In This Issue

Rod Fields recounts another Chandeleur day in paradise.
Jeff Deuschle reports on IFFF Gulf Council Successes | Syd Smith makes an offer too good to refuse. 
Tom Herrington ponders the magic of Redfish Day | Jim Magee shares his Redfish Bitters fly recipe. 
Sonny Schindler drums up interest in March fishing. | HOSSFLY donates to GCRL programs. 
We reprint Don Abrams’ story of a friend's first fly rod redfish. | Richard Schmidt offers maintenance tips. | Plus fishing reports, meeting minutes, and more.

Events Calendar

• The next meeting will be at 5:30/6:00 p.m. on March 3, 2015 at Ocean Springs Yacht Club. The featured speaker will be Harriet Perry from the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, discussing “beach bugs” - the critters on the bottom that fish love to eat. Don't miss this program; it's going to be a great one. Bring a non-member buddy, even if they're conventional tackle users. 
• Rod Fields is brewing up a few more winter trips to the Pelican at Chandeleur Island. 
• Check the online calendar at hossfly.org for the latest information on HOSSFLY events.
Lines from the Leader

Tom Herrington

Once again HOSSFLY is pleased to announce that we have donated $1600 to the Gulf Coast Research Lab (GCRL) for continued tarpon research and to sponsor two deserving children in GCRL's new fly fishing summer camp. As always, we are confident that our donation will help GCRL advance fisheries science and inspire an appreciation of our natural marine resources and the joy of fishing in two local students. We give a well deserved thank-you to the GCRL scientists and technicians who do such an important job.

Grab your favorite beverage, relax, and enjoy this month's Tippet. As always, we value your input immensely so keep those cards and letters coming in. Er,oh, uh, send your newsletter contributions by email to Don.

Meeting Agenda for Tuesday, March 3, 2015

- 5:30 Fly tying session – Jim Magee presents the Redfish Bitters fly
- 6:00 p.m. - Call meeting to order, make announcements and introductions - Tom Herrington
- 6:05 p.m. - "Beach Bugs" – Presentation by Harriet Perry, Gulf Coast Research Laboratory
- 6:35 p.m. - Business session
  - Old Business
    - Approval of previous meeting minutes - Pat Sharpe
    - Treasurer’s Report – Mike Sharpe
    - Master Caster - a new position?
    - Donations to GCRL
  - New Business
    - Scheduling more time/talks- Tom Herrington
    - Website - Jeff Deuschle
    - Richard Schmidt as Youth Director
    - Conservation Chair position
    - Trips, accomplished & planned - Rod Fields
- 6:55 p.m. - Call for Questions/Discussions/Voting
- 7:00 p.m. - Adjourn
### Editor's Notes

**Don Abrams**

#### This Month's Issue

While we have only a single contemporary fishing story this month, there's a very rich variety of other interesting material and news. My thanks to all those who contributed. Once again, Jeff Deuschle assisted with the odious chore of proof reading the final copy.

This issue includes the first installment of the *Backcast*, a reprinted article from previous issues of *The Tippet*. At Tom Herrington's request, this first Backcast presents an article I wrote for the May 2009 issue about Ellen Miller's first redfish on a fly rod. Let me know if you'd like to see a favorite article reprinted in a future newsletter.

#### Your Contributions to the April Issue

Send your *Tippet* contributions to don@dwabrams.com. Please include photos in their original resolution as separate files. It's fine to embed photos in a word processor document, but send the files, too. Send text as a word processor file, or just paste it into an email. Don't fret with formatting and layout; that's all done in the final production. I'll need your input for the April issue by March 27.

#### March Meeting Program

I've seen a preview of Harriet Perry's presentation on Beach Bugs that's on tap for the March 3 meeting. Harriet (The Crab Lady) will distill decades of marine biology expertise and field experience and some fantastic photos and videos into a brief summary of what fishermen need to know about the little critters that form so much of the diet of our gamefish. Come out and see why fish spend so much of their time hunting along the bottom. You'll enjoy the show and be much smarter the next time you cast a fly.

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### 2015 HOSSFLY Meeting Presentations

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Just Another Day in Paradise

Rod Fields

I had the distinct pleasure of spending six days in a row at the Pelican on Chandeleur Island during the last week in January of this year. I brought along Chris Stebly, virtuoso artist and fisherman, and the brother of Mark Stebly, who manages the Pelican.

