current to affect the flyline, leader and fly, will have a bearing on the approach used. There will also be changes to the tackle used and the river angler on a smaller, more closeted, stream may elect to fish a shorter rod i.e. 8 ft and less and line ratings of 2 - 5. Terminal tackle presentations also change depending on what the angler is trying to achieve.

Traditionally there have been two basic approaches i.e. wet fly downstream and dry fly upstream, but care must be taken not to fall into the trap of thinking that adaptability falls away. Various other techniques emanate from these two

### **Wet fly downstream**

Here the angler traditionally uses a sinking line and casts across the stream, allowing the fly to sink, while it is being pushed downstream by the current. The angler can target areas under the far bank or he can be trying to sink the fly into the body of the river (pool) and then retrieving the fly back up before re-casting.

### **Dry fly upstream**

In this instance, the flyfisher generally fishes up-river from behind the trout and uses a floating fly. This was regarded as extremely important especially in clear water, for the fish, facing upstream, would be less aware of the angler's presence.

The fly was then also cast into a pre-selected position and allowed to drift down over the fish, which hopefully would then rise and be hooked.

Two challenges face the angler here. By fishing upstream he is trying to effect a natural drift of the fly but he still has to maintain control of his line as it floats back towards him. If he does not have control, he will find that the current may "drag" his fly by pulling on the fly line or leader or he may lose fish by not having the control to tighten into a fish that has taken a fly on a slack line.

To overcome these problems, casting techniques will be more varied in fishing a river, than in still water. The way the flyfisher gathers and controls his line on the drift will be essential to his success i.e. he will need to "mend" the fly line to allow for a natural drift.

"Drag" is generally only considered permissible when fishing a dry caddis pattern i.e. it is allowed to skitter across the surface like the real insect.

This leads us onto a third approach:

### **Nymph or wet fly upstream**

Initially, this method was regarded as upstream nymphing, but it can be used equally effectively with a wet fly since the focus is in manipulating the sinking fly (which may also be weighted) under the surface. All the elements of control are still there, but one generally cannot easily see how the fly is being affected i.e. the actual level that the fly is sinking to.

Again casting and various mending techniques allow the fly line more slack so that the nymphs can sink naturally.

One of the greatest challenges with this technique is to know when the nymph has been taken by a fish, which, because there is no tension in the line, can spit the fly out without the angler even being aware of it.

For this reason, many anglers regard the use of a strike indicator as essential. Some anglers however will only use an indicator in rough water, while others will not use an indicator at all, preferring to rely on their own senses.

The guide must be aware of these preferences in assessing his client, in order to fish to the angler's ethic. It may mean that less fish are caught where an indicator is not used, but it may be regarded as an acceptable handicap. In some instances the use of a dry fly/nymph combination can be acceptable.

### **Czech, rolled nymph, or short line nymphing**

Over the last decade the practice known as "Czech" nymphing has risen to prominence. While there are different interpretations of what it all means in its variations, effectively a very short line with heavy flies is used in faster water. This allows the angler close control of the presentation.

In this style of fishing, the angler uses a line the length of his rod (sometimes only the leader) and flies designed to bump along the bottom. He is actually fishing for fish that are within an arm's length of him. This has been used successfully for trout, grayling and yellowfish.

Constantly changing weighted flies allows him to gauge whether the flies are fishing the depth he wants. Then the skill involves controlling the line drift by watching the leader for the subtle takes especially towards the end of the drift. And all this happens within under his nose.

### **Dry fly, wet fly or nymph downstream**

By using a parachute cast which is designed to drop flies on to the water **downstream** without drag, anglers can fish dry flies downstream.. This might contradict the upstream-don't-see-the-angler-approach, but it can be very effective.

It goes without saying that a wet fly or nymph can be naturally drifted in the same way.

### **Summary**

As in stillwater where various techniques come into consideration, so too in river fishing does the fly fisher use all the tricks at his disposal to offset the current that can affect his drift. However, each river is not only different, but the same river can provide a variety of challenges each time one fishes it. Even the wind changing from upstream to downstream during the day can make the angler to adapt in order to overcome the situation.

Adaptability is definitely the key word here.

### **3.5 Setting up a basic leader and knots**

Selecting flies for a client throughout a day will be only part of the reason for his or her ultimate success. Even if you choose the right fly, it is equally important that the client be advised on a way to fish it. The guide should understand the fundamentals of assisting in setting up the client's tackle in a suitable way. Some guides in the world regard it as part of their job to construct the client's leader and even tie the flies on i.e. the guide makes the decisions. Before you embark upon this action, however, it would be advisable to get the permission of the client as it could annoy them especially if they are experienced.

### **Using braided loops on the fly line**

Braided loops provide an alternative means for joining the leader to the fly line, as opposed to tying the leader on to the end of the fly line itself.

Traditionally the braided loop comes with a connector which is slipped on to the loop and once the braid is threaded on to the fly line, the connector is manipulated down to secure the connection.

Alternatively, the braided loop is simply threaded on to the end of the fly line and secured with a needle-less needle knot and a coat of varnish or super-glue.

The attached braided loop becomes the connection with the leader which also has a loop at the end. The connection between these two is therefore on a loop-to-loop basis. This approach saves wear-and-tear on the tip of the fly line.

## **Leaders**

A "leader" is the length of nylon/polymer/braid (or combination) that connects the fly line to the fly.

In its simplest form, a leader can be a LEVEL length of nylon monofilament ranging in length from 18 inches to 20 ft. In its more complex state, it can be a combination of the above materials either manufactured as a tapered length or tied in a series of TAPERED sections.

The last section of a leader is often called a tippet.

In general the longer the leader, the more expertise is required to cast it effectively. A long leader is popular especially with a floating line because the fly lands further away from the fly line, thus minimising any disturbance by the thicker fly line.

You should assess what length of leader the client can adequately perform with especially if you intend him to use a floating line. If a weighted fly is used, this can help in turning the fly over properly.

Some anglers using the so-called "booby technique" use a leader as short as 18 inches on a sinking line. It usually lands on the surface with some disturbance but not enough to scare a fish that might be lying three metres deep.

A competent caster should be able to cast a level leader of 6 - 9 ft. a reasonable distance, but difficulties arise when the leader is more than 10 ft. This is where a tapered leader can help to improve presentation. The guide should keep this in mind when helping to set up the client's leader and wishes to use a longer leader construction

Level leaders i.e. nylon of the same diameter throughout, can be used to good effect, but the longer they get, the more wind plays a part both positively and negatively.

### **(a) Tapered nylon leaders**

Tapered nylon leaders have a thick butt section sometimes with a loop at one end and taper down to a desired diameter (or breaking strain) at the tip. This could be designated as 4X tippet i.e. .007 inch (.175 mm.) or it could be marked as 4 - 6 lb. breaking strain.

These leaders are often 9 ft. in length, but they are relatively more expensive and to avoid damaging the taper each time a fly is changed, tie a level tippet to the end. In this way, the tapered leader is protected and it is the replaceable tippet that bears the brunt of fly changes. Once the tippet gets too short, another piece is substituted.

One drawback of the nylon leader is that it coils quite badly when first used (called "memory") and needs some stretching to straighten it.

### **(b) Braided and Polymer Leaders**

A second option is to purchase a similar tapered leader which is made of braid or polymer.

By attaching a floating or intermediate braided leader to one's fly, it is only necessary to add the desired length(s) of nylon and a tippet to complete the overall leader.

Braided and polymer tapered leaders do not have the memory of nylon. And they are produced in a range of sinking rates. Thus one can buy a polymer leader that floats (to aid dry fly work) through to one that sinks extremely fast (which converts it into a sink-tip)

Braided tapered leaders do pick up water and sprinkle the surface on the forward cast. The polymer ones are more costly, but they last for a season and are well worth considering.

### **(c) Self-constructed tapered leaders**

While the polymer tapered leader is a good option to help a beginner, some beginners especially on a river can destroy a leader very easily - and make it a costly exercise. It is an advantage though to know how to construct a simple tapered leader which doesn't take up much time to do and is far less costly.

This is done by buying spools of nylon of differing thickness (diameters) and then constructing a butt section (thick), a mid-section (thinner) and a

tippet (thinnest) e.g. with decreasing thickness of monofilament. More complex leaders can comprise of more than three sections to try and get a better turn-over of the leader.

