

A Note From the President

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

I hope this note finds everyone well during these recent trying times. 2020 was a very challenging year for all of us as individuals as well as for all of the Gulf Coast Council fly fishers and clubs. Many of us have been confined to our homes and haven't been able to enjoy our normal club gatherings and activities because of local restrictions and guidelines. Many of our friends and neighbors have been faced with a very active hurricane season and have had to deal with rebuilding their homes and lives. Our thoughts and prayers are with them. As fly fishers we have had to become more creative. Some of our clubs have started virtual meetings and tying classes via the Zoom app. This has been a great option for many of us. All of us have been looking forward to when we can spend time together.

As we enter the Spring of 2021 there are a number of great things that are happening in the Gulf Coast Council. As restrictions start to ease

with the widespread availability of the COVID-19 vaccine, we will see

more fly-fishing activities start again and become a part of our regular routine. The HOSSFLY club in Ocean Springs has rejoined the Council as an FFI Affiliate Club. Welcome back HOSSFLY. The Gulf Coast Council has started its' new Suncatch Program (more information on that in the newsletter and on the GCC's website).

The GCC will host the 2nd Annual Sweetwater Classic at Percy Quin State Park in McComb, Mississippi, on September 17th & 18th, 2021. There will be a great fly fishing tournament, fly tying demos, casting clinics, casting certification opportunities and great fellowship. I will soon be starting a bi-monthly virtual meeting with representatives of all of the GCC Clubs for idea sharing, best practices and networking in the very near future. Please be on the lookout for an email from me regarding this.

The GCC is taking nominations for the Council awards with the deadline for nominations to be submitted by midnight, on April 30th. The nomination form is available on the website.

The present GCC Board of Directors was elected in October 2018 to a three-year term. There will be another election in October 2021. If there is anyone that would like to be considered for the election ballot, please see the website for instructions on how to submit the nomination. This will be posted in the near future.

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The Board of Directors of the Gulf Coast Council of FFI is here to serve at your leisure. I have heard from a number of you recently with suggestions and questions. I really appreciate your feedback and look forward to working with all of you in the upcoming months.

The weather is getting great, the fish are really starting to bite. Let's get out there and fish.

Tight Lines,

A.J. Rosenbohm

A message from the Fly Tying Chairperson for the upcoming Sweetwater Classic

Friday – Saturday, September 17-18, 2021 Percy Quin State Park, McComb, MS



This is your official invite to participate in this event as a demonstration tier. We will have one tying session each day starting Friday March 13 at 12 pm. We will also have a "one feather challenge" at 6:30 pm that evening. Saturday will be an open tying session all day with no time frame and tiers will be limited only by seating available (first come first seated).

The Iron fly competition will be held at 2pm Saturday and the winners will have a chance at some great prizes.

This will be a new format and venue that will include elements of the tier's rendezvous and an expo with a fishing tournament added in.

We will have raffles and auctions throughout the two days and any tying or fishing items you wish to donate will be greatly appreciated.

We will also be asking for fly from each of you to be placed on a special hat to commemorate this event to be auctioned. This will be a highly sought-after keepsake by any who attend.

Please respond to this email or to hannief@bellsouth.net

Look forward to seeing all of you there.

-Fred G. Hannie

GCC Vice President, Fly Tying Chair

Floating Feathers Kayak Fly Fishing School



Donald Dehm

GCC Education Director, Donald Dehm, has been serving the GCC since 2020 when he was nominated by the BOD for the position due to an unforeseen vacancy. Previously, while living in Huntsville and a member of the Southeastern Council, he helped teach wounded veterans fly fishing here on the coast on his own dime. For that he was awarded the 2019 "Friend of the Council" Award. So when he moved within council borders, the GCC board was well aware of his dedication to our sport and education. He has been working closely with all members of the Board with all aspects of Education and is helping to ensure that the GCC can support and serve the Clubs within it as best as possible.