Chris had been camping on Horn Island for several weeks prior, and asked if we could stop by Horn and check on his camp, on the way to Chandeleur. As we pulled up to the beach, I could not see any evidence of his camp. Just a short distance off the beach and perfectly disguised behind some dunes however, he introduced me to what he calls his “tent city”, an elaborate concoction of round and square tents complete with everything one would need to survive for an extended period of time. While Chris was securing everything I managed to slip into my waders and coon up some nice Horn Island oysters. I picked up enough for our supper that night and we soon departed for Chandeleur.

It was what they call a “bluebird” day with clear skies and settled conditions. The expectation of spending a full six days on the Pelican had me energized and rambunctious. Strangely, as we made the turn into Schooner Harbor, our enthusiasm was silenced by seeing that the Pelican had blown off anchor and was now resting in the mud up against the grass a few hundred yards south of where it is normally moored. It became obvious immediately that something had happened to the main swivel connection that secures all three barges and enables the Pelican to rotate into the wind. Not to be disheartened, we parked my boat and waded over to the resting place to find that, amazingly, everything except a few smaller coolers had managed to survive the blow, and we knew that we would be able to complete our fishing trip even in spite of such a surprise. We both commented that the outcome could have been a whole lot worse.

It was nearing 3:00 p.m., so we decided to simply ferry our supplies from the boat to the Pelican with a skiff and proceed with toasting ourselves and basking in the knowledge that we still had a place to stay. Chris told me he could fry the best oyster I ever had, so I took him up on the challenge. He was right. We just gorged ourselves on them and settled in for a good night of sleep.

The next morning brought a brisk north wind and my boat was dead aground in the low tide, so we had to walk if we were going to do any fishing. A brief climb to the martini deck and we located pelicans diving on baitfish a good ways south. All we had was time, so off we went walking the beach down to where the birds were feeding, and managed to fish several honey holes on the way. I had the fly and Chris was using plastics. Much to his surprise I caught the first fish, a nice 10-pound red, on a pink Cactus Charlie, but Chris followed with two nice ones, both too big to keep so he...
released them. My fish was perfect for the grill, so we enjoyed redfish on the half shell that night with camp potatoes and it was simply out of this world good.

We fished every day, catching lots of redfish while searching the deeper holes for some nice trout, which were elusive for the entire trip. On the third day, Chris decided to stay campside and paint, and I began my trek down the beach after the diving birds. It's probably equivalent to a three-mile walk when you consider walking in waders on soft sand, so when I got to where the pelicans were feeding, I simply found a little ledge in the mangrove bushes and just laid down for a few minutes to rest my legs and lower back. It was almost noon and the wind had let up and the sun was warming the water near the bank when I sat up to begin fishing the hole. Much to my surprise, not eight feet away was a nice 12 - 14-pound redfish cruising the bank. He didn't see me. As he passed, I hunkered down and flipped the fly about 10 feet in front of him. Immediately he turned on it and when he hit it he hit it with such force that I practically lost the grip on my fly rod. Into the backing he went, taking line at will on long runs. I finally landed him, remaining somewhat disguised in the weeds and mangrove bushes. I no sooner took the fly out that first fish when another one of the same size cruised by in the same spot. I repeated the same action, with the same result. I caught four redfish without moving, and sight casted everyone of them.

I learned that if you get the fly in front of them without spooking them, they will turn on it. You don’t have to do anything other than give the fly a slight twitch once the fish sees it, and let it sink. They will pick it up off the bottom, so you have to be ready to strip set when the fish are that close to you. I caught several more throughout the middle of the day, one over 30 pounds that I could hardly lift up into the grass to remove the hook. I sight casted all but one fish. What a thrill!

That Friday the wind was blowing seriously out of the northeast and we did not expect the rest of our party to actually show, but they did. Stories of green water over the bow during the ride brought back memories of days gone by when I stupidly made the crossing in weather that I had no business being out there in. The new arrivals were Rob Harrell, Mike Arguelles, and Joe Taranto. Chris and I fixed them a hot breakfast and set out to find the pelicans. The redfish were back in the same place, feeding on mullet, so all of us fished the rest of the day, catching one big redfish after the other, all day long. To me, it just doesn’t get any better. Trout? Where did they go? Who cares! Look at the size and color of these beautiful redfish, my friend. Looks like we will have fresh fish for dinner, and we surely did, preceded by two of the best martinis that ever went down my neck. Good fishing, good friends, cigars, martinis on the deck and a killer crimson sunset. It's worth saying again - it just doesn't get any better for me, ever.

