In This Issue

Leon Leggett honored as 2014 Angler of the Year. | Mike Arguelles proposes new bayou adventures.
Rod Fields is back in school. | Anita and Mike Arguelles report on banquet & auction success.

Events Calendar

Meetings, Trips, and Other Events

- The next meeting will be at 6:00 p.m. on February 3, 2015 at Ocean Springs Yacht Club. Featured speakers - Rod Fields and Don Abrams, discussing winter fishing on the Gulf Coast.
- 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

Saying that we’re starting off with a bang this year would be an understatement. The banquet/auction was a rousing success and by the time you read this a winter fly fishing trip has been completed and if it is anything like what we have had in the past during our winters, it was fabulous. The winter chill just brings out slot-size reds in great numbers and larger specks than at any other time of the year, all schooled in deep holes and easing out at times to warm themselves as the sun reaches it's zenith each day.

To provide some insight into our winter fly fishing we have, for our February third meeting, our estimable Vise Leader, Doctor Roderick Fields, and our titillating Tippet editor, Don Abrams, providing you information with examples of past successes on what flies and where they were used to catch limits of those spottails and spotted fish. Do not miss what will prove to be an entertaining half hour before we get down to our business session afterward.

Here’s our agenda for the February meeting. Times are approximate.

- 6:00 - Call meeting to order, make announcements and introductions
  Tom Herrington - Leader
- 6:10 – Presentation, Winter Fly Fishing - Rod Fields and Don Abrams, with Q&A following
- 6:40 - Business session
  - Old business - Approval of previous secretary's report - Pat Sharpe
  - New business - Banquet/Auction report - Jeff Deuschle
  - Treasurer's report - Mike Sharpe
  - Trip reports (Accomplished & Planned) - Rod Fields
- 7:00 - Call for questions, discussions, and voting as required
- 7:15 - Adjourn

We have scheduled interesting talks for each meeting this year, with topics appropriate for each month. For many meetings, there will be a relevant fly tying session before the presentation.

The continued success of The Tippet depends on you. Provide Don some materials, requests, comments, and fodder for further issues.

Now, get out there and fish, because as you know, there is no substitute for time on the water!
### Editor's Notes

**Don Abrams**

Good on us. We've had two months of excellent newsletter contributions from members and I'm happy to send a second issue of *The Tippet*. We will distribute the newsletter prior to the meeting each month; for the March issue, I'll need your input no later than February 22. Right now, there's nothing at all in the hopper for March.

This issue includes three member-provided brief fishing reports from January. I'm hoping this becomes a strong part of future issues of the newsletter. Your submissions for the brief reports can be much simpler; just a photo and a single sentence can tell a great story.

Look for a new feature in this issue – the Backcast, a suggestion from Tom Herrington. Each issue will include an article that looks back at the history of HOSSFLY or a particularly good article from a previous *Tippet*. So, old members, dredge through your memory and send me a good story or, at the least, suggest a favorite old article to reprint.

A second new feature in this issue is a look at the prospects for February fly fishing in our area from Captain Sonny Schindler of [Shore Thing Charters](http://www.shorethingcharters.com). We welcome similar contributions from other charter captains who cater to fly fishers.

As always, send your *Tippet* contributions to [don@dwabrams.com](mailto:don@dwabrams.com). Please include photos in their original resolution as separate files, rather than embedding them in word processor documents. 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.

My thanks to Jeff Deuschle for assisting with the odious task of proof reading the final copy of the January and February issues.
2014 Angler of the Year – Leon Leggett

Jeff Deuschle

HOSSFLY’s bylaws call for the annual selection of an Angler of the Year by the clubs “past and present Presidents (Leaders).” As a lengthy email discussion bounced around this year, one name really stood out. For his great catches, the fishing trips that he shares, his steadfast participation and help at meetings and events, and his constant mentoring of new members, Leon Leggett is more than deserving of the HOSSFLY 2014 Angler of the Year Award.

Some of you may not know Leon because he is one of those guys who, without a lot of fanfare, just quietly does a good deal of fly fishing and a great deal for our club. Leon makes at least one trip over to the Apalachicola area each year to sight fish for tarpon. He has taken many new fly fishers on these trips over the years. He fished there this year with his son Ti.