Donald works full time with his "9-5" job, in which he develops training programs for corporations, government, and military customers. He also uses these skills in his work here at GCC and in a small business that he owns and operates, called Floating Feathers Kayak Fly Fishing School. In this business he teaches Fly Fishing Basics and Kayaking Basics and then aligns these two sports to teach Kayak Fly Fishing Specifics.

The business is unique in that Donald lives in Foley, Alabama, but he travels around the Southeast, and within the GCC region, to instruct these courses at various locations. For his classes, some locations may require overnight stays and that may be reflected in prices when booking classes. He also has all the equipment that any student may need for the kayaking and/or fly fishing instructions. If a student wants to learn but does not have the equipment, no worries, he has rods, reels, kayaks, paddles, life jackets, and everything else that a student may need to learn how to take on one, two, or all three of these sports. He can teach up to ten students at a time with his available equipment but can instruct more if some or all students have their own equipment.

Donald has been featured in magazines, podcasts, and blog posts for his kayak fly fishing skills and instruction abilities, to include Fly Fisherman Magazine, Kayak Fishing Quarterly Magazine, and more. He also gives discounts on class costs to fellow Veterans, First Responders, various Charity Organizations, and GCC Members (just be sure to let him know of any of these qualifications about yourself if you want to book a class or classes with him). He has an

active YouTube channel, a Facebook page, Instagram, and Website that you can visit to see more about his business and capabilities, all this information is below.

Donald's and Floating Feathers Kayak Fly Fishing School's mission is not to make a large profit, but to help people get into these sports as safely as possible and with good quality instruction in an area that is a little niche. With the sport of kayaking fishing exploding in the times of COVID, there is not always a place to learn the basics of kayaking when someone purchases a kayak, especially from big box stores.

Donald wants to make sure that he can reach as many people as possible, which is why he is a mobile business and why his prices are comparatively low to some other instruction programs. With most members being familiar with fly fishing, his classes on Kayak Fly Fishing specifics and kayaking can provide an opportunity to discover a fun and exciting way to find new fishing waters, in a safe and comfortable way.



Floating Feathers Kayak Fly Fishing School info:

Website: www.kayakflyfishingschool.com

Facebook: facebook.com/kayakflyfishingschool

Instagram: @kayakflyfishingschool

Tel: 256-258-9233

Email: kayakflyfishingschool@gmail.com

YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmrM3wiVkc3G40YK-4gHvOQ



Are you up to the Challenge?



The Suncatch Challenge is an initiative by the Gulf Coast Council that mimics the FFI Cutcatch and Basscatch projects. The purpose is to highlight the diversity of sunfish species within our geographic area.

It's not a contest and size doesn't matter. There's no time frame. Each time you catch one of the 16 different sunfish species listed in the Challenge, simply take a side photo of the fish, along with the fly and/or fly tackle. Then go to our website at www.ffigcc.org, click on "Suncatch", then click on the entry form.

The online form is easy to fill. Once you hit 'Submit', your entry is recorded. You only need to email your photo to the listed email address to complete the process.

Because the whole thing is online, you can see yours - and everyone elses - entries in real time.

Of course, there are several rules to be aware of - they are listed on our website. Two most important ones are: (1) you must be an FFI member and (2) proper and handling of the fish. Because this is a CPRE (catch-photo-release encouraged), the photos must show the fish immediately after being caught.

It won't be easy, but if you manage to catch 9 of the 16 species, you will receive the "Suncatch Award". In addition to recognition on our website, you'll receive an imprinted coffee mug with your name and a limited artist image. ALSO... the first 10 Suncatch Award recipients will receive a fish-imprinted neck gaitor with UPF 30+ sun protection. It's unisex and fits all neck sizes.