To do this adequately a formula is needed. There are many formulae of which one suggested by Kreh and Sosin is 50:50. Which works as follows:

Decide upon the entire length of the leader, say 14 ft.

Take 50% of the entire length as the butt section = 7 ft.

Take 50% of the butt section as the length for the mid-section = 3 1/2 ft

Take 50% of the mid-section for the third section = 1 3/4 ft

Add 2 ft. to the tippet.

This leader construction involves simplicity, effectiveness and competence in the loops and knots required to put the leader together.

### Summary

- (1) a needle knot to secure the braided loop to the fly line. This can also be used to attach the backing to the fly line, as can a double bloodknot.
- (2) a surgeon's loop (or perfection loop) in the butt end of the nylon leader.
- (3) a loop-to-loop construction to attach the braided loop on the fly line (1) to the surgeon's loop on the butt end of the leader (2).
- Two-, three- or four turn water knots to attach successive lengths of nylon together thereby increasing the length of the leader (or to tie on a dropper).
- a clinch knot (or improved clinch knot) to attach the fly.
- for bigger flies use a non-slip mono loop or the Duncan loop (uni-knot).

All knots must be tied securely and sit well i.e. before you draw the construction together you must lubricate the knot and draw tight slowly. If you are unhappy that the knot doesn't look neat and secure, rather re-tie it. Avoid tightening the knot too vigorously or the nylon will kink just in front of the fly. Indeed if any part of your leader from the butt down starts to kink, consider replacing it.

Once you have tied your fly on, sink it to ensure that it swims upright and looks lifelike.

The three-turn water knot is excellent for joining monofilament of differing diameter, but it can also be used to create a dropper which will allow you to use more than one fly.

Another method of using two flies commonly used more in rivers is called the "New Zealand System". Here, a "dropper fly" is tied on in the normal fashion to the end of the leader and the point (end) fly is tied via a length of nylon to the bend of the dropper fly.

In a river the heavier fly drops down fast to the bottom and if the smaller pattern is tied on a short length of nylon e.g. 12 inches it too will fish close to the bottom.

### **The length of a leader**

How long should a leader be? This is a tactical decision, for "booby" anglers and those wishing to get a fly down in a fast current often use short leaders to do this with sinking lines i.e. down to 18 inch leaders. On the other hand with a floating line set up, many angler like to fish with as long a leader as is practical. Some leaders can go into the 20 ft.+ range.

A very short leader on a sinking line does not seem to scare the trout, since it is used to catch very deep-lying fish. At those depths trout are not put off by poor presentation at the surface and although they see it, they do not associate it with danger.

With sinking lines, one relies almost exclusively on feel for a take. The longer the leader, the less sensitivity is transmitted to the hands. Often though you will see the line straighten between the tip of the rod and where the fly line enters the water before you feel anything.

In the case of floating lines, either the tip of the fly line or in fact the leader itself must be watched to pick up the subtle takes. This is also important in a river ( See nymphing above)

The same goes for your retrieve. The longer the leader the more you have to pull to transmit the retrieve to the fly. Check this out in the water to see what retrieve will look the best.

A long leader on a floating line keeps the fly line out of the trout's window of vision i.e. the fly line lands too far away from the fly for the fish to associate it with danger or to cause any disturbance on the surface.

Often the fly line on the surface can cause a "wake" when moved. A trout swimming close to the surface may not see the fly because it's area of vision (a window) is small, but it may still be put off by any unnatural movement of the fly line.

### ***Leader material***

There are different types of leader and tippet material and many brand names e.g. nylon, fluorocarbon, co-polymer each with own characteristics. In Southern Africa, co-polymer is not widespread, but is used as an alternative to nylon. Nylon monofilament is still regarded as ideal for all types of flyfishing especially dry fly, but fluorocarbon is regarded as better for sunk line. The latter is however still quite expensive and many anglers only use it for tippet material.

What are the benefits of fluorocarbon. One is that it is said to be invisible to the fish because and is also abrasion resistant but it is costly and needs additional care in tying knots with it especially if a mixed leader is constructed i.e. nylon butt and mid-section and fluorocarbon tippet.

Other variations are not commonly seen in South Africa are matt nylons, double-strength nylon and camouflage nylon.

Assume that fish, within reason, are not put off by the sight of a piece of nylon, but rather by it's behaviour. Any glint or flash is unnatural and poses a danger; equally anything that moves on the surface raises suspicion. In flyfishing a river, one tries to eliminate the dragging of a leader and fly across the surface: the principle is the same in stillwater.

Since leader shine and lying on the surface may on occasions be regarded as detrimental, a common ploy is to degrease the leader. One can buy a sinkant compound to do this or rub the leader with mud, soap or glycerine.

### **Terminology of Leaders**

While most refer to the breaking strength of their tippets in pounds or kilograms, others refer to using 4x ( four-x) or 5x tippets.

The higher the X, the smaller the diameter and the less the breaking strain.

### **Knots and Loops**

There are many knots in use but the ones below are competent for the job in hand in freshwater flyfishing:

- 3.4.1 The surgeon's loop = making a loop in the leader
- 3.4.2 The loop-to-loop = securing one loop to another loop
- 3.4.3. The three turn water knot = tying one diameter nylon to another diameter
- 3.4.4 The clinch knot = tying the fly on to the leader

- 3.4.5 The Duncan loop = tying the fly on to the leader but leaving a loop rather than a knot at the eye of the hook

### 3.5 The Essentials of Fly casting

This is essentially a practical session, which will comprise casting instruction and the mechanics of simple single-haul casting. It is not designed to make the guide into an expert caster, but rather to understand how different aspects of casting can bring results.

There are various schools of casting and each school has produced extremely good casters within a variety of styles.

However, there are aspects of casting that can be discussed and which will help the guide in assessing important fundamentals when watching his client cast

#### (a) Distance casting

The most important role of casting is to deliver a fairly weightless fly to the fish. In some instances this may mean hardly rolling the fly further than the tip of the rod e.g. short lining. In other cases the ability to reach a distance of 30 m and more gives the flyfisher a much greater range and ability to reach fish that may be feeding further out.

Most clients who have flyfished a few times may be relied upon to cast between 10 - 20m; some will hardly be able to get the fly on to the water. Assessing the client's capability early on will help the guide to plan the day so that it matches that ability.

A function of casting to be kept in mind when assessing distance is how many "false casts" are needed to get the required distance i.e. how many times the fly line has to be shot forward until it is dropped onto the water. The more disturbance even through the air the more opportunity there is to scare fish in the vicinity. Be mindful of this if a client takes a number of false casts to get distance. A reasonable caster seldom need more than three false casts for an acceptable reasonable distance - two is better.

#### (b) Accuracy

Aiming for distance needs to be rivalled by a degree of accuracy. Very often it is the closer casting that causes problems rather than the longer distances. Flyfishers used to fishing rivers tend to be better adapted to casting and controlling a short line, while stillwater anglers have adapted their techniques to getting further out.

Assessing the ability to cast an **accurate** line a certain distance can be critical. Some species, such as some "bream" required extreme accuracy in

putting the fly an inch or four from their position, while in rivers, placing a fly almost under the overhanging bank is often imperative to interesting a fish in that lie.

### **(c) Presentation**

A third consideration going hand in hand with accuracy and distance is the actual presentation of the fly i.e. how it falls into the water. An angler may be able to cast a good distance and even be reasonably close to the target. If, however, the cast lands the fly heavily in the water or if he slaps the water with the line or leader on false casts, he may well disturb that fish in the area. Wild fish, in particular, will be put down.

### **(d) Stillwater casting**

Despite the ability of a client to cast long distance well, a guide should be aware that many fish patrol close to the margins and long casting is not always the answer. However, a specialised technique called double-hauling has developed over the years by anglers wishing to get more distance.

### **(e) River casting**

Casting on a river requires another set of skills to that of the stillwater angler where not only straightforward accuracy and distance is required but also more specialised techniques such as roll costing, parachute casting, reach casting etc. While the stillwater man uses distance as an important part of his approach, the river anglers often likes to get closer to the fish and short-cast so that their presentation and feel is better. The main reason for this is that rivers have currents which affect the movement of the fly line and ultimately the fly. A current can push the leader etc to the left or right and cause what is known as "drag".

