



## A Note From the President

Greetings All Members and Fly Fishers of the Gulf Coast Council of FFI,

Happy New Year and welcome to 2022. I hope everyone had a safe and Merry Christmas. The Gulf Coast Council is looking forward to the 2022 calendar year and hope to see many of you at some of the upcoming council events and club events and activities in 2022.

The election for the 2022-2024 GCC Board took place in November. The board was elected and seated at the December Board of Director's Meeting. The board is made up of the following members and positions:

- AJ Rosenbohm -President
- Fred Hannie -Executive Vice-President, Fly Tying Chairman & co-Social Media Chairman
- George Norton -Secretary
- Donald Dehm -Treasurer & Education Chairman
- Jeff Ferguson -Executive Board Director & Casting co-Chairman
- Roger Breedlove -Director & FFI Casting Challenge Chairman
- David Buckner - Director & Council Clubs Coordinator
- Tom Bullock -Director
- Glen "Catch" Cormier -Conservation Chairman & co-Social Media Chairman
- Danielle Davidson -Director & GCC Women's Connect Liaison
- Tom Dempsey -Membership Chairman & Casting co-Chairman

GCC Board Member Tom Dempsey was recently elected to FFI's Board of Directors to a three year term. Tom will be a much needed voice for the GCC on the national board and will proudly represent the Gulf Coast Council. Congratulations, Tom.

The Gulf Coast Council's 2nd Annual Sweetwater classic will finally take place on Friday and Saturday, March 11th and 12th. After a couple of postponements in 2021 due to COVID concerns it looks like the classic will finally return. This is a combination fly fishing rodeo and expo that will be headquartered at Percy Quin State Park in McComb, Mississippi. There will be lots of auction and raffle prizes as well as casting challenge certifications and casting lessons. Please be sure to check out the details on the Gulf Coast Council's website and be sure to get registered in advance. Interest is high for this event and cabins at Percy Quin are filling up quickly.

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Why there's finally hope for speckled trout changes in Louisiana

Donald Dehm tells us why the best things in life are free – especially fishing!

George Norton reflects on his beginnings into the world of fly tying

What's happening this Spring around the Council

The Historic Ocean Springs Saltwater Fly Fishing Club recently rejoined FFI. It is great to have you back and we look forward to getting reacquainted with all of you.

David Buckner will be reaching out to all the clubs in the near future regarding coordination of clubs for sharing information and best practices. This will be a great opportunity to learn from one another and share ideas and resources.

Jeff Ferguson will be contacting the clubs in the council regarding the opportunity to teach an intermediate/advanced casting class for your club members. This is an opportunity for your club members who are at an intermediate or advanced casting skill level to fine tune your casting skills and learn from one of the best.

It is my hope that all of the clubs will be able to get back to their normal meeting schedules as we enter 2022. My intent is to visit each of you sometime over the course of the year. I look forward to seeing many of you at the Sweetwater Classic in March and at some of your upcoming events.

Tight Lines,

*A.J. Rosenbohm*

President, Gulf Coast Council of Fly Fishers International

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## Fly Tying Opportunities Abound in Spring 2022



There are many fly fishing events slated for 2022 and with them is the opportunity to improve your casting skills, learn a new fly pattern or win some nice auction items, or at the very least, spend some time with like-minded fisher folk. I didn't attend many events in the past two years for one reason or another and I'm really missing the fun and fellowship that they bring. I won't list every fly-fishing event that is scheduled, that list can be found on [laflyfish.com/calendar](http://laflyfish.com/calendar).

I would like highlight a few. The first event is the Cenla Fly Fishing & Light Tackle Festival on January 29 in Pineville, LA. It's a bi-annual event that will officially kick off the fly fishing shows within the Gulf Coast Council. Complete details can be found through a link on the site listed

above. The second event is TroutFest (Feb 18-20) New Braunfels, TX. This event isn't in our council, but it is a great festival that I have attended many times and it is on a trout fishing river full of fish. The third event is Red Stick Day, hosted by the Red Stick Fly Fishers of Baton Rouge, on March 5th. There's fly tying, as well as seminars, fly casting, even kayak demos, and a jambalaya lunch.