Leon has also fished out west and fishes regularly in the Great Lakes region for steelhead. He and his bride, A.C., always take lots of photos and are generous about sharing them with us at club meetings.

Despite having to travel from Mobile, Leon and A.C. are regular participants and contributors to club meetings, parties, fish frys, and other events. He was one of several HOSSFLY members who worked hard all day long to make our inaugural Fly Fishing Fair such a success this past summer.

Most importantly, Leon can often be found fly fishing with someone who is just learning the sport. He does this with HOSSFLY members and with members of other clubs as well. He’s always there with camaraderie, help, and encouragement.

Thank you, Leon, for all that you do, and for setting such a fine example for our “true sport of gentlefolk.” Congratulations on being the HOSSFLY 2014 Angler of the Year.
I’ve been excited about fishing from a kayak ever since my wife and I found the Native 12’ (wide body). We have two - his and hers. The mesh seats are cool and comfortable enough to sit in it for hours. I also own a 24’ Carolina Skiff that has many uses. I use it in my marine construction business for pushing the barge. And I use it to fish. It’s ideal for carrying kayaks to remote areas so that people can fish from the kayaks. We call that a mother ship trip.

I have just begun to explore fishing opportunities using Google’s satellite views of the local bayous. I was told about this particular bayou from a guy who fished it from the little bridge. He said it was always good for a redfish or two. I visited it on November 9, 2014 with the strict intent of fly fishing only. This is rare for me, as I am still converting from conventional tackle and slip back to the meat pole at times. But on this trip, I didn’t even have the conventional tackle on board.

We anchored the mother ship in the main arm of Simmons Bayou near Gulf Park Estates and boarded the kayaks. The draw for me in fishing from a kayak is to capitalize on the stealth that makes them famous for fishing. The design of the Native 12 kayak provides enough stability to allow standing up. My wife can do it, but I would never try it. Therefore my fly casting has to be disciplined. Keep the line high on the back cast. Just like throwing a cast net for mullet, there is some satisfaction in making a good cast. Now add the stealthy control of a kayak’s position in a small bayou and the good cast is all that more rewarding. The fish strike and the hook up is all lagniappe.

I look forward to exploring more spots like this one using the mother ship. I will need to make a sign for my boat that displays, “Boat not abandoned, fishing nearby in a kayak.”

Back on board the Carolina Skiff mother ship. Mike shows off a speck he landed from his kayak.
Back in School

Rod Fields

Well, my ol' buddy Bob Effinger and I got a chance to sneak out to the Pelican right before Christmas. The weather was unexpectedly better than reported, as well as the seas. Blue skies and not another boat in sight as we turned south out of the channel, headed for Chandeleur.

Time was when I wouldn't think of making a crossing without having a couple of meat lines rigged and ready, but since I began fly fishing, well, I guess i'm just not as gung ho about catching as I once was. Funny how the sport can help you into feeling that way. The seas were slightly choppy but Bob and I could actually sit down during the ride. Always mindful to not violate the Tom Herrington Rule of Order for the Crossing, we popped a couple of cold ones as we went through Ship Island Pass. It was 8:00 a.m. so we were a full two hours earlier than 10:00 a.m., which means that we would receive credit for drinking all day.

About three miles north of Chandeleur I looked to the west and asked, "What are those birds working on over there?" Bob said he could not tell so we decided to run closer to take a better look. When we got closer I stood up and could see that the water was red, and there was some kind of thrashing and activity in the water that had the birds and even some porpoises in a feeding frenzy. "That's a big school of redfish, Bob!" "No," he replied candidly, "It looks more like a school of sea turtles". Sea turtles? A school of sea turtles?? Oh help me!

We weren't ready. Both of us had to completely rig up our fly rods. Key words here: "weren't" and "ready." After 15 minutes of nervously putting our tackle together, Bob got on the bow and I began to motor towards the school. Mind you, this is the largest school of redfish that I had ever seen in the open Gulf. I would estimate 400 - 500 fish easily, and they were in a feeding frenzy on something that we could not see. As we neared the school, our hearts were pounding with excitement, but the most unusual and striking thing that we saw and heard was the sound of the fish rubbing against each other. They were literally stacked three or four fish on top of each other and the sound was very similar to what it sounds like when you drag a stringer of big reds across wet sand, and it was loud!