"Drag" is often described as an unnatural movement of the fly by way of the line or leader which, in the case of a dry fly, causes the fly to drag across the surface rather than float naturally. With wet flies and nymphs, this same drag causes the fly to be pulled towards the surface and this affects the movement of the fly or detracts from it's being fished at a desired depth. A fisher must be aware that a number of currents or movements of the water can affect his approach.

To counter this, anglers manipulate their lines by "mending" which can be a upstream or downstream flick of the fly line, creating some slack and avoiding the pull of currents. Done proficiently, an angler can minimise the current's manipulations and keep his fly down where he wants it. There are various techniques for doing this.

Another example of a common and useful casting technique is the "roll cast" which is used when there is not enough space for a back cast. In this way,

the angler can roll his fly line and leader out quite a considerable distance without risking getting his fly caught in trees or bushes behind him.

While "double-hauling", "reach mending" and "roll casting" can be regarded as more advanced techniques, for the purposes of this course, the guide should have to display an acceptable level of proficiency in basic casting, with accuracy, distance and presentation.

#### **4. DEMONSTRATE A BASIC KNOWLEDGE OF THE FLYFISHING AREA AND ASSOCIATED HAZARDS.**

##### **4.1 Basic knowledge of a specific geographical area**

The guide is assumed to know his "home waters" well and be able to talk knowledgeably on its features (See below: "Reading a dam or river"). Some guides may decide to make a specific water i.e. one dam such as Dullstroom dam or a section of river their speciality i.e. so-called site guides. They will become extremely proficient in assisting a client with his flyfishing experience. On the other hand, the SFA may also encompass a variety of waters e.g. Millstream where there are a number of stillwaters and some weired-up river.

##### **4.2 Land ownership, owners, boundaries and access are correctly identified and acknowledged.**

Whether the guide is attached to i.e. employed by a venue or uses a venue owned by another person(s) it is implied therein that he has the right to fish there. However, the looser the arrangement with the landowner, the more specific is the permission that must be sought from the riparian owner(s). In other words, every time the guide takes a client into that SFA he must, as a matter of courtesy inform the owner(s) of that fact and be granted permission to do so. He must also be aware of the rules and regulations of the province and of the SFA. These may differ in that, while Provincial regulations may make allowance for a number of fish to be killed on the licence, the SFA owner may institute a rule that all fish must be returned. Another example would be where the Province has a size limit of 20 cm, but the owner only allows fish over 30 cm to be taken. A third example would be where the owner institutes a fishery rule of "no wading" or "no kick boating".

The guide must be aware of all such regulations from the moment he makes the arrangement with the SFA to the time he and the client leave the waters. This also includes access arrangements i.e. which roads to take to the water, where to park, opening and closing of gates, removal of litter, reporting of any item not consistent with the arrangements e.g. no fires, evidence of

poaching, deterioration of river banks, weed control, dead fish, strange species e.g. black bass, carp in a trout dam etc. These observations will help foster the relationship with the owner thus allowing for continued use of the venue in the future.

Included in the briefing to the owner, apart from thanking him/her for allowing them to fish, should be a more detailed report on the day's fishing. Owners like to know that their waters are appreciated and how they are fishing, especially if they have stocked a dam where there is a financial cost attached. In some rivers where migrations of fish take place e.g. largescale yellow fish, the owner is always keen to know when this happens and what is happening in his section of water.

A SFA may more than one owner and therefore the guide should be aware of boundaries and seek permission from all involved. A common example is in the case of a river where two different farmers own the respective banks. Or in the case of a dam, where a portion of the dam may lie on another farm.

Rules and etiquette must be respected. While the boundary is usually delineated by a fence, in the case of a river, anglers often cross over to the far bank to get into the best position. Where this action traverses another's land, permission must be sought.

#### **4.3 Basic ability to "read" weather conditions and associated fishing variables**

We will discuss how to analyse a specific water in this next section, since such analysis is the crux of putting the client onto good fishing positions during a day's fishing. This analysis is greatly dependant on what we learn in general about the weather and associated conditions and the effect they have on the behaviour of our target species. Understanding how your quarry reacts to these variables aids in matching this up to specific areas (spots) on the water.

##### **Bright sunlight and dull days**

Generally, fish do not like to spend much time in direct, bright sunlight. They live in a semi-dark environment and are more accustomed to viewing objects in diffused light. Therefore, generally, as the sun ascends, so fish (trout) move deeper or into covered positions e.g. shade under a weedbed. Knowing this, then given a sunny day, we generally anticipate that the fish will move accordingly. We then match those movements to positions in the dam or river that fit the situation e.g. on a bright day, trout will move into the deep water areas in a dam or river. However, since they are only trying to avoid too much exposure to sunlight and not concerned about temperature

at this stage, it is possible that they may move into shaded areas, such as under an overhanging tree across a river, or under weed beds in a dam.

The less disturbed the water, the deeper light penetrates, especially if it is very clear water. However, if a wind stirs up the surface layers of a dam or a fast current accelerates the flow of a river, light penetrates less. The fish may then lie shallower. This is an example of how two variables i.e. light and wind can interact with one another to determine a depth at which the fish might be comfortable.

On the other hand, if the day is dark e.g. at dawn, dusk, night, or if overcast, there will be less sunlight penetration and the fish will be inclined to move into and stay in the shallows longer. It then pays to know where the productive shallows or weedbeds are in a dam or river are.

### **Heat and cold temperatures**

The sun does not only produce light, but it soon heats the water up. In talking of water temperatures one must start to distinguish between fish species that are more tolerant of higher water temperatures e.g. tilapia, black bass and those which prefer colder water e.g. trout, in order to establish how they will react.

Cold water fish will move away from the hot water layers that make them uncomfortable and into cooler or more oxygenated water i.e. deeper levels in a dam or into fast water in a river that holds lots of oxygen and is usually cooler as well.

Note that, in very cold weather on a calm day, the bottom layers of a dam are actually warmer because they are not affected so directly by the weather as are the surface layers.

A hot spell over a period of time, will have an adverse effect on the oxygen levels in a dam, particularly, the surface layers. In the case of trout, they prefer cooler water and so will spend more time deeper.

Since the water temperatures are still too high, trout would forsake even shady places. In rivers, they might drop into the deeper pools or into runs where they can get protection and oxygen. The angler who is aware of this can concentrate his fishing on those areas. The guide who has successfully worked out where the fish are has immensely improved the chances of his client being successful. (Refer to Fly Selection)

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In colder water, the colder species are active until the temperature of the water falls below that which even they are comfortable. In cold water, the warm species e.g. tiger fish, become very lethargic.

From now on think of other weather elements e.g. wind, sunlight penetration and water temperature - and then of the overall effect that will have on your fish.

### Wind

Wind is another common element, influencing fish, and which can give valuable clues as to their whereabouts. While it can hinder casting, especially that of a beginner client, wind is actually welcomed by many more experienced anglers. How does it impact on the day:

(a) Firstly, a wind breaks up the water surface, particularly after the calm of dawn. This means that it brings more oxygen to the water and the fish tend to be more lively as a result. It is not uncommon to see fish moving in lethargic fashion when the water is calm.

(b) Secondly, a cooler wind will delay water temperatures heating up. In the northern parts of the country, some winds themselves are quite warm and can warm the surface layers up.

(c) Thirdly, as the wind starts to disturb the water, the fish are less likely to be aware of your presence, so allowing you to get closer to the fish or into a better position.

(d) Fourthly, a strong wind will stir up the bottom on the windward side of the dam, which dislodges aquatic larvae and nymphs. This invariably stimulates fish to feed on the dislodged food items. This is usually the case with the bank onto which the wind blows, especially if there are weedbeds there. It may even be so strong as to create a dirty line of water, but in this turmoil fish may be actively feeding. It is not necessary to cast far and if the client is a reasonable caster, this would be a good place to look for concentrations of fish.

(e) Alternatively, the calm opposite bank i.e. off which the wind blows, is likely to be less disturbed, but there will invariably be a ripple line which fish will patrol along to intercept what is hatching or feed off food blown into it. Wind, or the lack of it, can also stimulate a hatch by changing the temperature of the water. Often in the evening as the wind drops and the sun dips below the horizon, so flylife is more prolific and the fish start to rise.

### Rain

Water levels, whether in a dam or river, are important, and generally after a good season of rain, many beneficial effects occur. The fish feed well, put on weight quickly and consequently the fishing improves.