Finally, there's our own Sweetwater Classic which will be held March 11-12 at Percy Quinn State Park. This event will have auctions and raffles, a fly fishing tournament, casting games and fly tying competitions like the Iron Fly Tyer and the Single Feather Challenge. We still have a few spots open for demonstration tiers so contact me at [hannief@bellsouth.net](mailto:hannief@bellsouth.net) if you want to come tie with us.

The Fly Tying Group of the FFI has many new projects in the works that will interest you. They are expanding the fly tying library to include fly tying videos and are seeking input from the tiers of the Gulf Coast. We are getting resources together to help those that are not tech savvy create videos or photo step by steps. If you have a pattern you would like to share contact me or the FTG directly. The FTG has also put together a Saltwater Journal which will be available soon on the FFI website. Catch Cormier and I have begun setting up a similar fly-tying resource for the GCC which is available on the GCC website. We are looking for patterns that work in our waters whether they originated here or not. Go check out

the flies we have so far and see if you have something to add.

Follow us on Facebook at (Fly Fishers International Gulf Coast Council) to stay current on upcoming events.

Fred Hannie, Sr.  
Vice President  
Fly Tying Chairman  
Fly Tying Group Board of Governors

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## The best things in life are free!

Free fishing days are one of those!! Almost every State has at least one day per year that allows free fishing for its residents and those dates are coming up quick!! (Except for Alaska, they do not have a free fishing day) So why not take advantage of the free fishing days and enjoy fishing without a license? This is the best time to introduce a friend or a loved one to fishing. Better still, you can reconnect with your friends and family while catching some fish!

We are all aware of how fun fishing can be, the level of enjoyment that we receive from being out on the water and casting a line to a hungry fish. Free fishing days can offer us a chance to share that with someone who may not be an angler and get them into this sport that we love so much.

The artful casting of the fly line. The gentle presentation of the fly upon the water's surface. The gentle movement of the fly as we entice the hungry finned predators. The tug of the fish on the other end of the fly line. The spray and mist that occurs as you set the hook. The battle that ensues both man and beast. Finally, the reward of landing that once in a lifetime fish. Yup, that sport, that is the one we love! What better way to share in it than by taking advantage of what your state can offer and maybe make a new friend in the process.

So why do states have free fishing days? It can be deduced down to the importance of National Fishing and Boating Week. Generally held in the second week of June (5th-11th, 2022), the National Fishing and Boating Week is a national celebration meant to celebrate and highlight the importance of recreational fishing and boating across the nation. It's also meant to show the importance of fishing and boating in enhancing the quality of life and preservation of your natural resources. Think of this week

as the catch all for boating and fishing, a great time to learn about all things fishing including conservation and safety.

On these free fishing days, you do not need a license (for most public waterways), but be sure to check your local regulations on restricted and special areas. Some states even allow non-residents to fish without a license, but again, be sure to check with your local and state fishing authority. Do keep in mind that even though you do not need a license, you do need to abide by all other regulations such as seasonal, size and creel limits.

You can simply mark your calendar and use this day or days to find a new fishing spot or revisit an old one you have not been to in a while. Taking some time to relax and unwind, destress and simply enjoy fishing again. These free days can also give you a reason to take the significant other, kids, grandkids, or great grandkids out and have some fun.

It can also be a great day or days to schedule a Fly-Fishing Seminar or Casting Class. As you can take advantage of the no license rule and the fact that people are primed to fish and maybe try something new. If you are an instructor or a club member, be sure to bring this up at one of your meetings and perhaps you can gain some members from this annual free event.

Check the list for your State's free fishing days. The GCC states are marked with an "\*" and bolded, but I included all states, as some of us travel and some of our members are not residents of the Gulf Coast. Please verify the dates before going out, states can change dates after this list was made.

### Free Fishing Days 2022 By State

- **\*ALABAMA: SECOND SATURDAY IN JUNE. JUNE 11**
- ARIZONA: FIRST SATURDAY IN JUNE. JUNE 4
- ARKANSAS: SECOND FULL WEEKEND IN JUNE. JUNE 10-12
- CALIFORNIA: FIRST SATURDAY IN JULY. JULY 2, SEPTEMBER 3
- COLORADO: FIRST WEEKEND OF JUNE. JUNE 3 - 4
- CONNECTICUT: UNKNOWN
- DELAWARE: FIRST WEEKEND OF JUNE. JUNE 3 - 5
- **\*FLORIDA: FIRST WEEKEND IN APRIL (FRESHWATER FISHING DAYS) APRIL 2 - 3. SECOND SATURDAY AND SUNDAY IN JUNE (FRESHWATER) JUNE 11-12. FIRST SATURDAY AND SUNDAY IN JUNE (SALTWATER)**