Chuck Fisk was extra stealthy in stalking this nice redfish in shallow, clear water.
IFFF – Gulf Coast Council Update

*Jeff Deuschle, GCC VP/Events*

As the new year gets underway there are lots of activities and news to report from our Gulf Coast Council of the International Federation of Fly Fishers.

**2014 Fly Fishing Fair a Huge Success**

The September 2014 fair was big fun with approximately 250 attendees, a Jambalaya Party at OSYC the night before, Awards breakfast at the GCRL, and a full day of events and programs at the Civic Center. We had approximately 50 regional fly tiers and vendors, and perhaps the best casting program in the country. There were numerous certified casting instructors holding classes all day long, headlined by Jay Clark, Master Casting Instructor and national distance casting champion. The schedule also featured fly fishing presentations, auctions, raffles, and food.

Many HOSSFLY members played major roles in working to make this first Fly Fishing Fair such a big success and the foundation for more events in years to come. Many members also attended and participated. Please thank these folks for their contribution when you see them. Many of them worked for many months beforehand and all weekend long at the fair. We couldn’t have done it without them!

- Don Abrams – GCRL liaison
- Jeff Deuschle – Show co-chair
- Rod Fields – Intro to Fly Fishing program
- Chuck Fisk* – Auction/Raffle chair
- Reed Guice, CCI – Casting programs
- Ken Koffel* - Show co-chair
- Leon Legget – Registration

* Chuck and Ken are long time HOSSFLY members and the current presidents of the Eastern Shore Fly Fishers and Mississippi Coast Fly Fishers, respectively.

**IFFF Donation to Gulf Coast Research Laboratory**

As promised last year, we recently donated half the proceeds from the 2014 Fly Fishing Fair, $2000, to the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory. The funds will be applied to outreach and the growing marine education programs at the Lab.

[Image of Gulf Coast Council show chairs, Jeff Deuschle and Ken Koffel, present a check for $2000 to Jim Franks and Chris Snyder of the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory]
Fly Tying for Boy Scouts at Swamp Base

Remaining proceeds from the Fair help support other major Council projects including a matched contribution to reef building on Mobile Bay and the fly fishing program at Boy Scout super camp Swamp Base in the Atchafalaya Basin. In its brief history, this expanding program has already served Scouts from 23 states with more than 600 Scouts and Leaders expected to participate this coming Summer. Clubs all over the Council (and probably Texas as well) are working to tie ~4000 bass and bream flies to supply those Scouts. We working at organizing some HOSSFLY get-togethers for tying. If you want to help out please get in touch with Jeff Deuschle at jeffcatfarms1@att.net.

Plans for September 2015 Fair

Our 2015 GCC Fly Fishing Fair promises to be even bigger and better. It is scheduled for September 18-19 here in Ocean Springs with a similar format to last year's successful show and lots of new programs, participants, prizes, sponsors and vendors. We will need more help. Please “drop a line” to Jeff if you can lend a hand.

Syd Smith Offering Casting Instruction

Syd Smith

(Editor's note: Syd is one of only 149 Master Casting Instructors currently certified by the International Federation of Fly Fishers. HOSSFLY members who have received instruction from Syd consistently agree that he is an excellent instructor and they all point to significant improvements in their casting as a result of working with him.)

There will be several casting instruction groups formed according to the casters' needs. Ideally groups should be no less than three or more than six, but that is not written in stone. Nor need there be only one group per type. Of course, there will be a beginners group, but also a group for more advanced casters including those who have been in previous groups. We will press on, picking up where we left off. There may or may not be a need for a Refresher Group which would include anyone who just wants to go over it all and tweak things here and there. If interest is sufficient I will offer specific group lessons on such subjects as wind casting, casting sinking lines or heavy flies, distance casting, etc. All group lessons are free.