However, in the short term, rain on a daily basis, can influence the decision as to where to take your client for the day. Anticipating an adverse effect on the water you want to fish can save time and money e.g. a heavy thundershower can turn a river into a torrent and unfishable.

It also pays to know how long it will take for a piece of water or section of river to clear up. It also pays to know where the thunderstorm has struck, for upstream of the storm may still be clear river, while below will be unfishable e.g. of planning - if your client is around for a few days, the plan might be to fish upriver for a day or so and then progressively take him to the lower sections as the river clears.

Water clarity is important for flyfishing. Fish rely on their eyesight to see your flies and while certain species such as catfish are more attuned to sensing vibrations and movement very well, flyfishers as a whole prefer to fish in clear water. Some experienced flyfishers will still fish for yellowfish given 10 cm of clarity, but others are put off if there is less than 30 cm.

Very clear water makes the fish aware of everything going on around them and you would need to take extra care in your approach and tackle preparation

A dam's clarity is less radically affected by general rain, but if a river or stream flows in at the inlet, or there are agricultural fields around the dam, you may find the rainwater discolouring. Generally though, dams are fishable, when rivers are dirty. Again the plan may be to take the client to fish a dam until the river has cleared.

Rain provides a contrasting day with the number of variables coming into play and changing. Since rainfall is often accompanied by wind, the day will cloud over, lessening light penetration and then reverse to be a clear day - sometimes even calm before and after. It is very important to remember the following:

If there is thunder and lightning around, you should stop fishing and move to a safe area. the fly rods should be dismantled or laid on the ground so that they do not act as lightning conductors. if you are in a boat or float tube, you should keep an eye on the weather and move to safety long before the storm strikes.

Rain lowers the temperature of the water as well and there is a perceptible change in atmospheric pressure. Often after a storm, the day "lightens" up stimulating aquatic flies to start hatching, which in turn attracts the fish e.g. flying ants

Fish are also attracted by any inflow into a dam and patrol around there so look for any inlet or gullies that start to flow. Not only will food be washed into the dam, but the water will be cooler and oxygenated.

If it has been a heavy downpour or rain over a period of time, grass verges may be submerged. Even if these are a foot deep, the fish will cruise into them looking for "new" food, such as earth worms or beetles etc. to feed on. This usually happens in the early morning or late evening before the light intensity gets too sharp.

### **Atmospheric air pressure**

We cannot see atmospheric pressure, though there are clues as to its presence. It does affect fish and it is believed that fish and aquatic life are even more aware of it and react to it, long before we do.

Another explanation of lethargy in fish is that the heavy pressure removes oxygen from the surface layers of the water, forcing the fish deeper. Alternatively, when the air pressure rises, oxygen is "given" back into the water.

If you fish during such a "heavy" period (presuming there is no thunder and lightning), the fish may be on the bottom and not be inclined to move to your fly. However, an option would be to look for a section where some wind may still bring oxygen to the surrounding water

### **Moon Phases**

In saltwater flyfishing the moon phases have a direct impact on tidal movements causing foreseeable high and low tides daily as well as spring and neap tides during new/full moon and 1<sup>st</sup> and last quarter respectively. Anglers depending on the structures they are fishing e.g. estuaries or beaches, rocks, plan their fishing meticulously around the effect these water movements will have on the fish and their feeding habits.

In freshwater there are divergent opinions as to whether the moon phases have the same impact on fish behaviour. Local "tidal movements" on smaller pieces of water e.g. dams, is unobtrusive and their impact is therefore lessened by other variables. Others are at odds to plan their fishing trips around one or other of the "moons" or quarters.

The other consideration of the moon is in the physical light of the moon i.e. at full moon or in the total darkness. However, fish are not put off feeding in the dark as their environment is in any event dark. However, insects are attracted by light and so this can spark off some feeding activity e.g. sedge later at night.

A local phenomenon is the netting on Lake Kariba which comes to a halt at full moon. Fish (kapenta) that ordinarily are attracted by a bright light from a boat but are almost absent at full moon.

### **Working out the effect of a combination of factors**

As we have seen above, each variable has an effect(s) on the fish. If there was only one variable, life would be easy, but while one factor may be dominant for a period of time, it will be affected by other variables. You will have to work out a range of possibilities, but these should also be seen as a range of opportunities. Some factors, such as sunlight, may affect the whole dam, but others, such a wind may only affect a part of the dam. You can take advantage of the wind to overcome an otherwise difficult fishing day.

#### **4.4 Basic ability to "read" a water (dam or river) in order to assess potential good fishing position**

The basic role of the guide is to take the client to places on a water where he stands a good chance of catching fish. Over a period of time and with experience the guide will accumulate a list of "good spots" where he has observed fish being caught or seen movements of fish. However, he will need to understand why the spot is good, for it may only be productive at a certain time of the day or the year for that matter. Timing can therefore be critical to making best use of areas in a dam.

By "reading" a dam and knowing how weather variables affect the target species, a guide will be better able to make appropriate use of the information and to catch more fish.

This section however is to equip you with the basic knowledge of how to "read" or analyse a dam or river so that you get to know it well and can take advantage of its mood swings. All water is not equal - some can be more equal than others.

This section will also give you the basics and the reasoning, but once this is understood, it is important to build on this in your SFA . The more field practice, the better.

A very good starting point is to divide the dam or river into features and one of the delineations is to know where deep and shallow water areas are.

### **A basic reading of a dam**

In a dam, marking down the depths and shallow areas is important. These can then be matched with prevailing weather conditions to find the right spot for the conditions.

- (a) The most obvious place on a dam to find deep water is at the dam wall, though it may not be equal in depth all the way along the wall. Your observations in using the gradient and colour of the water to help you

Also, near the wall, you may find the areas that were originally used for excavating the earth to build the wall. These too will be deep water areas.

- (b) A second good clue is to look at the contours of the dam itself. If the bank is steep behind one, then it is likely the water is equally deep in front.

(c) Shallow water areas show up as lighter in colour e.g. light green and if you look carefully you may see isolated areas of darker water which will establish the whereabouts of deep holes. One feature is the old river bed that winds through from the inlet into the dam. This often shows up until the water surrounding it also becomes deeper. In the shallows near the inlet, you may find a productive deep water spot.

(d) Look for areas of weed. Generally surface weedbeds flourish where the water is relatively shallow and where there is no weed, the water has increased in depth. What is of interest here is that the weed can give cover to the fish and is also the place where they will feed on the organisms that live in the weed.

Make a close study of the areas where the weedbeds pop up in late summer. This will be useful at other times of the year, such as in winter, when they have died back. You will still know where the slightly shallower water is.

(e) Look for bays and promontories. The inside of a bay will hold deep water while the promontory is visible because it is shallower. At the end of the promontory one may find it submerging gradually or sometimes, such as in the case of a jetty, the water at the end drops away quite quickly.

(f) Be aware of any other structural aspects in the dam, such as trees or fences. These are collectively known as "structure" and they not only give

an idea of depth but can also provide food for the fish or protection. Note down all of these aspects of structure, even things such as old roads going into a dam that have been submerged.

(g) There are times when dams are emptied for any number of reasons e.g. profuse weed growth, dam wall structure weakness and these are excellent times to have a look at the dam bottom.

### **A basic reading of a river**

By understanding the approach to reading a dam, you should also have some clues as to what to look for in a basic analysis of a river.

- (a) Try to assess the deep water areas such as pools and shallow water sections such as runs and riffles. Basically where the water is rough it is because the surface water is being affected by what is on the bottom and this can mean that it is a shallower area. Direct observation by yourself or even wading often give one a better idea. Two areas worth noting are the heads and tails of pools. Because here currents speed up faster than in the middle (body) of the pool. Consequently there is not only more oxygen, but it is likely the river bed has been scoured. Fish often hold (called "lies") in the drop off at the head of a pool and at the sill in the tail.
- (b) Water colour again plays a part.
- (c) Look out for sandbanks that intrude into the river for these can be invaluable in allowing you to wade far up pools and being able to cast into the right areas
- (d) Make a list of structures along the river. There is usually much more in a river than one takes for granted e.g. trees and bushes overhanging the banks, reeds, papyrus, branches that have fallen in, rocks that jut out. Very often they are not just features but can affect the current, thus providing holding areas for fish.
- (e) Don't neglect the river banks themselves as holding places. After many years of flowing in a particular direction, the river carves out deep areas under the outside bend of the bank and the fish make full use of this as cover.
- (f) The current line is exceptionally important in reading a river i.e. oxygen and food. In a river the best trout take the best lies. If you find a spot that

has cover, oxygen and a current running close by, there you will invariably find the lie of a good fish.