**JUNE 4-5. FIRST SATURDAY IN SEPTEMBER  
(SALTWATER) SEPT 3. SATURDAY FOLLOWING  
THANKSGIVING (SALTWATER) NOV 26.**

- GEORGIA: JUNE 4 AND JUNE 11, SEPTEMBER 24
- HAWAII: 365 DAYS A YEAR (MARINE)
- IDAHO: SECOND SATURDAY EVERY JUNE. JUNE 11
- ILLINOIS: FATHER'S DAY WEEKEND IN JUNE. JUNE 17 - 19
- INDIANA: FIRST SUNDAY IN MAY 1. FIRST WEEKEND IN JUNE. JUNE 4 - 5. SEPT 25
- IOWA: FIRST FRIDAY, SATURDAY AND SUNDAY IN JUNE. JUNE 3 - 5
- KANSAS: FIRST WEEKEND IN JUNE. JUNE 4 - 5
- KENTUCKY: FIRST FULL WEEKEND IN JUNE. JUNE 4 - 5
- **\*LOUISIANA: SECOND SATURDAY AND SUNDAY IN JUNE. JUNE 11 - 12**
- MAINE: PRESIDENTS DAY WEEKEND FEB 19 - 20, MAY 28 - 29
- MARYLAND: FIRST TWO SATURDAYS IN JUNE. JUNE 4 AND 11. JULY 4.
- MASSACHUSETTS: FIRST SATURDAY & SUNDAY IN JUNE (FRESHWATER). JUNE 4 - 5. FATHER'S DAY WEEKEND JUNE (SALTWATER) JUNE 17 - 19.
- MICHIGAN: FEB 12 - 13 AND JUNE 11 - 12.
- MINNESOTA: MN TAKE A KID ICE FISHING WEEKEND (MN RESIDENTS 16 AND OLDER FISH FREE WITH CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 16) JAN. 14 - 16. TAKE A MOM FISHING WEEKEND (MINNESOTA RESIDENT MOMS FISH FREE) MAY 7 - 8. TAKE A KID FISHING WEEKEND (MINNESOTA RESIDENTS 16 AND OLDER FISH FREE WITH CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 16) JUNE 3 - 5.
- **\*MISSISSIPPI: JUNE 4 - 5 "MISSISSIPPI RESIDENTS CAN FISH WITHOUT A FISHING LICENSE. JULY 4 (STATE FISHING LAKE AND STATE PARK PERMITS ARE REQUIRED TO FISH IN STATE FISHING LAKES AND STATE PARK LAKES ON JULY 4.)**
- MISSOURI: IT IS THE SATURDAY AND SUNDAY FOLLOWING THE FIRST MONDAY IN JUNE. JUNE 11 - 12.
- MONTANA: FATHER'S DAY WEEKEND IN JUNE. JUNE 17 - 19
- NEBRASKA: FREE FISHING/FREE PARK ENTRY DAY. MAY 14
- NEVADA: SECOND SATURDAY IN JUNE. JUNE 11
- NEW HAMPSHIRE: THIRD SATURDAY IN JANUARY. JAN 15. FIRST SATURDAY IN JUNE. JUNE 4.
- NEW JERSEY: JUNE 4 AND OCTOBER 15.