Now let's talk about one particular species: the redbreast bream. It's sometimes mistaken for a longear because of it's long opercle flap. But unlike a longear, most of the lower body is either yellow, orange or rusty red. It's most common in streams and upper sections of lakes where streams feed into. It's also one of the largest sunfish, sometimes getting up to a pound in weight.

In my opinion, this is one species that Suncatch anglers should target because it's quite abundant and also an

opportunistic eater. I've caught them on popping bugs, tiny shrimp patterns, wet flies, beadhead patterns like Prince Nymph, Hares Ear and Jitterbee. Woolybuggers and Fluff Butts imitate minnows that they also commonly feed on.



Conversely, the most difficult fish for the Suncatch Challenge will be the Mud Sunfish. It's only found in Beaver Dam Creek in Alabama, although there are reports of this fish in other waters of the Mobile River basin. If somehow you manage to catch it and all other 15 species, you will be eligible for the "All Suncatch" award. We're still deciding what that might be.

Conservation Update

Glen 'Catch' Cormier, GCC Conservation Director



Overview

More than any time in the past, conservation is paramount to the FFI. We're now funding more projects, up to \$3,000 per project, and more scholarships. But the real change has been with activism. FFI continues to team up with other conservation groups in partnerships to address a variety of issues from pollution to overharvesting to spawning migration impediment.

The FFI encourages clubs and councils to submit requests for conservation grants, on behalf of themselves or other groups or agencies. Forms are available on the FFI website.

The GCC also has conservation grants of up to \$500 each, maximum two awarded per year. The GCC Board is looking for high-impact and quick fruition projects. As one board member stated, "Where the public sees the results'". Examples of such projects might be liming a small lake to increase fish production, or adding gravel beds to provide spawning habitat. While studies are also acceptable, they too should result in actionable items that improve or sustain fisheries. To be certain your proposal might be viable – PLEASE contact me prior to submitting any request, at catch@laflyfish.com.

Partnerships

The purpose of conservation partnerships is to share conservation commitments and goals. Several organizations working together are stronger than each on their own.

Current partnerships include: Bonefish & Tarpon Trust, Fisheries Conservation Foundation, Western Rivers Conservancy, Idaho Conservation League, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, Trout Unlimited, Keep Fish Wet and several others.

Among the big items we are collabrating on with our partners are the Simpson Proposal and the Everglades Restoration.

Simpson Proposal. Congressman Mike Simpson of Idaho has developed a comprehensive proposal that would remove four outdated hydroelectric dams from the lower Snake River. Removal of these dams would greatly boost salmon and steelhead returns to the upper tributaries. Currently the return rate is one percent of it's historical numbers. FFI has signed on with 35 other endorsing organizations in a letter strongly supporting the proposal.

Everglades Restoration. This legislative plan involves restoring hydrology of the system, i.e., bringing back historic flows to Florida Bay. FFI and partners recently sent letters to the US House and Senate requesting continuation and expansion of funding for future restoration work.

Gulf Coast

Here in the Gulf Coast Council, we've been very busy the last 3 years drafting letters of support for limit changes of spotted seatrout in Mississippi, Florida and Louisiana. We were the ONLY organization that endorsed a 14-inch minimum size limit for Louisiana seatrout - a proposal recommended by the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries marine fisheries biologists. Sadly, the proposed regulation change was tabled until October, 2021, for "further studies".

The most recent "big issue" is menhaden harvesting bycatch along Louisiana beaches. It's been the subject of several articles in recent months and even a seminar topic at last summer's virtual ICAST.



The issue surfaced as the result of video evidence of thousands of spawning redfish killed as bycatch by "pogey boats" working close to shore. Mississippi, Alabama, and other states have exclusion zones for menhaden harvest of at least one mile. While this greatly reduces bycatch, it also protects a significant population of menhaden - estimated in the millions – that are utilized as food by a wide variety of game fishes along the coastline.