- (g) Reverse currents. A river may split into a number of currents. Usually at the top (head) of a pool, the water flowing in may be diverted by rocks and form a number of different currents. Track the current down the pool and watch to see how it loses pace in the middle (body). Often you see another current reversing and flowing in the opposite direction back to the top of the pool. Treat it as another potential holding place.

## Summary

Every river or dam has "hot" spots. However, fish move in and out of these during the day, or utilise the area at certain times during the season. Making best use of these at the right times reaps dividends and that is where an in-depth assessment of the weather variables and fish behaviour will interact to help you.

You will be amazed at how educated these assessments can become once all information is matched up. There will be times when your client will catch fish and others, less astute, may not. This will certainly count as a huge plus for you in the client's assessment of you as a good guide - and enhance your reputation.

## **5. TO DIRECT THE CLIENT TO GOOD FISHING VENUES AND SPOTS WITHIN SGA.**

### **5.1 Identification of suitable venue within area.**

Depending on the definition of the area, the guide's task as above is to:

- (a) select an appropriate venue within the SGA and (b) to identify good fishing spots within the venue

e.g. A guide operating out of Millstream will be required to make a decision as to which of the dams or weirs he wishes to select during the day. Having selected a dam he would then have a plan of action as to where on the dam he wishes his client to fish.

Guides should refer to the previous section relating to the inter-action of weather variables and "reading" of the water. The same principles apply here in terms of coming to a choice of "spot".

e.g. a strong wind is blowing which affects the fishing on the dams immediately exposed to the wind. The guide has assessed his client as being a relative beginner and likely to struggle in the wind. He may then opt to

fish with the wind or visit a water that is more secluded and convenient for his client. He would still use the principles of reading the dam and assessing the strength of wind, cloud etc to decide where best to fish and at what times.

## **5.2 Knowledge of suitable access routes.**

Having made the decision as to where the day's fishing venue will be, all care must be taken to acquire permission and use the available permissible access routes to the dam/river. If driving there by car, the guides should be aware of the capabilities of the car used over the terrain and advise the client on how far the car can safely negotiate the road and the best place to park.

No client likes to feel that he may get stuck at a remote water. Even if the guide feels that the vehicle will be able to cope, he should ascertain the permission of the owner before proceeding on what might be a bad road. Do not spoil a good day's fishing with poor planning.

e.g. if the client is elderly, or unfit and walking a distance is a problem, take care that the venue chosen is easily accessed. If, for example, the access road is poor and the car must be parked some way from the water, leaving the client to walk an extra kilometre or two, the client may well refuse and cancel the day's fishing.

Walking around a dam is usually straightforward, but be aware of areas that may be marshy and muddy or that the client is suitably attired for walking these more difficult conditions i.e. he has boots and waders. Beware of gullies and inlets where the ground may be soft and treacherous or holes in the veld.

On a river, part of the craft of the good river angler is to know where the river can be fished, accessed and crossed with a minimum of fuss. Knowing this can save precious time and avoid spooking fish. In many cases it is critical that the client is placed in the most advantageous position to approach fish in good "lies".

Since river fishing can be arduous, good knowledge of the pathways and easy crossings is paramount, not only to good fishing, but to the health, safety and enjoyment of the client. Some clients may have sufficient knowledge to work out the best route for themselves and if they realise that you are not properly knowledgeable about the river, they can lose faith in you. If you are taking a new route, inform the client, just in case you come across an unforeseen obstacle e.g. a game fence

## **5.3 Access requirements closing gates and acknowledging land-ownership boundaries (borders), are adhered to.**

Close all gates that were closed prior to you entering and beware of passing through wire fences. Check first that you are not about to move on to somebody else's land and that it is safe to climb through the fence i.e. it is not electrified. Clean up any garbage that others may have left. This may sound trite but a client (and the landowner) will value it greatly if they see you going to such lengths.

#### **5.4 Explain the plan and the fishing spots at venue are pointed out to client.**

Explain to the client up front what your plan of action will be, before getting to the selected fishing position. If possible, lay out the plan for the day so that he can look forward to enjoying it, but always cover yourself by saying that the plan can be amended at any time to take note of changing conditions.

Explain your feeling or reasoning for choosing a particular spot at that time and what fly you would like him to use. If need be, away from the spot, demonstrate how you would like him to fish it i.e. fished deep and slow or on the surface and static.

Accompany the client to the spot, ensuring the approach will not scare the fish. Depending on whether the client is right or left handed, stand slightly behind the non-casting shoulder. Take note of the wind direction as this too will have an effect on his casting and where the fly will be directed in front and on the back cast. The client has come to catch fish not an aspirant guide or a tree.

### **6. IDENTIFY AND REPORT ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS IN GEOGRAPHICAL AREA AFFECTING WATER QUALITY.**

#### **6.1 Dirtying of dam or river, poaching, soil erosion on dam or river banks, pollution, fish losses, fires, alien or invasive plants.**

The above instances are all examples of care for the riparian owner's property that the guide should value, even if this is not part of the job description. All owners value care and feedback and they will be more inclined to allow you to visit their fishery in future if they know that you share a concern for their asset.

- (a) The dirtying of a dam or river may in many cases be due to weather conditions, such rainfall and the clarity of the water may be of general interest to the owner should other anglers be invited to fish on his property. Dirty water caused by rain in a dam does not usually render it

useless for fishing, but this may well be the case with a river which may become totally unfishable.

There are other reasons for water getting murky:

e.g. If a dam is seen to get progressively dirty without any apparent reason for it, this can be caused by weed dying off, but it may also be that the dam has inherited a bottom feeding fish, such as carp. Carp can infiltrate a dam and not be noticed for a few years, when their activities such as spawning become more apparent. When their numbers of big enough, their grubbing around on the bottom has been known to eventually affect the quality of the water.

Such discoloration should be reported as soon as it is noted. Generally though, once a dam starts to show discoloration, the carp population has increased to significant levels and if allowed to continue unabated, can result in the dam becoming unsuitable for species such as trout.

- (b) Poaching is always a problem for a riparian owner, for it signifies that somebody is on his land without permission. Poaching reduces the number of fish in the river or dam, which may have extraneous cost implications i.e. the farmer may be paying to have his water stocked.

Another danger though is that if other anglers become aware that a dam is poached it may lead to the downfall of the entire fishery. Apart from less fish being present, nobody likes to visit a poached water. Apart from security reasons which can also lead to theft and damage to motor vehicles, the prevailing view will be that the fishery has no control and fewer fish.

While most subsistence poaching may mean the odd fish being removed, undetected poachers can go beyond the requirement of food and denude the river by netting it or taking out the adult fish. This can lead to the breeding stock in a river being destroyed. For the guide, this is not just another man's problem. This resource which can earn him a living could be destroyed and with it his own livelihood.

The guide should therefore be on the look out for any signs that someone else is on the river or around the dam e.g. foot marks, fireplace, litter, night lines, nets etc and inform the owner immediately. If the guide comes across others on the water, he should be polite and non-confrontational, but take note and report this to the owner if he is suspicious.

- (c) Soil erosion can be a big problem. On a dam, it usually relates to the dam wall structure being washed away progressively by wave action or

cattle trampling the banks, but on a river it can be more insidious and often neglectful farming practice can hasten it e.g. leaving *dongas* to go unchecked, crops planted too close to the river. A guide who knows the river well should examine the places where a strong current (such as is evident after a thunderstorm) might smash into a bank eroding it. If this is left unchecked, one day the bank might collapse into the river and silt up a section of river making it unfishable. With forethought and care such banks can be repaired and the river improved.