- NEW MEXICO: FIRST SATURDAY IN JUNE, JUNE 4 LAST SATURDAY IN SEPTEMBER, SEPT 24
- NEW YORK: FEBRUARY 19-20, JUNE 25-26, SEPTEMBER 24, NOVEMBER 11
- NORTH CAROLINA: INDEPENDENCE DAY JULY 4
- NORTH DAKOTA: FIRST WEEKEND IN JUNE; JUNE 4 - 5, AND LAST WEEKEND IN DEC 24 - 25
- OHIO: FATHER'S DAY WEEKEND JUNE 17 - 19
- OKLAHOMA: FIRST WEEKEND IN JUNE. JUNE 4 - 5
- OREGON: PRESIDENTS DAY WEEKEND FEB 19 - 20, FIRST WEEKEND IN JUNE, JUNE 4 - 5, AUGUST 13 - 14, THANKSGIVING WEEKEND, NOV 25 - 27
- PENNSYLVANIA: SUNDAY BEFORE MEMORIAL DAY MAY 29, INDEPENDENCE DAY JULY 4
- RHODE ISLAND: FIRST WEEKEND IN MAY. (FRESHWATER FISHING ONLY) MAY 7 - 8
- SOUTH CAROLINA: MEMORIAL DAY, MAY 30, INDEPENDENCE DAY, JULY 4
- SOUTH DAKOTA: THIRD WEEKEND IN MAY, MAY 20 - 22
- TENNESSEE: JUNE 11
- TEXAS: FIRST SATURDAY IN JUNE. JUNE 4
- UTAH: JUNE 4
- VERMONT: FOURTH SATURDAY IN JANUARY, JAN 15, SECOND SATURDAY IN JUNE, JUNE 11
- VIRGINIA: FIRST FULL WEEKEND IN JUNE. JUNE 3 - 5
- WASHINGTON: FIRST WEEKEND AFTER THE FIRST MONDAY IN JUNE. JUNE 11 - 12
- WEST VIRGINIA: SECOND SATURDAY AND SUNDAY IN JUNE. JUNE 11 - 12
- WISCONSIN: WINTER FREE FISHING WEEKEND - THIRD WEEKEND IN JANUARY, JAN 14 - 16. SUMMER FREE FISHING WEEKEND - FIRST SATURDAY AND SUNDAY IN JUNE, JUNE 4 - 5
- WYOMING: FIRST SATURDAY IN JUNE. JUNE 4

Again, please take advantage of these free opportunities to introduce someone to new to our favorite sport.

**Donald Dehm**

*Council Treasurer*

*GCC Education Chairman*



## An Opportunity Too Good to Pass Up!

I am offering an Advanced Casting Workshop for the FFI clubs in the Gulf Coast Council. Often, I see beginner classes offered during club functions. Which is great, but our long time fly fishers don't get the instruction that could help improve their casting and teaching. The theme of the advanced workshop is to know more so we can do more.

During the workshop we will drill down on what we need to know to become the most efficient caster so we can fish longer. The roll cast is a basic simple cast that we all use. During the workshop we will explore gaining distance and direction change by adding life to the static roll cast. The double haul is a technique we employ in many casts. An improper timed double haul can hurt the cast more than help. We will break down the double haul in ways that will improve hauling at any distance. Other topics will include improving accuracy, shooting line, curve casts, slack line presentations and time to focus on individual caster needs. I look forward to meeting fellow casters throughout the Gulf Coast Council while we share our fly-fishing passion.

**The Casting Instructor Certification Program will offer a testing event in Lake Charles LA on March 3-5-2022.** We will offer 6 certified instructor exam opportunities and 2 master certified instructor exam opportunities. This is a great opportunity for anyone in the GCC wishing to achieve their certified instructor credential to do so without long distance travel. We already have two GCC members committed to taking their exam at the event and wish them much success, it takes dedication.

We are happy to be able to offer an Examiner Development Pathway Workshop for our MCI working towards becoming validated examiners. This has attracted EDP candidates from Oregon, Florida and one of our own from Alabama. This is a rare opportunity, and the outcome will result in another L2 validated examiner in the GCC in the near future. As the event coordinator having L2 examiners in our area will be wonderful for future testing events.

**Jeff Ferguson**

*MCI, FFI Casting Board of Governors  
Casting Chairman - GCC*

## Connecting With Women in the Gulf Coast Council



Hello! My name is Danielle Davidson, I am one of the newest Gulf Coast Council Board members and the FFI Women Connect liaison for the Gulf Coast region. Over the next three months I plan to reach out to all 12 of the GCC clubs

in hopes of establishing a Women Connect liaison for each individual club. There will be a Google Drive folder created to compile contact information so that the lady fly anglers of the Gulf Coast can easily communicate, connect, partner and support one another. Our focus is collaboration over competition! Let's work together to build a strong connected group of lady fly anglers along the Gulf Coast!