I will also offer private lessons for which there is a $150 fee and which include a 1-1/2-hour first lesson and follow up one-hour lesson. There is no doubt that private lessons offer the chance to improve much, much more. They are for anyone, beginner to most advanced, or someone simply having a problem of a specific nature they want eliminated.

Anyone desiring any form of lesson should get in touch with me at 228.326.6050 or sydzach@bellsouth.net. We will talk over your needs and fit you into a group or set up private lessons. We will mostly be working on weekends until Daylight Savings Time comes on March 8, at which time there will be enough light for afternoon lessons for people who work during the day. All are welcomed.
Redfish Day!

Tom Herrington

One of my favorite times of year for fly fishing is the winter, mainly because the fair-weather anglers are home. While all the national publications talk about winterizing your tackle, clear water permeates the estuaries and there's little floating grass and debris, making sight-fishing advantageous. Our estuaries and near-shore areas are holding big and hungry fish.

Wind can be a problem but it certainly shouldn't affect your casting; it's more an issue of being able to get to where you wish to fish. If wind bothers your casting, seek help. Go to Syd and take a few pointers. Learn to use the wind to your advantage. Learn to cast with either hand. Use sinking lines to penetrate those high impact conditions. Whatever you do, don't let wind keep you from fly fishing.

March is especially good for redfish, so good in fact that on my personal calendar March is highlighted as Redfish Month and I consider March 9th to be Redfish Day. On March 9, 1975, I caught my first two redfish over 10 pounds on the fly while fishing an early version of a Firefly at the jetties at the mouth of Charleston harbor.

Then, 22 years later, on March 9, 1997, I caught my first redfish over 30 pounds, again on a Firefly!

Coincidence? I think not. Our Back Cast blast from the past article this month is Don Abrams' account of witnessing former HOSSFLY member Ellen Miller catch her first redfish on the fly in 2009. Yeah, you guessed it; it happened on March 9th!

What are you planning for Redfish Day, March 9, 2015?
Fly of the Month – March 2015 – Redfish Bitters

Jim Magee

Date of Origin: 2014

Pattern Origin, History and Species Targeted

Craig Mathews developed the Bonefish Bitters for fishing Belize’s Turneffe Island. It has become one of the most popular flats flies in the world. The stylized crab pattern is very easy to tie and catches fish even when it’s at rest. The Redfish Bitters is a more robust version of the bonefish pattern adapted for redfish with a larger hook, barbell eyes instead of bead chain, a “beefier” body, and some lagniappe.

Materials List

• Hook: Mustad 3407 size 1/0 or equivalent
• Thread: Danville flat waxed nylon
• Eyes: barbell, size dependent on depth/sink rate desired
• Head: Loon UV Clear Fly Finish (or Clear Goo or epoxy)
• Mouth parts: UV estaz, red or orange
• Wing: Craft fur, tan or olive
• Legs: Fly Enhancer Legs
• Body: deer body hair, bleached, tan, olive, or your preference

Tying Instructions

• Tie in eyes right behind hook eye, whip finish behind eyes, and cut thread.
• Cover the barbell with the UV Clear Fly Finish, turning the fly to ensure head is evenly covered, and harden with UV light. To color the head, 1) mix in glitter, apply to head and harden or 2) color with acrylic nail polish. Once hardened, cover with Hard as Hull or Sally Hansen for protection.
• Turn hook point up. Tie thread at hook bend and tie in a couple wraps of Estaz, tie off and trim excess. Add a drop of cement.
• Tie in Craft fur on top of Estaz so the ends protrude about ¾” past hook bend. Tie off, trim excess and add cement.
• Wrap thread about half-way up hook shank and tie in three Enhanced Legs using figure eight wraps. Make several wraps behind the legs and trim so they splay out to the sides.

• Wrap thread to behind head. Cut a hank of deer hair about the diameter of a pencil. Use a hair stacker to ensure tips are even and tie in behind the head with a couple of loose wraps, then pull tight to spin the hair. Secure with cement. Trim the butts so they stick up about 3/8" above the head.

• Trim all material on the bottom of the fly so it rests hook-up consistently.

Notes

There are several very good, step-by-step videos about tying the Bonefish Bitters on YouTube. Numerous websites also have Bonefish Bitters tying instructions.