There are a number of initiatives regarding river conservation that we can touch on here :

- rehabilitation of a river
- catchment management
- captive breeding and restocking of systems
- river conservation area
- catchment and river awareness formal conservation organisations
- personal awareness
- becoming aware of alien plants
- water use and conservation
- legislation with regard to water use and conservation
- knowing the fish species, their habitats and threats thereto
- becoming aware of rehabilitation and awareness programs

Some of the actions that can be considered with permission are as follows:

- clear invasive trees from rivers and catchment areas
- do not interfere with the riparian zone of the river
- plant local vegetation which will play a useful role as in attracting birds, bind banks
- look to restocking of rivers from the river itself and focus on improving the capacity of the river to hold fish rather than artificially increase numbers into a static environment
- get advice before stocking your dam with species that may be incompatible e.g. catfish into a bass dam or banded tilapia into a trout dam
- do not stock yellowfish into water where they are not ordinarily resident as this may lead to hybridisation and a loss of the pure strain of fish.
- become active in river, fish and conservation initiatives
- highly sensitive area may not contain angling fish. Accept these as they are for the value they bring in the holistic environmental picture.

(d.) Pollution may not just be effluent from an industry upstream on a river, but any foreign matter being expelled into the water e.g. from a gully or

tributary. It goes without saying that any deviation from the norm should be checked out immediately and reported before fish losses (or worse) start to occur.

Dead fish found floating in a dam or river may be the result of a fish being poorly handled or not revived by a C and R angler. Or it could be through natural means. However, it can also be as a result of pollution and this might be effluent from industry or weather and water conditions becoming unsuitable for the fish

e.g. After a long hot summer, water levels may fall very low. Often this is heralded by an increase in algae and then oxygen levels will also fall, distressing large numbers of fish. The key to avoiding this is actually not to wait for dead fish to start floating but to observe the increase in algae and begin to sound alarm bells at that stage. It may be a case of search and rescue by netting the fish out before they die.

#### (e) Fires

One of the most feared events on a farm is a run-away fire, which may be caused by an act of nature e.g. lightning or from somebody lighting a fire on the property.

It stands to reason that any fire should be watched and reported early on before it can get to run away status.

On a more personal note, the guide must be more than careful should he decide to make a fire for lunch purposes. If decided upon, the fire place should be constructed in such a way that the fire can be well contained by a circle of rocks and properly doused afterwards. No fire should be started on a day of high winds as the wind can easily scatter embers and start a veld fire which cannot be controlled and which will cause untold damage.

### **6.2 Supervisor or authorities to be notified of environmental problems.**

As mentioned previously, the mere identification of a problem is not sufficient. The guide must endeavour to notify the landowner or the nearest authorities about the problem with the environment. In some instances e.g. dead fish floating in the water, change in water colour, bank near collapse, the sooner action is taken the better the chance of averting a total disaster.

### **6.3 Understanding of fishing regulations in operation at a specific water.**

Fishing regulations generally are imposed at two levels i.e. the Provincial level and the individual water. Both should be taken account of and while

Provincial regulations hold sway, you may find that the individual water imposing stricter rules when it comes to bag and size limits. The individual fishery may also impose various other moral rules such as the use of barbless hooks or the netting of fish with a knotless net. There may also be restrictions on how one should access the water e.g. only fishing from the bank, no wading, float-tubing or the use of specified boats only, institution of a close season.

Some regulations are a source of confusion to the average angler as a permit does not carry the full regulations in force. Others can be interpreted in different ways e.g. the measuring of undersized fish. A trout is generally measured from head to tail, if the tail is widened to form a straight line. Other species of fish which have a forked tail may be measured differently. Establish what process the fishery would like to impose, so as to avoid any confusion or embarrassment.

Proper identification of fish species is important. Many waters have a variety of fish in them and some anglers are not certain of their ability to identify the particular fish. e.g. it is very common in a trout fishery for anglers to confuse a very heavily spotted rainbow trout with a brown trout "because it has spots". This may be important as many fisheries value their scarce brown trout stocks (which are also very expensive to stock) and also the rules may prohibit the taking of brown trout. Expensive grass carp have also been known to have been killed by anglers confusing them with common mirror or full-scale carp

It is also important to identify a species that may have infiltrated the water e.g. black bass and carp into a trout dam

From a reporting point of view, one should be able to distinguish a largemouth yellowfish from a smallmouth yellowfish etc. If the guide is to accompany the client to a mixed fishery, especially one where identification can be tricky, remember one or two distinguishing features of each fish species in order to be accurate e.g. the brown trout has no spots on its tail whereas the rainbow trout do have.

## **7. ENSURE RECORD KEEPING OF FISH CAUGHT AND RELEASED.**

### **7.1 Data could be related verbally or in writing.**

The golden rule is that a record should be kept whether in mind or on paper. While it can be related verbally, for accurate records to be kept, the catch return should be written down where it can later be processed. The mind is not a great reminder of the small points that can be important for stocking purposes

e.g. many anglers neglect giving in an accurate catch return and often forget to do so, or if it is done, it is a poor reflection of what actually happened on the day. From the guide's point of view, records are an invaluable source of information. If you are given access to all the records, then this will contribute to your increased knowledge of the water. The more information on the return the better for all.

Imagine being able to look through all the returns for a month and seeing what flies were used by the various anglers. This alone will speed up your information based on other people's experiences.

If length and weight information is recorded, this will allow the fishery to be able to assess the Condition Factor of the fish and this alone will tell a story about the fish, numbers and ability of the water to support a certain stocking policy.

Condition factor :  $\text{Weight of Fish} / \text{length of fish}^3$  (cubed)

e.g. A fish weighing 2 1/2 lb and measuring 18 inches will have a "perfect condition factor" of 43.

## **7.2 Noting down regularity of catch, species and associated information e.g. proximity, time, fly, method etc.**

The more information that is observed or noted down the better the bigger picture both from the fishery's point of view and also the learning experience of the guide. While fisheries may only be interested in the number of fish caught and/or killed, in a put-and-take fishery this information merely allows them to make certain observations about their stocking policy. The guide can however make a great deal more use of information to help him catch more fish.

Obviously identification of species and the proximity in which they are caught can help a guide to take an angler to a specific position to catch a certain species of fish on a more regular basis.

e.g. brown trout are notorious for finding an area in a dam where they prefer to stay rather than rove around. Largemouth black bass enjoy being close to structure and because they ambush their prey, will be found in much the same place as previously i.e. under a tree. Similarly other species will have their likes and dislikes and analysing the catch returns will give you an idea of where best to go to catch a desired fish for your client

It may also be noted that certain flies work best either at times of the year or times of the day.

e.g. during the season : a feeding phenomenon in summer sees trout feeding on the small water flea daphnia. These daphnia which are tiny and almost invisible, bloom in their millions but are mostly prevalent during a hot period. In summer the guide should note the presence of daphnia as they present opportunities to catch a lot of fish at a time when many other techniques fall short because of hot weather conditions.

e.g. during the day's fishing : a midge pupae pattern catches more fish during a period at last light than it does at mid-morning, whereas the Dragonfly nymph will be better on a warm mid-morning in Summer than at last light.

### **7.3 Catches and releases are measured and recorded correctly.**

Most owners however generally regard the following as a minimum:

- correct species
- number of fish caught and killed/released
- length
- estimated or actual weight
- fly used
- date
- weather conditions

Additional information such as proximity in a dam or the name of a pool in a river, technique, time of capture, amount of time spent on the water, wind direction, temperature of the water, general fishing conditions, clarity of water etc as extra information.

### **7.4 Reports are submitted regularly to correct sources.**

It is important that catch returns do not lie around in a cubby hole of a car or a drawer at home, but are submitted timeously to the correct person. This is so that they can be used for analysis at the correct time and that they also help build a bigger picture. Stocking policies are often drawn up on the strength of the catch returns and so it does not help if the information is late.

## **8. PROVIDE A FISH HANDLING SERVICE.**

### **8.1 Ability to net or otherwise properly handle fish caught**

With help from the guide, hopefully all the hard work will culminate in the form of a fish on the line and a satisfied client enjoying the fight. At this stage the guide must know what the client's wishes are with respect to that fish i.e. does he wish to keep it, if the option is there, or if he is going to return it, does he want a photograph taken of it.

The manner of release is up to the guide providing he has the client's permission to do so. Some client's wish to net or return their fish and the guide should respect this. If the guide insists on netting a big fish and it escapes at the last moment, the relationship between guide and client could be damaged.