### FFI Women Connect Upcoming Events

- **Tying and Training** – Tie along and learn from accomplished tyers. (Every Tuesday – link on Facebook page)
- **Zappy Hour** – Get social and connect with the FFI Women Connect crew! (3<sup>rd</sup> Monday – link on Facebook page)
- **Fly Fishing with Kids** – The Weeks Bay Estuary and FFI Women Connect is hosting a Fly Fishing with Kids event at the estuary in beautiful Fairhope, AL. The event will take place on Saturday, March 19th. We are in need of lady angler volunteers to help teach the basics of fly fishing to youth participants. Volunteers are invited to stay at Weeks Bay Reserve's research dorms on the weekend of 3/18 - 3/20. This event will include the kids' learning event on Saturday followed by a volunteer fishing day on Sunday. If you are interested in volunteering/participating in this event, please contact me at (251) 278-4660 or [danielle.davidson@dcnr.alabama.gov](mailto:danielle.davidson@dcnr.alabama.gov).

**Stay Connected with Women Connect!**

**Instagram:** [@ffiwomenconnect](https://www.instagram.com/ffiwomenconnect)

**Facebook:** [@ffiwomenconnect](https://www.facebook.com/ffiwomenconnect)

**Website:** <https://www.flyfishersinternational.org/GetInvolved/FFI-Women-Connect/fbclid/IwAR3jb1wlr5rtKI>



## Clubs Helping Clubs

During 2021, an effort to increase communications and coordination between the Gulf Coast Council's member clubs began. This effort will continue in 2022. The twelve regional Gulf Coast Council clubs have numerous programs, events, and tournaments in place. This effort will ensure that our twelve clubs have access to all of these adjacent club activities.

For instance, if one club is hosting a Zoom meeting with a remote fly-fishing expert, we want all GCC member clubs to have access to the meeting. Also, member clubs can share monthly meeting topics and speakers. Regional clubs have some really innovative initiatives underway.

We want to make sure that all clubs are aware of those initiatives. We often share tournament information amongst clubs, but this effort will expand sharing and ideas to the "whole" of the GCC. It's a great demonstration of synergy. This effort will also increase the value of club membership in FFI.

**David Buckner**

*Council Clubs Coordinator*



## From the Editor

Hey everyone, Glen 'Catch' Cormier here. I'm subbing as editor for this edition of The Gulf Streamer. My daughter, Corinne "Cokie" Duplan, is our GCC newsletter editor and well, she had a recent stay in the hospital. Don't worry, it wasn't an illness... rather she gave birth to her first child, a 7 lb, 7 oz. baby girl!

Mother is doing fine, but daddy is a bit stressed. Being somewhat of a germaphone, the job of changing diapers is something that he's having a tough time dealing with.

Cokie wants to let everyone know that she plans to be back fly fishing soon. And hoping to join in for our 2nd annual Bugs & Bikes Women Connect event at Gulf Shores in June.



*Adeline Louise Duplan*

## Connect With Us

**Website:**

[www.gulfcoastcouncilffi.org](http://www.gulfcoastcouncilffi.org)  
[www.ffigcc.org](http://www.ffigcc.org)

**Facebook:**

Like us at "Fly Fishers International Gulf Coast Council"

# Fly Tying: Struggles to Success

**George Norton**

I've tried fly tying on my own with the help of library books, the internet and YouTube videos but I'm old school. I like to take my classes in person rather than on line. I enjoy the interaction of our group (Fly Fishers of Northwest Florida) in the old log cabin clubhouse in City Park at Miraflores and 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

There is an aged frig stocked with cold drinks. The walls are covered with old black and white photos and a glass case with classic saltwater flies. The more veteran tiers are at ease with a batter of jokes and fishing tales that circulate around the table. Some of the newbies sit a little apprehensively like kids in grade school attending a new school. They are not used to intricate work with their hands like trying to put thread and feathers onto seemingly tiny hooks and their patience will be tried. Your inexperienced fingers do not work as they are supposed to.

Deer hair will shift from the top of the hook to the far side or the whole thing will unravel not once; but even two or more times when you thought you had it all put together. By the third or fourth time your frustration turns to success as you admire a reasonable facsimile of what you were supposed to have accomplished.

I can easily imagine a room full of frontier women at a quilting bee for the opposite effect. They talk about family and the older women keep the gossip under control. The fly tiers are predominately older males but there is a sprinkling of the younger generation and one female.