A one-mile exclusion proposal was brought to the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission in October, but no action was taken. As often the case regarding Louisiana fisheries, the matter is now being taken up by the Louisiana Legislature. A bill has been pre-filed to

create a 1/2-mile exclusion zone. Making matters interesting - the Chairperson of the LWF Commission is spearheading the commercial resistance to the bill.

As always, you can keep up with the latest on this and other regional fishery issues on our website at www.ffigcc.org.

Make plans for the Sweetwater Classic Sept. 17-18



2nd annual Gulf Coast Sweetwater Classic Friday-Saturday, September 17-18, 2021

Percy Quin State Park, McComb, MS Free admission to park & festival

Big Bream Contest: Friday, 3pm - 6pm Entry fee: \$5 cash payable at event

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

Entry fee: \$30 payable thru iAngler app or at www.iAnglerTournament.com

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

Complete event details at www.ffigcc.org and click "Classic"

* PQSP has nearly two dozen cabins and several motel rooms, as well as topnotch RV facilities. Please book ASAP as weekend rental of cabins is very popular. There are also several fine motels in McComb, five minutes from the park.

Last fall, over continuing Coronavirus concerns, the GCC board voted to move

back our Sweetwater Classic from late February to mid-September. Now with widespread vaccinations and rapidly declining rates of new COVID-19 cases, we are anticipating a "return to normal" for this event.



For those not familiar with our Sweetwater Classic, it's part fly fishing contest, part festival. It kicks off at noon Friday and continues through Saturday until 5:00pm. There's a Bream Contest on Friday afternoon, the major tournament on Saturday morning, 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 for the Classic Tournament on Saturday. Anglers can now opt to fish Lake Okhissa near Bude or Lake Tangipahoa inside the park. Okhissa offers world-class bank and kayak fishing for bass (although Tangipahoa has produced it's share of 6+ pound fish recently). The Saturday hours have been extended to make the 40-minute trip hopefully worthwhile.

Another big change this year is that we are requiring "hard rulers" only. This can be a yardstick or manufactured fish measuring ruler or board.



Okhissa and Tangipahoa.



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 fly tying demonstrations (see Fred Hannie's article), and encourage everyone to participate in the Iron Fly Tying competition – always a fun and interesting activity!

As part of our new "GCC Online Series" - see the article elsewhere in this newsletter - we'll have the Sweetwater Classic as one of the series topics. Including fishing tips for

The festival is free. Admission to the park is free when mentioning you are attending the Classic. Only if you enter the tournaments is there a fee. The "Big Bream" tournament is \$5 cash payable at the event. The "Sweetwater Classic" tournament is \$30 with online registration in advance (iAngler), or payable onsite Friday until 8pm.

Again, all details are on our website at www.ffigcc.org or on the Sweetwater Classic page at www.iAnglerTournament.com.

Help us recognize the contributors!

Since 2007, the Gulf Coast Council has recognized individuals and clubs for their accomplishments in conservation, education, service and other areas. Once again, we're encouraging FFI members and member clubs to submit nominations. Deadline is May 31st. The main criteria is that all nominees – except for Friend of the Council – must be FFI members within the Gulf Coast Council.

Here are the categories open for nominations, and brief qualifications:

- Flyfisher of the Year (Man/Woman) made outstanding contributions to fly fishing the past year.
- Junior Fly Angler individual 18 years of age or younger who has made outstanding achievement in fly fishing and/or fly tying.
- Fly Tying Excellence Award has made a significant contribution to the art of fly tying. Past contributions considered.
- Education Excellence Award Individual or club that has made outstanding contributions to passing along the art of fly fishing/tying to others.
- Conservation Excellence Award Individual or club that has made outstanding contributions to the conservation of our fisheries resources, either through projects or activism.
- Club Community Award Club that has been very active outside its own membership.
- Club Fellowship Award Club that has made outstanding commitment to their membership, through activities, education, etc.
- Friend(s) of the Gulf Coast Council Individual, group, business that has made strong contributions to the GCC in some way. Nominees must not be GCC during time of contribution.