After Bob made a few halfhearted casts, I got aggravated and shouted for him to "Quit casting like a girl and lay a cast out there!" His next cast was right into the middle of the school and he hooked up immediately. I grabbed my flyrod and made one cast and instantly hooked up. We both had big bull reds on and the school was now all around the boat. They were actually banging into the boat in their effort to eat the baitfish. I got broken off after a few minutes but Bob had managed to get his redfish away from the school and was now just letting the fish make its runs, one after the other. I was fortunate to have a gaff on board, otherwise we would probably not have been able to boat any of those huge fish. With Bob's bull red now in the boat, it was my turn on the bow. As soon as my fly hit the water it was eaten. Fifteen minutes later, Bob gaffed the huge fish for me.

Fish on! And hundreds more nearby.
The school was still all around us thrashing the water and the birds were squalking as they too were caught up in the frenzy. We had a command decision to make - either stay there and catch a few more bull reds, or go on to the Pelican and fish Chandeleur. Bob said "Well, how many of those do you feel like cleaning?" That was all it took and we were off to Chandeleur, breaking the most sacred of all cardinal rules. *Never leave fish to find fish!*

Little did we know that that would be the last fish we would see for the entire trip. The water at Chandeleur was gin clear, but for the next two days there was was not a bait fish, not a mullet, not a Pelican, not a Seagull to be seen. We fished every secret honey hole that we knew and didn't as much as see another fish, much less catch one.

So I felt like both Bob and I went to school, on that school of big reds. The lesson is simple. Have a couple of rigs ready when you make the crossing. Someday, you'll be glad you did. And just maybe you should think twice before leaving a huge school of frenzy feeding fish to go find fish.

### 2015 Banquet and Auction – Another Success

*Anita and Mike Arguelles*

HOSSFLY begins every year with the January banquet. The banquet presents an opportunity for members to gather, celebrate the past year's fishing milestones with awards and recognition, and cast the framework for the upcoming year's activities. And a silent auction is held to raise money for a good cause. January is the perfect month for club members to gather. Since January here on the Mississippi Gulf Coast can be too chilly to do much fishing and the days are short, few fishing opportunities are sacrificed to attend an evening with other like-minded fishers.

The 2015 banquet was a wonderful respite from the hustle and bustle of the holidays and marked a forward look to spring and to fish on the fly. Thirty-one members and guests attended the event held at the Ocean Springs Yacht Club and catered by the Yacht Club. There was plenty of time to mingle, the Yacht Club bar was well...
stocked with the best liquor, and there was wonderful assortment of appetizers. The liquor facilitated recaps and embellishments of 2014 fly fishing escapades. Everyone had a great time and moved on to a lovely dinner of salad, prime rib, twice-baked potatoes, and broccoli. There were elegant desserts to end the meal, including the Yacht Club kitchen's famous bread pudding.

During dinner, 2014 president Jeff Deuschle announced the annual awards, introduced the new club board of leaders, and cataloged the club milestones before passing the torch to Tom Herrington the new leader for 2015. Note that just like bell bottom jeans, what is old and long forgotten has re-emerged with a nod to nostalgia. So, too, our vintage leader Tom Herrington who years ago founded the club has returned as club leader. Other officers are Rod Fields as vice leader, Pat Sharp as Secretary, and Mike Sharp as Treasurer. Don Abrams serves as Conservation officer and Tippet editor for 2015.

The 2014 Angler of the Year Award went to a well deserving Leon Leggett. Leon is known for selflessly helping new members get acquainted with saltwater fly fishing and often takes his boat out to host saltwater fly fishing newbies. You rock, Leon!

Tom Herrington, said a few words about the history of the club and noted that HOSSFLY is in its 20th year. He said that Dr. Louis Rivas had a strong influence in promoting fly fishing and a local club back in 1968. (Editors note: Read more about Dr. Rivas later in this issue.)

There were tables around the edge of the room holding silent auction items. Auction items came from donations by club members and local businesses. New this year, were three fishing trips provided by members. The friendly bidding went on throughout dinner and everyone bid and went home with their share of the booty. Funds were collected from the sales will be donated the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory to support summer program scholarships and research.

A nice donation from TFO via Tom Jindra, was raffled off separately. The winner would get to choose the TFO fly rod of his choice. The winner was Mark Tscheulin, a brand new member attending his first HOSSFLY event with his wife Mary. Mark joined HOSSFLY to learn the sport of fly fishing and had no gear to start. In addition to the TFO rod, he was also the high bidder on a silent auction item fly rod. What a start Mark. Welcome to the club!