A lead tier sits at the head of a long table with about a dozen tiers listening and trying to keep pace with the instructions. Fly tying vices and materials such as hooks, tools, thread, feathers, and dyed synthetic and natural hair are spread all over the table. You grab a roll of hair, trim it and pass it down the line.

The learning curve to becoming a proficient fly tier is a little painful for some of us who realize how helpless we are. Why go thru this when you can buy pre made flies for 50 cents each on line? Because ancient primitive man

made his own stuff for hunting and fishing and it must be in our DNA.

Cutting off a piece of fur from a deer, elk or squirrel, or a feather from a pheasant, turkey or duck's tail and tying them on a hook with the idea of fooling or deceiving a fish in their natural element is really satisfying. Yes we have the modern tools and materials but the natural material from a bird or deer you may have killed takes us back hundreds or thousands of years.

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## Roussel, Williams rise to the Challenge

**Catch Cormier**



The Suncatch Challenge is an initiative by the GCC to highlight the species diversity of sunfish, and the importance of conserving their individual habitats. It mimics the Fly Fishers International Cutcatch and Basscatch Projects in that it encourages FFI members to document the different species they catch and release. And in return, receive recognition.

It's not a contest.. There are no time limits. There is no entry fee, only that you be an active FFI member. All fish must be caught on fly rod, on single hook flies and in public waters. Photograph the fish, and register the catch on our website form.

Sixteen (16) species found in the waters of Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and northwest Florida were



selected for focus. To qualify for the Suncatch Award, an FFI member must catch at least nine (9) of the species.

Created only a year ago, we've already had two FFI members receive the Suncatch Award: Ben Roussel of Baton Rouge, LA, and Chris Williams of Sorrento, LA. Both are avid sunfish anglers.

In fact, Ben has a fantastic website dedicated to his fishing adventures and to the many species he targets. One of the pages is entirely about sunfish species and where to find them. It has photos and maps! I strongly encourage anyone taking the Challenge to check out Ben's webpage:

<https://mountainstommarsh.com/fish/freshwater-fish/sunfishes/>

Both Ben and Chris will soon receive a personalized mug recognizing their achievement. Of course, the "challenge" is not over for either. Any FFI member who catches all 16 species qualifies for the "Suncatch Master" recognition and an additional award.



## Conservation Update

*Glen 'Catch' Cormier, GCC Conservation Director*

As stated in the last issue of The Gulf Streamer, the FFI is now involved in conservation activism more than any time in the past. Why? History has taught us that, once a fisheries starts to decline, it's better to address the problem immediately than later – when the time, effort and money to restore it can be extravagant.

For the past three years, the Gulf Coast Council has been actively involved with our conservation partners (CCA state chapters, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, etc) to enact new rules and regulations

recommended by biologists. Those regulations included the following species:

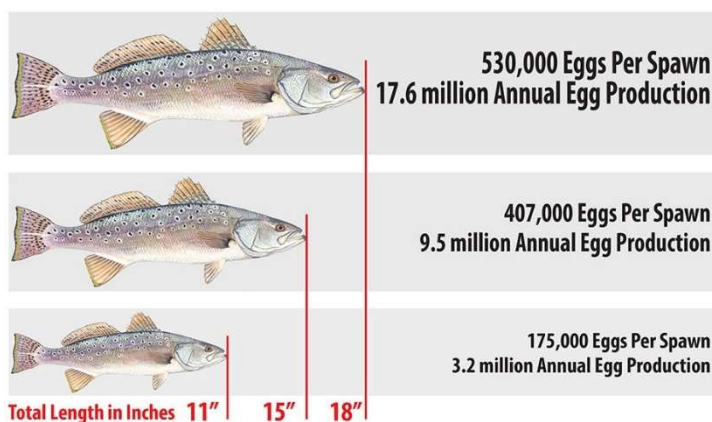
- Alabama: spotted seatrout, flounder
- Florida (Panhandle Zone): spotted seatrout
- Mississippi: spotted seatrout, crappie
- Louisiana: spotted seatrout, menhaden

We've been mostly successful in these efforts. Much credit goes to our GCC members who wrote letters and emails and made their voice heard.