Fish Tales – Brief Trip Reports

Mark Carter

February 11. Not skunked this past weekend, but it was close. I fished the CCA tournament on a friend's boat. Five hours and about 700 casts between four people later, I landed a 30.5" red. Top slot limit for the tournament was 30", but we took it in with the hope that the tape on board would be high versus the official pinch-length. It wasn't. I caught a total of four, none in the final money, but as they say, "Beats any good day at work!"

Shamefully, my fish were caught on conventional tackle; Syd is working on helping me change that!

Don Abrams

I kayaked to some local marsh edges and small bayous twice this month, and while being on the water was enjoyable, I came home fish-less. Admittedly, both days were poor from a tide and salinity perspective, but when the weather straightens out and the wind slows, you need to go anyway. And at least I didn't have to clean fish.

The birds provided a good distraction, with scaup, buffleheads, mergansers, and other ducks still here. There were kingfishers hovering and diving over the water and northern harriers (marsh hawks) hunting low over the marsh. It must be terrifying at times to be a minnow or mouse in the marsh.

Reed Guice

See the Parting Shot photo feature on the last page for Reed's February fishing success story.
Outlook for March Fishing

*Captain Sonny Schindler, Shore Thing Charters*

Years ago I didn’t even bother looking at fishing in March. However, since the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources scattered reefs all along the Mississippi Gulf Coast, March has become one of my favorite months to fish. Of course, on good weather days, you can always run to the Louisiana Marsh for redfish and the occasional trout. But, the best bet for the most action in March is going to be on the nearshore structures (reefs, bridges, pilings) along the coast. It seems as though the action gets better every year, and huge catches are already hitting the dock. Big sheepshead will usually be outnumbered later in the month by the black drum. The delicious smaller drums (three to eight pounders) should be thick as thieves. The big bruisers over the 30-pound mark will be around too. We have been enjoying these “sea monster” black drum for years. Using the same tackle we catch speckled trout on, these beasts are a treat. For fly fishing, you probably want to leave the 8 wt. gear at home and go with a heavier 10-12 wt. rig. The oysters, mussels, and barnacles are rough on tippets, so consider stepping up to 20-pound fluorocarbon. For flies, I like a shrimp or crab pattern. Put it close to the structure, let it sink, and use a slow retrieve.

If you have not already done it, March is the month to get your boat, motor, electronics, trailer, and tackle ready for spring. Even better, take the family out for a nearshore trip to the reefs to check your gear and see what is working right and what needs TLC. If the boat does not crank, get it to the shop before the spring rush. And maybe book a charter?

As always, have fun and be safe.

*Editor’s note: We welcome appropriate contributions to The Tippet from guides and others providing services to saltwater fly fishers.*
HOSSFLY Supports Research and Education at GCRL

Don Abrams

Six hundred dollars of the proceeds from the silent auction and raffle at HOSSFLY's 2015 banquet has provided scholarships for two deserving local young folks to attend the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory's new saltwater fly fishing summer camp.

An additional $1000 of auction and raffle proceeds and general funds has been donated to continue HOSSFLY's ongoing support of Jim Franks' research on tarpon in Mississippi waters. In 2015, Jim's work will continue to probe local marshes for pre-juvenile tarpon in the leptocephalus stage and expand to include satellite tagging adult tarpon.

Generous contributors to the silent auction included a number of HOSSFLY members as well as several local businesses, including Temple Fork Outfitters Fly Rods, Shearwater Pottery, the Beau Rivage Resort and Casino, Islander Outfitters, Hillyer House, Don Gaddy's Cat Island lodge, and Shore Thing Charters.

Superbowl Sunday Sunset at Delacroix, Louisiana, Bob Effinger
The Backcast

Could Rod and Tom be Right?
Another Perspective on Ellen’s First Fly Rod Redfish Catch

Don Abrams

Originally published in the April 2009 issue of The Tippet.

Rod Fields and Tom Herrington have said time and again that they’d rather watch a friend catch fish on a fly rod than to do the catching themselves. My reflexive rejoinder to those statements has consistently been a simple one-word expletive that refers to organic waste produced by male cattle. But after watching Ellen Miller land her very first fish on a fly rod (Editor’s note: on March 9th), I won’t completely switch over to Tom’s and Rod’s way of thinking, but I do agree that their viewpoint may be valid, at least part of the time.

