

## **Loch Style Fishing**

By Graham Davis

There has been a great deal written recently about Loch Style fishing. It has been promoted as a new style but the basis of loch style fishing has been around for a very long time. A friend recently lent me a Scottish book from the 1920's that included many of the techniques being used today. There have been a number of excellent articles recently in various magazines about loch style and if you are really interested I suggest you read these. My perspective is one where I have tried the methods described and found that my catch rate did improve.

The original concept of loch style fishing was to fish a team of wet flies on a floating line downwind from a drifting boat. In Britain this was normally three flies and the rules in Tasmania have recently been changed to allow three flies also. More recent developments have included the use of sinking lines and fishing loch style with dry flies. The traditional wet fly method is to allow the top (bob) fly to make a wake across the surface of the water. It pays to give the fly plenty of time on the surface before lifting for the next cast as fish will follow the flies all the way to the boat and slash at them on the surface. The sinking line method is much the same but more water is covered. It pays to give the flies time to sink if you think the fish are deeper down. Again leave your flies on the surface for a while in case fish chase them up. The dry fly method is very simple, just throw a short cast in front of the boat and watch the flies carefully, if nothing happens in about ten seconds pick up and recast to different spot. Keep working a circle in front of the boat and cover as much ground as possible.

So why does loch style fishing work? One important reason is that by using three flies instead of one you must increase your chances. Not only do you have more tickets in the raffle but by using three different flies you have a greater chance of having a fly on that fish will be interested in. Last season I was polaroiding in Lake St Clair and still had my rod set up for loch style fishing from the previous day. I spotted a fish just above the lagoon and cast to it. The fish swam over to the bottom (point) fly, circled it for a while and refused the small emerger, it then came back and looked at the middle fly (nymph) and refused that. Finally it swam up to the top (bob) fly, a large dry and after a long examination took it quite confidently. In clear water like that I would have normally just fished a small emerger or nymph and probably wouldn't have caught that fish.

The second reason for that success of loch style fishing is because it covers a lot of water. We often complain about the wind but the wind is a great help with this type of fishing. It allows using the boat to cover a lot of water. I would recommend fishing without a drogue, unless the wind is particularly strong or you know there a lot of fish in the area. Once you have found the fish put the drogue out but until then cover as much water as possible. This also applies to fishing with sinking lines, cover as much water as possible. If you don't have a sinking line then you can get a sinking polyleader or just use weighted flies and a long leader.

The main reason why this method works though, in my view, is that it triggers a response from the fish. It is different from the traditional Tasmanian approach of sight fishing with an imitative fly. Because the fish thinks the fly is getting away it is likely to slash at the fly and try to get it gets away. Even with the dry fly method it pays to twitch the flies or retrieve them a bit before recasting.

To finish I will answer some of the more common questions asked about loch style fishing.

### **Won't I get a lot of tangles using three flies?**

You do get tangles but because you are always casting downwind and often with a short line this should not be a mar problem. When fishing loch style dry it is possible to avoid false casting altogether simply by using a pick up and put down casting method. This reduction in

false casting not only reduces the chance of tangles but also reduces the chance of tangles but also increases your chances of fish because your flies are in the water not in the air.

**Don't I need a special long rod for this type of fishing?**

A longer rod is an advantage because you can keep you flies skimming the surface longer, but it is by no means essential. My longest rod is nine feet and I have had a number of successful sessions using an eight foot six rod. You can make up for lack of rod length by holding your rod as high as possible or standing on the seats of the boat provided it is safe to do so.

**What sort of flies should I use?**

The magazine articles refer to this at length and I suggest you read them but the main thing is to use three different flies until you work out what the fish are interested in. It does pay to have your bob fly (the one closest to the fly line) one that will create a wake through the surface. A well hackled fly works well here. The club favourite Zulu is ideal in this position. It can be fished dry and then retrieved to create a wake.

**How do I set up the leader?**

A good deal has been written about leader lengths and placement of droppers etc. but the simplest method is to use a leader and put your dropper flies on about one third of the way along for each. The fish don't have tape measures. Tie a couple of droppers that hang 15 cms from the main leader. If conditions are very windy use a shorter leader to reduce the risk of tangles and in calmer conditions use a longer leader. I normally use six pound line all the way through. It is a good idea to tie up a couple of spare leaders and keep them on a spool in the boat so that if you do need to change over it is a simple process.

The main thing about loch style fishing is that you need to be prepared to experiment. Don't get locked in to one style of fishing, keep trying different things until you find something that works. Good luck.

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