When it comes to Louisiana, it's been tough. The Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission (LWFC) is an enigma that no one quite understands. Not even a majority of state legislators. For example, Louisiana is the only state without a menhaden harvest buffer zone. An attempt to create a zone of one mile from shoreline was rejected by the Commission. Later, after the legislature almost passed a buffer zone law - failing only on a technicality – the LWFC came back with a "compromise" plan. It's currently under a period for public comment.

As for speckled trout in Louisiana, a proposal by biologists two years ago to increase minimum size and/or reduce creel limit was also rejected soundly by LWFC. But a follow up study caught the attention of several legislators. It shows there is a serious decline in the numbers of age 3+ trout – 18 inch and larger females - the prime spawners. As the chart below shows, these fish are vital to recruitment success.

There is hope. At their recent meeting, a member of the LWFC made it clear that changes are necessary. Check our website and Facebook pages often as we will monitor this issue as it proceeds.





# This Fly Needs Some Love

## Catch Cormier

Two decades ago, the Contraband Fly Casters club of Lake Charles invited the legendary Stu Apte to be guest speaker for their annual conclave.

If that name doesn't ring a bell, chances are you're too young to remember the original American Sportsman television show, aired by ABC network and hosted by famed sports announcer Curt Gowdy. Apte was a recurring guest on this long-running, award-winning program.

In fact, the pilot for American Sportsman may have been an episode of ABC's Wide World of Sports, which featured a tarpon contest with Apte and three other now-legendary saltwater fly rodding pioneers: Joe Brooks, Jimmie Albright, and A.J. McClane.

Today a fiberglass rod and a Pflueger reel might be considered poor tackle to tame saltwater giants, but back in the early 60s it was standard gear. The secret lay in the skill of the angler, a characteristic which we take for granted these days.

As important as skill was having the right fly. Today's fish are far more educated. Or at least we're led to believe. That is the reason why the patterns we use now tend to more precisely "match the hatch".

But folks like Apte recognized the weakness of certain species for a particular shape or color. The flies they devised caught fish regularly back then, and remain with us today. Though largely ignored, if given the opportunity, and put in the presence of fish, they can keep your rod bent and you happy.

One such fly is the Apte Tarpon Fly. At the Contraband Conclave, I won a box of these in a raffle. Since they weren't tied by the master himself, I felt okay putting them in water.

The ATF has been one of my top ten redfish patterns over these many years. While not as consistent as spoon flies or crab patterns, it's just a fun fly to fish and catches more than enough reds.

My scaled-down version is easy to cast with a 6-weight rod. Also, the fly itself is bright in the water. When a redfish flairs his gills, ready to eat, you'll see this fly one instant and the next instant it disappears.

If you're concerned about grass or oysters, you can tie on a weed guard. But for fishing canals and small lakes where the ATF works best, it's really not needed.

## Materials:

- Hook - stainless steel size 1, Mustad 34011 or similar
- Thread - red or fire orange
- Tail - four saddle hackles, 2 yellow or brown, 2 red
- Body - marabou and hackle mixed colors
- Eye - thread wrapped to eye, then painted on

## Directions:

Select two hackles from each color set, and match the different colors into pairs. Tie one pair in above the hook point of the hook, such that the feathers bend out. Temporarily secure with two wraps. Then tie in the second pair again with the feathers bent out. Now secure strongly with thread.

Tie in a small tuff of marabou that matches one of the colors of the feathers, and palmer the marabou, stroking it back. Tie in a third pair of hackles, and this time palmer the hackles just in front of the marabou until at the tips. Secure the palmer with thread, and clip the tips off. Stroke back the palmer, and wrap the front base of the palmer with thread to force it backwards a bit.

Now build up a base of thread just above the feathers, where you will paint on an eye. Then wrap thread up to the hook eye and knot off. I like to use nail polish to paint on eyes, using a 5cm dowel for white, and 3cm dowel for black.