Nomination forms can be found on our website at www.gulfcoastcouncilffi.org (www.ffigcc.org) along with guidelines. Submission deadline is May 31st.

Connect With Us

Website:

www.gulfcoastcouncilffi.org www.ffigcc.org

Facebook:

Like us at "Fly Fishers International Gulf Coast Council"

FFI Gulf Coast Council

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Rosborough Hares Ear: A Sunfish Love Story

by Catch Cormier



The Hares Ear nymph is one of the oldest flies known, attributed to 19th century English tier James Odgen. There are many variations of this fly, but the one that has become my go-to pattern for both coldwater and warmwater is one originated by Ernest "Polly" Rosborough.

Rosborough is credited for having added the "gold rib" to the hare's ear. But it was his approach to fly construction that made him a legend. An FFI Buz Buzek Award winner (lifetime achievement in fly tying), Rosborough wrote in his landmark book, "Tying the Fuzzy Nymphs" the following:

"To be consistently successful a nymph must appear alive to the fish from any angle. When a fuzzy-bodied nymph is saturated and reaches the vision of the fish, every filament of the body - tail, legs, even the wingcases - vibrate, and this is enhanced tenfold by short quick movements of the rodtip."

In 1993, I attended the FFF National Conclave in Livingston, Montana, after getting a "taste" of this event the year before while on family vacation in West Yellowstone. I've been to many fly fishing events across the country over my life, but that ranks as the most memorable. The venue, Park High School, stood on the banks of the Yellowstone River, with the snow-capped Absroka mountains in the background. I took a casting class with Mel Krieger, a trout fishing class with Bob Lay, and a saltwater tying class with Lefty Kreh. During my "free time" one afternoon, I caught a then personal best

rainbow and brown trout - both just over 20 inches - in the span of two hours.

But the most impactful experience of that event was meeting Polly Rosborough. The floor of Park High School gym was packed with vendors, such that many of the tiers had to do their demos in the bleachers. As I walked up and browsed around, there was Polly tying by his lonesome. I soon understood why.

Rosborough got his nickname from "Polly the Parrot" because he could talk your ears off. But being from the Red Stick Fly Fishers club - notorious for it's "talkers" - I was well acclimated. There are folks who talk a lot and don't say much. But when Rosborough spoke, it was like an encyclopedia of fishing and tying knowledge!

His belief was that flies that are suggestive in nature and which have a soft, buggy profile are more effective than ones which closely match the insect.

While he created at least a couple dozen flies - nearly all featured in his book - it was his variation of the Hares Ear that caught my attention. It was by far the buggiest thing I'd ever seen. Immediately I fell in love.

After getting back to Baton Rouge, I tied up a few Rosborough Hares Ears (RBHE) – with a couple changes. Mine had a bushy tail, Polly's didn't have a tail.

A second difference soon emerged. One of our members gave me a magazine called "Stillwater Trout Angler", a British publication. There were several articles with "beadhead" flies. Another one of our members was already tying flies with beads – a year before they became popular in America - and was of great help to me on adding gold beads to this fly.

So I tied up a dozen with gold beads and gave a few to my friend Hogy Notzel. I lived two blocks from a 7-acre neighborhood lake that was my testing ground, and Hogy fished a 6-acre pond less than a mile away that was his aquatic laboratory.

Perhaps because it was winter, I didn't get many takes on my first experimentations of the RBHE. But Hogy found the jackpot on redear sunfish on his lake, fishing them on a sink tip in 8 feet of water.

As Spring emerged, I took the fly on the road to the sunfish-rich oxbows of the Mississippi, and the cypress-filled swamps of the Atchafalaya River basin. Then in

June on our trip to Florida, and a stop at Merritts Mill Pond near Marianna, home of trophy redears. Hooking up 12-14 inch "chinquapin" on this fly was more fun than the law should allow!