John Adametz, another fairly new member to our club, was there with his son Spencer. John is an experienced fly fisher and has been working with our own Syd Smith on earning his FFF casting instructor certification. He is also a member of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Fly Fishing Club in Gulfport and serves them as casting instructor. As an active duty military member with the Seabees, Mark often has to miss our monthly meeting on Tuesday, but looks forward to club fishing trips. He was the high bidder on a kayak fishing trip, something he has always wanted to do.
We all had a great time at the banquet. The people and food were great. Make a special effort to attend in 2016.

Chandeleur Haiku

Reed Guice

Head dipped in ink well
Laughing gull in Spring plumage
Scribes question in sky

Editor/Conservation Officer’s notes:
The haiku is an elegant and simple form of Japanese poetry in which something from the natural world is noted and celebrated. A classic haiku has a strict structure with three lines of five, seven, and five syllables, respectively. A season of the year is always included. Reading this one on this cold January evening puts me right back on the martini deck at the Pelican last spring.

Laughing gulls are plentiful during the warmer months of the year at Chandeleur and all along the Gulf Coast. They’re graceful fliers easily identified by their solid black heads during the mating season, reddish beak and legs, and a raucous call with a “ha-ha” sound that can become downright annoying if there’s a big flock nearby. However, that flock of laughing gulls diving and feeding on the surface is a good indicator of a school of baitfish that just might have speckled trout underneath.
Outlook for February Fishing

Captain Sonny Schindler, Shore Thing Charters

February is probably one of the least popular months to fish along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. But we have actually come to enjoy the heck out of fishing it. We always go after the best bites and the most action and the go-to fish for us this month will be redfish and sheepshead.

The ponds in the Biloxi Marsh (informally called the Louisiana Marsh) have been teeming with perfect sized slot fish for months. Most of the areas we have been fishing are very deep inside the marsh. You certainly have to be aware of your tides, especially if there is a north wind. Once we find good water in the shallow ponds, we go to work. Some days, the wind is light, the water is clear and it is all sight fishing. Other days, the water is high or dirty, and blind casting is the only option. If the fish are in the ponds tailing, crashing bait or throwing wakes, they will hit just about anything. If you are lucky enough to have a fly rod on the boat, get ready for some real fun. Spoon, crab or shrimp pattern flies will draw some heart stopping strikes.

February sheepshead fishing is historically some of the best we see all year long. The water from Chandeleur Island to just off the mainland beaches and everywhere in between will be full of sheepshead. Just about any structure that has barnacles, muscles or oysters growing on it will hold sheepshead all month. Smaller shrimp pattern flies can be lethal on the big sheeps when they are feeding near the surface. If you have never eaten sheepshead, you have no idea what you are missing.

The biggest issue all month will be the weather. There will be plenty of cold and windy days in February. If the weather is bad, look at it this way – at least February is the shortest month of the year. As always, have fun and be safe.

Fish Tales – Brief Trip Reports

Jim Magee – Redfish Close to Home

You don’t have to go all the way to Venice or even to Chandeleur to find hot redfish action. The south side of East Ship Island recently had large numbers of redfish feeding actively and eager to take a fly. With a strong rising tide on Martin Luther King’s birthday hooking up with redfish over 30 inches was surprisingly easy. Using a Redfish Bitters (a beefed-up version of the well-known Bonefish Bitters) I was able to hook and land 31”, 32” and 36” redfish in quick succession. I released the two larger fish and kept the 12-pounder.

February 2015

Jim Magee with the smallest of three Ship Island redfish from his recent trip
The schools of reds were feeding from right up against the beach out to a depth of four feet. Water clarity was excellent, so seeing the fish was not a problem. I was fishing from the boat but wading would have been an excellent tactic. The reds seemed to be feeding mainly on polychaete worms (deduced from stomach contents and the big crap one took in the boat), so worm imitations may be effective. I’ll find out on the next trip.

**Gus Pialet – Fort Bayou Flounders**

I caught two flounders on a shrimp fly from a pier on Fort Bayou earlier this month. I missed the first strike and then caught the first one a few casts later. After fishing down the pier a few minutes, I came back to the same spot and missed a strike before finally hooking the second one. Joyce and I baked the filets with a crab meat stuffing. Unfortunately the next two trips down to the pier came up empty.