Ellen has been getting back into fishing after a long absence from the coast while working in redfish-free places like Manhattan and L.A. She became proficient with a spinning rod last winter and had some very good success with reds and specks at Horn Island and Chandeleur. A lesson from Syd put her squarely on the road to learning to use a fly rod. She’s been practicing at City Park, Bayou St. John, and the lawn of the Latter Library on St. Charles Avenue in New Orleans near her house. Last month I figured that it was time to get her out on the water with a fly rod. We did a 70-mile banzai day trip out to that special place about halfway down the Chandeleurs. On the last HOSSFLY trip, several of us had an amazing day of sight fishing for redfish on those flats. The conditions looked just right as Ellen and I ran out there in the panga. I was absolutely confident that I’d be able to put her near some fish.

As so often happens when I’m absolutely confident about fishing, I was promptly proven absolutely wrong. We waded the Promised Land from one end to the other and didn’t see a fish. Not one. On the previous visit we’d been damn near tripping on them. So, Ellen and I started wandering into new territory, and we quickly found fish. I started out with a nice black drum that was wallowing in ten inches of water while digging something out of the bottom. He readily abandoned his hunt to slurp down my fly. The water was shallow and reasonably clear, and we soon spotted a pair of reds moving down the shore.

Unfortunately, the bottom was very lumpy and muddy and the wading was awkward. But there were fish, so we eased in and waited for the next fish to appear. It didn't take long before I’d put a pair of nice redfish on the stringer. Ellen was having a little trouble reaching out to where the fish were passing by. It wasn't hot and heavy action, but every ten minutes or so a fish appeared. I was straining my eyes to spot one over her way. Something nearby caught my attention, and I realized that I was surrounded by redfish. Two or three dozen reds were peacefully grazing their way along the shore, swirling around me and heading straight for Ellen. I whispered to her, nodded toward the fish, and held my rod motionless to avoid spooking them.
If you're a bird hunter, you'll know exactly how Ellen reacted when she saw those fish. It was just the way a good pointer responds when he gets a whiff of quail in his nose. She froze. Absolutely motionless, and stared until the fish moved into casting range. (No, her tail was not up in the air.) She didn't get flustered or over-excited. She didn't talk. She just focused on those fish and her casting. Syd's instruction paid off as she made her false casts to get a little line out and then dropped that Scooter fly about six feet in front of a group of four fish. I was whispering instructions – “Let it sink. Don't move it. Take the slack. Just let the fly sit there. Wait. Wait. Wait. Now twitch it just a bit. Wait.” In retrospect I don't think she heard a word I said. But she did exactly the right thing.

I was holding my breath and thinking back to all the times I'd had fish surrounding me and all I could do was tangle line around my feet and hit myself in the back of the head with the fly. Ellen was as calm as can be. (Is it testosterone that causes buck fever?) Her cool was enough to fool two of those redfish. They rushed her fly, and the bigger one shouldered his smaller buddy out of the way sucked it up. He calmly turned back to join the pack, but he never made it. Ellen did an absolutely perfect strip set, and that fish was hooked. I hooted and Ellen managed to say "WHOOO!" and "WHOOAAA" simultaneously as line buzzed off her reel. I wound my line in and grabbed the camera and started shooting. There was plenty of time for photos. That redfish made some terrific runs and got well into her backing.

The school of redfish seemed to get excited by the commotion. Several followed Ellen's fish as if they would try to snatch the fly from the hooked fish. I still find it difficult to believe, but I never even thought of casting to those redfish. I was completely immersed in the show, laughing and grinning so hard my face hurt.

When Ellen finally landed her redfish, I was as happy as I've ever been on a fishing trip. It was the same feeling that Rod and I had when Keith Thompson landed his first big fly rod redfish a couple of weeks earlier. What do you call it? Excitement? Joy? Happiness? Satisfaction? Delight? Pride? It's all those things, with a huge measure of plain old fun thrown in. And while Keith is a fine fellow and a friend, it was a whole lot more special with Ellen.

I finally understood what Rod and Tom have been talking about. Like I said in the beginning, I'm not a complete convert yet. But I'll say this without reservation, “Once in a while, it's more fun watching a friend catch a good fish on a fly rod than it is to catch one myself.”
Too Cold to Fish? Then Get Ready for Spring.