# Make plans for the Sweetwater Classic March 11-12



## 2nd annual Gulf Coast Sweetwater Classic

**Friday-Saturday, March 11-12, 2022**

Percy Quin State Park, McComb, MS

Free admission to park & festival

Big Bream Contest: Friday, 2:30 pm – 5:30 pm

Entry fee: \$5 cash payable at event

Classic Tournament: Saturday, 6:30 am - 12:30 pm

Entry fee: \$30 payable thru iAngler app

or at [www.iAnglerTournament.com](http://www.iAnglerTournament.com)

Categories: Boat (biggest bass), Bank (biggest bass + bream), Biggest Crappie

Complete event details at [www.ffigcc.org](http://www.ffigcc.org) and click "Classic"

For those not familiar with our Sweetwater Classic, it's part fly fishing contest, part festival. It kicks off at 10:00am Friday and continues through Saturday until 4:00pm. There's a Bream Contest on Friday afternoon, the major tournament on Saturday morning, seminars, fly tying demonstrations, flycasting instruction, a Casting Skills Challenge, and Iron Fly Tying competition, and a large raffle/auction to benefit the GCC's

education and conservation initiatives.

While the event will again take place at Percy Quin State Park, there's a second fishing venue added for the Classic Tournament. Anglers can opt to fish Lake Tangipahoa inside the park, or Lake Mary Crawford near Monticello (45 minutes away). Both lakes hold plenty of 20+ inch bass. MDWFP fisheries biologist **Samantha Bergeron** – herself an avid flyfisher – will be giving a complete report on both lakes on Friday evening at the Captains meeting (6:00 pm).



Of course, as mentioned it's also a festival. We'll have CCI instructors willing to assist in improving your casting. We encourage festival participants to take the FFI Casting Skills Challenge and earn either a Bronze, Silver, or Gold recognition award.

We'll have a "Fly Fishing Basics" on Friday and another seminar on Saturday. We'll have beginner casting and beginner tying lessons on both days.

While Covid still remains a concern, it's become more endemic than pandemic. However, we'll continue to ask attendees to take any necessary precautions.

Again, check for complete details on our website by clicking on "Classic".

# What's happening in the GCC

**Mar. 4-5** - FFI Certified Casting Program Examination, Lake Charles, LA. Hosted by the Gulf Coast Council. Candidates for the FFI Certified Casting Instructor (CCI) badge as well as Master Certification Instructor (MCI) badge will be tested. For details, contact Jeff Ferguson.

**Mar. 5** - 27th annual RED STICK DAY fly fishing festival, 8:30am to 3:30pm, Waddill Outdoor Education Center, 4142 Flannery Rd, Baton Rouge, LA. Free admission. Seminars, fly tying demos, casting instruction, kayak demos. Hosted by Red Stick Fly Fishers. [www.rsff.org](http://www.rsff.org).

**Mar. 11-12** – SWEETWATER CLASSIC fly festival & tournament, Percy Quin State Park, McComb, MS. Hosted by the FFI Gulf Coast Council. See article for details.

**Mar. 14** – FLY FISHING 101, hosted by Fly Fishers of Northwest Florida, Pensacola, FL. Eight consecutive Monday evenings from 6pm to 8pm. Cost \$60. The current class quota is filled however interested parties should contact the Education Committee for possible cancellations. Email [ffnwfeducation@gmail.com](mailto:ffnwfeducation@gmail.com).

**Mar. 19** – FLY FISHING WITH KIDS, Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Fairhope, AL. 10am – 2pm. Free for ages 6 to 16. Instruction in fly fishing, casting, fly tying, conservation, water safety. Contact Danielle Davidson at [danielle.davidson@dcnr.alabama.gov](mailto:danielle.davidson@dcnr.alabama.gov).

**Mar. 26** – 73rd annual NEW ORLEANS CITY PARK FISHTIVAL & BIG BASS RODEO, New Orleans City Park, New Orleans. 6:30am – noon. Fishtival free, Rodeo entry fees: adults \$10, kids \$5. Fly Fishing category. Also fly casting and fly tying by New Orleans Fly Fishers Club. Hosted by LA Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. [www.neworleanscitypark.com/big-bass-fishing-rodeo-and-fishtival](http://www.neworleanscitypark.com/big-bass-fishing-rodeo-and-fishtival)

**Apr. 23** – FLY FISHING 101, 8:30am – 12:30 pm, no cost. Open to public, registration limited. Sessions on equipment, knots, what flies to use, hands-on casting. Hosted by Kisatchie Fly Fishers. [www.kisatchiefly.org](http://www.kisatchiefly.org)

*If you have an event, meeting or activity you wish to publicize, and/or put on our website Calendar, please email details to [catch@laflyfish.com](mailto:catch@laflyfish.com).*

## Clubs of the Gulf Coast Council



Kisatchie Fly Fishers