Having been given permission from the client, the guide can suggest how the fish might be landed. Generally, once the fish is played out (but not to the point of exhaustion), the guide can instruct the fish to be led, head first over to within range of the net. The net is lowered into the water, firstly to wet it and secondly to timeously submerge it to avoid coming within the eye-line of the fish. The net is raised once the head and portion of the body of the fish are within the rim. Beware though of a fish that still has its head down. Many are the fish that have escaped at the last moment when the net is pushed prematurely at it.

The basic rule of returning fish is the less the fish is handled and the quicker it is returned to the water, the better. One exception to this is if the site of netting is not the best site for returning.

On a river, there will be instances where the fish will be landed away from the actual point of hooking and the guide will have to ascertain where the best position for landing will be. Thus prior to netting, the client should already have been told where to manoeuvre the fish into a section of the river for easy netting. In a river, be careful of trying to drag a fish upstream to the net. Even if the fish is tired, all it needs is one kick (not from you) and, using the force, of the water it will be gone!

## **8.2 Despatch & cleaning of fish**

There are different methods for unhooking fish. One method without actually touching the fish is to slide the hand down the leader to the fly and reversing the fly out. Others prefer a fish unhooking device which works on a similar basis, or by using blunt scissors or forceps. It may be that the hook is lodged in a sinewy area of the mouth and in this instance it is permissible to wet one's free hand and gently grip the fish by the jaw. With some fish this is easier e.g. largemouth black bass, allowing leverage to get the hook loose. Thus the only part of the fish that is touched is the inside of the mouth and the underside of the jaw.

Other species are more difficult, but nevertheless it can be done. Some yellowfish e.g. large-scale yellows have rubbery mouths and it can be difficult to withdraw the hook. A technique is to turn the fish upside down. With tiger fish and largescale yellowfish this can be helpful as there are occasions where the hook is also lodged in the upper side of the mouth.

Some anglers prefer to net their fish, but remember that this too is a foreign object to the fish and so it should ideally be a knotless net and certainly a wet one. Otherwise you will find large areas of fish slime coming off on the mesh. This opens the fish to disease.

It is generally acknowledged that fish returned which turn belly up have less than 50% chance of survival. The angler can try to revive it by holding it upright in a current in a river or waving cool water in front of it.

If a fish is not resuscitated, refer to the rules of the water as to what should be done with it. Some fisheries prefer to have the fish removed rather than lying around dead; others try to dissuade some anglers from using "deep hooked" as an excuse for taking fish.

### **8.3 Correct despatching techniques are applied and cleaning of fish.**

Where the fishery allows for the removal of fish, be aware of any rules pertaining to the keeping of fish. This may include an extra fee being charged based on weight of fish and the fish should not therefore be cleaned.

Where generally, after a fish has been killed quickly and efficiently, it is preferable to clean it soon afterwards - but not if a fee is charged in weight. Fees are charged in the weight of a fish before it has been cleaned.

Generally cleaning trout is very easy whereas other fish such as tilapia can be messy and anglers often prefer fillets. Ensure that the fish is cleaned at the waterside or at a designated area and that the area itself is left clean thereafter.

After despatch, keep the fish cool in a bag or "creel" and refrigerate it straight away if it is not going to be eaten on the day. There is nothing worse than taking a fish only to find that it has "gone off" a couple of days later.

Note: cleaning of fish means either (1) filleting the fish, keeping the fillets or (2) gutting the fish to remove the entrails and most importantly the gills. It is a matter of preference whether the head and tail is removed. It is a tradition that trout are eaten with the head and tail on, while other fish are generally eaten as fillets.

In a trout area, where anglers may wish to keep a number of fish, enquire as to whether they have the facilities to do so e.g. a fridge or establish a place where they can keep their fish. Even better, find somewhere where the fish can be smoked if desired. This is a good aspect of your package which can be offered to anglers coming from far off.

## **9. ASSESS CLIENT NEEDS/CAPACITY AND FLYFISHING ABILITIES.**

### **9.1 Client needs: physical ability, flyfishing goals, flyfishing morality, other interests such as birding, wild life.**

#### **Physical ability :**

Gauge the overall fitness level of the client i.e. does he walk with a limp, is he overweight, establish any medical condition e.g. heart,

#### **Flyfishing goals**

Establish up-front what the client wishes to achieve on the day i.e. a relaxing day out, capture of a particular species of fish, a preference for a certain method of fishing such as dry fly, the desire to fish a particular water he has heard about.

#### **Flyfishing morality**

This can refer to any preferred method of catching fish e.g. dry fly or using a floating line only. Does he have any objection to any of the methods you think might work on the day e.g. the use of a "booby fly" or "egg" pattern? Is he a strict catch-and-release angler. Some anglers are totally C and R and almost resent any implication that any others should think otherwise. There are some who refuse to fish at a water where absolute C and R is not the rule.

#### **Other interests**

Many flyfishers have dual interests in being in the outdoors and visitors may also wish to see more of the countryside. It is in your interest to gather as much natural information as possible to enhance their day, but also to be able to refer them to some one else who can give them an additional experience

e.g. many are keen birders and appreciate comment on local bird species or in assisting in arranging for someone else to take them out. This is called networking and should work on a reciprocal basis i.e. that they refer clients to you.

Other common interest are in the wild animals that may be around your area, flowers and trees, butterflies. Many people enjoy history of the area

e.g. Kimberley offers wonderful yellowfish flyfishing but as one fishes you see signs of early prospectors who dug for diamonds in those very waters. In addition there are many historic battlefields close by which add colour to the experience.

### **9.2. Client's general flyfishing ability: experience of flyfishing in general, specific knowledge, casting, fly selection, techniques, etc.**

Learn to ask particular questions of a client which will give valuable clues as to his flyfishing ability. If he is a beginner, you may need to rearrange the schedule to cater for his shortcomings.

Your assessment of the client (in addition to his physical condition) will allow you to map out the day. Asking questions about the experience he has had, where he has fished, the biggest fish he has caught, the type of species fished for, not only are good conversation points, but will give valuable clues as to his ability and experience.

Consider starting him off at a neutral spot just to check out his casting ability and the use of the line (in a river). Here a competent guide can give some preliminary guidance on tackle and technique that may become critical later on. Try not to fish productive water before you are happy that all the basics are in place. Discover this information early on.

e.g. take note of his set-up, range of casting, accuracy and overall presentation. If possible try and get him to cast to a certain spot and see how well he manages the task. If necessary, ask permission if you can give him a tip on a specific technique that you think he might not be proficient in.

### **9.3 Assessment of flyfisher's tackle range**

It may be a general rule that the better the tackle the better the angler, but there are many instances of this not being the case. However, your assessment should be rather how he uses his tackle and whether it is the correct tackle for the day. e.g. if after tiger fish on a big river, a 3-weight rod is inadequate for the job, while for fishing a small stream an 8-weight rod will be difficult to manoeuvre.

While basic, check whether the tackle used is "matched" i.e. whether it will be able to cast a line adequately. Many beginner clients in particular have tackle that is out of sorts making it difficult to cast a reasonable line even apart from their inadequacies. For this reason, providing it is advisable to work towards providing a spare outfit that you know is ideal for the job. If the client's tackle is not going to help him, tactfully enquire whether he would prefer to use your spare outfit and explain the reason giving him the choice. Should he still opt to use his own rod then assist as much as you can.

Establish what range of tackle the client has at his disposal i.e. floating line, intermediate, sinking line and the leader material. Remember that travelling anglers seldom are able to pack in everything that they would like to bring along and that a degree of compromise will be required.

One area to keep an eye on at all times is the performance of the leader, tippet and fly. It is the leader that will be damaged during the day and often may make the difference between catching and disappointment e.g. the leader may be frayed and the tippet reduced in length until it no longer performs the function it is required to do. After any "take" and especially after a long battle, check the leader and the knots to make sure that they have not been compromised. In general, feel the entire leader to see if there are any nicks in it. Any of these could lead to a lost fish on the next cast - don't take any chances.

Check the action of the fly. Some flies do not swim correctly. Put the fly in the water and observe its action. If it doesn't convince you, it's probably not going to fool a fish. Sometimes the tippet can get caught around a fly without you being aware of it or fly hangs at an angle. Also many anglers pull their flies out of the water so fast that it's impossible to see whether it is working properly. In any event, try to get the angler to fish a fly out to the last. Many fish follow and only take as the angler withdraws the fly.