You can fish the RBHE "straight"... casting it out, letting it sink, then slow strips off the bottom. But the inner child in me loves fishing it about 3 to 4 feet under a tiny strike indicator. Making a somewhat-open loop cast to avoid entanglement, then letting the fly sink down a few seconds before beginning a series of small twitches. Watching that tiny float pull back, or go subsurface, makes Catch one happy, happy man!

Give this fly a try. You'll love it – and so will the bream!



Materials:

- Hook: 2XL nymph, size 14

- Bead: small (5/64)

- Thread: size 6/0 or 70 denier

- Tail: Hare's Mask, short hairs found on the lower ear

- Abdomen: Mixture of hare's mask fur and antron

- Ribbing: small copper wire

- Thorax: Longer hare's mask fibers found on sides of

face

- Wing Case: 4 strands of turkey fibers

Instructions:

- 1) Start with thread base, then tie in bead head building up a thread ball behind the bead to secure it in place.
- 2) Tie in tail fibers
- 3) Tie in copper wire
- 4) Get several clumps of hares mask and antron and blend it together with your fingers. Touch the fibers to the waxed thread and form a noodle of dubbing. Wrap the dubbing toward the hook bend. Then wrap thread back toward the eye.

- 5) Spiral the copper wire thru the abdomen by wrapping opposite the dubbing wraps.
- 6) Cut off turkey feather section. Bind in at thorax going towards tail.
- 7) Form a dubbing loop at rear end of the thorax about 3-4" long and add long fibers. Tighten the dubbing loop by spinning with a dubbing spinner or with an electrical test clip. When tightened, palmer the loop around the thorax area.
- 8) Once the thorax is formed, pull the turkey wing fibers forward and bind down with thread behind bead head. Then whip finish.
- 9) Take a small brush and gently abrade the bottom and sides of the thorax to give the fly a buggy appearance.



Coming Soon! GCC Online

The "FFI Online" series of webinars have been a success, providing viewers with a wide variety of informational topics. They have fly pattern instruction, conservation issues, fishing destinations and more.

The Gulf Coast Council is looking at doing a similar bi-monthly webinar with a regional slant. Topics will range from fly fishing for redfish and pompano, to tying flies, to issues that affect anglers on the Gulf Coast. Check our website for upcoming details.

What's happening in the GCC

May 22 - "Fly Fishing 101", 8am - 12 noon, no cost. Open to public, registration limited. Hosted by Kisatchie Fly Fishers. www.kisatchiefly.org

June 18-19 - 2nd annual Tripletail Classic Fly Fishing Tournament, Fairhope, AL. CTPR (catch-tag-photo-release) iAngler Tournament. Hosted by the Eastern Shore Fly Fishers. Captains meeting Friday evening, tournament Saturday. Team entry fee \$150, proceeds benefit USM Gulf Coast Research Lab. www.easternshoreflyfishers.com.

July 16-18 - Saltwater Fly Fishing Weekend, marsh outing by Red Stick Fly Fishers open to members of other GCC clubs, Friday night shrimp boil, Saturday evening fish fry. www.rsff.org

Sept. 17-18 - Gulf Coast Sweetwater Classic fly festival & tournament, Percy Quin State Park, McComb, MS. See article for details.

Sept. 25 - National Hunting and Fishing Day

Oct. 2 - Rio Grande Fly Fishing Rodeo, 7am to 12 noon, \$10 entry fee, Jefferson, Orleans and Plaquemines parishes. Categories: Longest Rio Grande perch, Most Rios. Hosted by New Orleans Fly Fishers.

Oct. 21-22 - 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.

Oct. 30 - 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. www.rsff.org.

Nov. 5-7 - Fly Fishers International Virtual Expo. Zoom webinars, breakout rooms for virtual tying demonstrations. Details to come soon. www.flyfishersinternational.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.

Clubs of the Gulf Coast Council