Richard Schmidt

February is cold. I didn't get out on the water to fish even one day this February. Very sad, I know. It's been freezing, but spring is right around the corner, so I've taken this opportunity to get my gear prepared. If you take care of your equipment, your equipment will take care of you. This is a good time to change your fly line, check your backing connections, grease drags, and rummage through your gear to make sure you have plenty of tippet material, flies, and such.

Most Important is my skiff maintenance. If my fly rod fails, I just grab another one, but if my skiff fails, I'll be bumming rides for tarpon season! I started with a thorough cleaning. I cleaned the hull and removed all wax with a phosphoric acid hull cleaner like Star-Brite, taking extra precaution not to get it on my aluminum trailer. The stuff is excellent for fiberglass repair but despite the name, it will stain your trailer. When the hull is spotless and all the old wax is stripped, I apply Collinite wax. It is a bear to use, but it will last all year. I then clean the decks with the same hull cleaner but only use woody wax on the deck. The woody wax doesn't last as long, but it's easy to apply. You just spray it on, let it dry, and then hose it off.

Check all your electronics, lights, pumps, bilge pump float switch, and other electrical gear to be sure they're in working order. Test your VHF radio and check your safety gear. Replace your flares if they've expired.

Next is the trailer. I travel a lot to fish, so keeping the trailer in good shape is essential. Check your coupling, rims, lug nuts, wiring, and lights. Also, inspect the valve stem on all tires and the spare and check the air pressure. I recommend replacing them with metal stems if possible. A rotten valve stem has just about ruined me on the Florida Turnpike a few times. Jack your trailer up and check for play in your wheels. That could mean a bearing is going bad. If all is good, re-pack the bearings with grease.

Your engine deserves special attention. Take this time to change the spark plugs, check the connections of the battery, change the gear lube, and hit all grease fittings with some fresh grease. If you are feeling froggy and it's been a while, I'd replace the impeller in the water pump. I paid someone to do all these things and it for me and it was around $150.

These small steps will allow you more time on the water when it finally warms up. I'll see y'all out there!
HOSSFLY Meeting Minutes,  February 3, 2015

The monthly meeting was called to order by Leader Tom Herrington on February 3, 2015. Tom introduced the officers and asked that the members present introduce themselves. Several new and re-joining members were in attendance. Tom’s remarks included thank-yous for a successful banquet in January.

Program - Winter Fishing

Don Abrams and Rod Fields presented a slide show on coastal winter fishing. The program highlighted the improvement in water quality in the cold months, types of habitat and frequently-seen fish species and types of successful flies. Tips for avoiding the hazards of cold water wading were also discussed.

Old Business

Treasurer's report: $5,134.36 in bank account, includes $1,460 in silent auction proceeds. Our 2015 FFF dues are still pending disbursement and GCRL donation from silent auction are also pending.

New Business

Donation to Gulf Coast Research Laboratory: Anita explained the kids’ fly-fishing program at GCRL will be a 3-day, 12-18 years of age all-day camp administered by the Marine Education Center at different venues along the coast. Cost of program per student is $300. Motion was made and carried to fund two campers who might need financial aid to attend and to increase the funds from the silent auction by $140 to fund the full amount. Further motion was made to donate $1000 for tarpon research at GCRL.

Master Caster Designation: After discussion of the need for a casting director, a motion was made and carried to ask Syd Smith to accept the position. Syd accepted. Syd suggested emails be sent by those interested to set up a mailing list for future casting sessions.

Fishing Reports: none given

Motion to adjourn made and seconded.
Respectfully submitted,
Pat Sharpe, Secretary

Ten-pound redfish on an 8-weight fly rod. Don Abrams
David Sheffield proudly displays this bull red caught on a Fire Fly at Ship Island in early February. The reds were running with huge black drum. They all had lockjaw, but during one 45-minute period they decided to eat. Several reds were caught and Reed Guice managed to hook and land a 32-pound black drum on his 8-wt TFO Pro.

HOSSFLY Officers

Leader – Tom Herrington | Vise Leader/Activity Coordinator – Rod Fields | Secretary – Pat Sharpe
Treasurer – Mike Sharpe

HOSSFLY is on the web at hossfly.org.

HOSSFLY c/o Mike Sharpe, Treasurer, 2519 Brighton Circle, Biloxi, MS 39531