Check the point of the hook every now and again. With some casting, you may find the point has broken off and the angler keeps getting takes or losing a fish. If a fish is lost, make it a mandatory check to see if the hook is still sharp. Also have a look at whether the hook is barbed, de barbed, barbless or has a depressed barb.

Inspect the reel and check it's drag before starting. While an accomplished angler will know to set his drag appropriately to the manner in which he plays a fish, a beginner may have his drag set too lightly. An overwind can easily occur with a sudden run of a big fish or, too tight, and the fish will break him. Many good fish that the guide has worked hard for are lost because this simple check was neglected. Don't wait for the fish to run before wondering about the drag.

Ask to have a look at the range of flies the client has. If appropriate, use some of the flies, otherwise select from a range that you think is more likely to bring success under the circumstances. Clients will expect some comment on fly selection so have a rationale for your action.

#### **9.4. Noting of any safety features that need to be assessed e.g. anglers mobility, experience with boating, etc**

Part of the introduction process mentioned above i.e. assessment of the angler's fitness should include be relevant to the type of outing planned e.g. if the guide intends to use a rowing boat to fish a lake, establish beforehand whether the client has experience in boating, from a fishing point of view and safety e.g. can he swim.

A second more common example is related to wading. Many anglers have relatively little experience in wading and few visitors have the foot gear for it. Wading is an art and while most South African rivers are reasonably docile, wading into a suitable position or crossing the river can be tricky e.g. never turn your back on a strong current, it will use your impetus to push you downstream and many have fallen in this way. Wade across or slightly upstream and use your rod to help your balance. This is done by submerging the tip of your rod and using it as a lever to push gently against the current. Provide a wading staff.

Note: In saltwater, knowing the movement of the tides can be critical especially if fishing off rocks. Often the angler is so intent on watching the water in front that he may not realise he is being cut off by water coming in behind and wading back to the beach becomes a perilous activity.

Do not take chances that you feel are 50:50. Some anglers quite simply do not like to wade and if unused to it may have an uncomfortable day.

Flyfishing from the bank may only include the use of waders in need, but if the experience is to include flyfishing from a boat or kickboat/float tube, the guide must take particular care that all the safety features associated with the device are in place e.g. suitable waders or boots. Life jackets in a boat going out to sea plus all the regulation safety equipment that is required.

While the possibility of falling in the water is a constant danger in wading a river, the guide should also be aware of other dangers, such as a weather change for the worse. The client's apparel should be checked before a day out on the river to ensure that warmth and dryness are assured. It is easy to be misled by a lovely warm day when one sets out, only to be hit by an electrical storm in mid-afternoon. An all-weather jacket packed just in case will make the difference between a miserable sodden outing that has to be cut short and a day that continues to last light with plenty of fish. In more remote areas, it is not amiss to take a box of matches or a lighter with you in case there is an accident of some sort which may prevent you getting back to the car before nightfall. For that matter a torch is also a good emergency idea.

On longer trips these elements are essential, as is basic medical equipment, such as plasters, antihistamine ointment and tablets and even headache tablets. A bottle of water or other drink helps with insidious dehydration.

## **10. ADVISE ON AND/OR DEMONSTRATE SUITABLE TACKLE, KNOTS, AND SUGGEST SENSIBLE CLOTHING.**

### **10.1 Client's equipment is appropriate to species and conditions i.e. rod, reel, line and terminal tackle.**

The following is a very general Guideline to tackle required for major species and/conditions:

Small streams: 3-weight outfit (trout, yellowfish) :leader 6 - 9 ft tippet 3 - 5 lb

Medium rivers: 5-weight outfit (trout, yellowfish) : leader as above, tippet up to 6 - 10lb

Large rivers : 8-weight outfit (tiger fish, catfish) : leader 6 - 12 ft, tippet 6 - 12 lb

Small ponds : 5-weight outfit (trout, yellowfish, tilapia, black bass) sinking lines usually shorter leaders to 9 ft and 4 - 8 lb tippet. Floating line 12 - 18 ft and tippet of 4 -8 lb

Medium dams : 5-weight outfit ( trout, yellowfish, tilapia, black bass) Large black bass and catfish may require a heavier 8-weight outfit. Leaders as above with tippets up to 12 - 15 lbs

Large lakes : 8-weight outfit (mostly to combat weather conditions e.g. wind and to aid in distance casting. Leaders as above.

Saltwater: 8 - 12 weight outfit depending on whether estuary, deep sea and selection of species. Leaders as specified for various species

### **10.2 Clients dressed correctly for weather and conditions.**

Whatever else is required specifically for the conditions and water, the client should have :

- suitable headgear
- sunglasses, preferably polarised and with UV light excluded
- warm jacket/jersey
- waterproof jacket
- suitable boots/ waders

### **10.3 Tackle assembled correctly: primary tackle, fly line, leader and appropriate knots.**

Whether the client opts to use your spare outfit or his own gear, it is incumbent upon you to check that the set-up is suitable for the purpose required.

See above for instructions on leader set -up:

Knots recommended for freshwater leader set up:

Securing braid/nylon to flyline: Needle knot

Butt of leader : Surgeon's loop

Fly line to butt of leader : loop to loop connection

Adding lengths of nylon to leader and tippet : three turn water knot

Creating a dropper fly : end of three turn water knot

Fly to leader : Clinch knot, Duncan loop or Uni-knot (Uni-knot or the non-slip mono loop are both recommended for allowing the fly some leeway in movement. The latter is often used in saltwater flyfishing with bigger flies.)

There are many other knots that can be used as alternatives and it is a case of being proficient in tying these alternatives to construct a competent set up e.g. many flyfishers prefer to use a perfection loop instead of the surgeon's loop. Others prefer a Palomar knot instead of a clinch knot. And for a loop connection some choose a non-slip mono loop against the slipping Duncan loop.

#### **10.4 Essential food and water, comfort items are present**

Guides must, at the outset, agree a basic comfort arrangement for the day. This usually includes coffee and a lunch with drinks at a prearranged spot or time. While many flyfishers may prefer to continue their fishing, it is better to insist upon a break to give the client some rest especially if an arduous return journey to the vehicle is anticipated.

### **11. THE ROLE OF ADAPTABILITY IN APPLICATION OF APPROPRIATE FLY SELECTION, CASTING AND PRESENTATION TECHNIQUES.**

#### **11.1 Adaptability in appropriate techniques to species and conditions concerned.**

Adaptability is one of the most important aspects of being a good flyfisherman and a being a good guide will incorporate this trait. A competent guide will exhibit a high level of observation in the day's fishing, always looking to spot some clue or change in the conditions that would occasion a change in tactics. There is no one method for catching all fish all

of the time and indeed on a single day, there will be many opportunities for changing flies, altering leaders, and even substituting basic tackle

If the major objective is simply to catch fish, then the guide must be proficient in recommending and advising on the use of a number of allowed techniques. Many techniques over the years have been developed for trout fishing, but there is significant overlap when it comes to other species. Often it is merely a case of a small adaptation for yellowfish, black bass etc. Other techniques have been borrowed or developed specifically for species.

e.g. a great many smallmouth yellowfish in the Vaal River system are caught by using a small fly attached to the bend of the hook of a larger fly. This is an acknowledged yellowfish technique but its origin was in the methods used by New Zealand trout fishers to get a small fly down to the depths without breaking the regulations concerning weighting a fly. The dropper system can be used equally productively

## **11.2 Adaptability in presentation techniques appropriate to conditions and fish.**

Standard techniques for stillwater include:

Floating line set up for dry flies and nymphs fished close to the surface

Floating line set up for weighted nymphs fished deeper

Floating line set up in conjunction with a sinking braided or polymer leader to create a sink-tip approach

Use of an intermediate or slow sinking line technique

Sinking line with nymphs

Sinking line with attractor patterns

Fast sinking lines for deep water

Standard techniques for river fishing include the above in appropriate circumstances as well as:

Understanding the philosophy of line control in a river current and the technique of "mending" i.e. manipulating the flyline upstream or downstream in order to allow the fly to sink to a desired level and minimise "drag".

Understanding the approach to fishing a fly at depth in a strong current e.g. tiger fish in the Zambezi.

## **SUMMARY**

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**This concludes the more formal presentation. What is absent here is the extension of many of the concepts above and the practical application of them. By this time candidates will have spent a great deal of time in the outdoors putting into practice and observing many of the issues under discussion.**

**I trust you have enjoyed the Course.**