**Don Abrams – Ship Island Reds**

My friend Tom and I took advantage of settled weather and strongly rising tides a couple of weeks ago to do a quick wade fishing trip to Ship Island. We left about 10:00 a.m. In my friend’s home-built wooden skiff and returned in the late afternoon with four fine redfish. We released a few that were simply too large to keep, i.e. 30 – 36” in length. Those big fish are far too valuable as producers of little fish to kill them. Besides, they aren’t quite as tasty as the juveniles and smaller adults in the 18” to 25” range.

We were wading and sight fishing and found fish in groups of three to thirty, though a fair bit of walking was required between schools. The fish did not respond well to the flies we offered. Tom tried six or eight different fish and crustacean imitators, while I stuck with one of Scooter Gaines’s pink trout fly and a Dupree Spoon. We obviously weren’t offering what they were feeding on. But for every 30 or so good casts in front of fish, we could eventually get a
strike. Maybe it was a matter of finally making them an in-the-face offer they couldn't refuse. I never saw one pursue the fly.

We were unsure of what the redfish were eating, though we were sure it wasn't fish. We saw no baitfish at all and only a very few mullet. The reds weren't hugging the bottom and they weren't rooting around in the sand. A stomach check on the cleaning table showed no fish, one ghost shrimp, a few small crustaceans chewed to unrecognizable bits, and lots of 1” to 3” worms. Roughly 20% were polychaetes (bristle worms) and the rest were pale to translucent, smooth-bodied worms that resembled overcooked strands of thin pasta.

On the next trip, I'll be starting off with a fly I've just made from a piece of braided cord similar to parachute suspension line and one of Tom Herrington's Firefly deep minnows that a dozen aggressive redfish had reduced to a hook, eyes, and a little wad of twisted red hair. Stand by for a field report on my first attempt at recycled fly tying.

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The Backcast

Tom Herrington

The start up of the original Ocean Springs fly fishing club by three students at the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory in August 1968 was strongly motivated and influenced by Dr. Louis Rivas. Two other students and I were in a six-week class taught by Dr. Rivas. We met for a full day in the classroom for four days each week and spent one day in the field. I still remember him saying,"The title of this course is Marine Vertebrate Zoology but since 90% of the oceans of the world's vertebrate biomass is fish, that will be upon which we shall focus our time." True to his word, we spent the first day on other vertebrates and the rest of the six weeks on fish!

Dr. Rivas was born in Key West but received his first academic degree from the University of Havana, long before the revolution. Dr. Rivas was one of Ernest Hemingway's proteges and served as Hemingway's personal ichthyologist for his books. We students were fortunate to have him as an instructor, and as a friend. During class, he filled our minds with scientific knowledge. After class, he regaled us with tales of fishing in Cuba, Hemingway, Joe Brooks, fly fishing, sport fishing in general, and tournaments, while introducing us to the finer side of life with Mojitos and Cuban cigars.
Dr. Rivas's knowledge and enthusiasm for fish, and for the sport of fishing, inspired us not only as students but as fishermen. Under the influence of his infectious enthusiasm, both in class and after hours, we grew interested in fly fishing, and that interest gradually evolved into a fly fishing club. That club was eventually reborn as HOSSFLY. We students at the lab had no idea how gifted Dr. Rivas was until years later. Let's all hope that some of his love for the sport of fishing and for the world of fishes lives on in each of us HOSSFLY members today.

Here's the posthumous induction profile for Dr. Rivas from the International Game Fish Association (IGFA).

**Dr. Luis Rivas**

1916 - 1986
1998 Inductee

Dr. Luis Rivas was an enthusiastic angler and peerless marine biologist whose research has contributed invaluably to our understanding of saltwater game fish. Rivas’ distinguished academic career spanned nearly 50 years, focusing on the morphology, ecology, and taxonomy of fishes. One of his many research contributions involved the definitive taxonomy of the snook. Dr. Rivas was born in Key West, Florida. Guided by his interest in the sea and its fascinating creatures, Rivas completed a B.S. degree in Cuba, continued graduate studies in Canada and the U.S., and received his Ph.D. from George Washington University in 1953. He was the recipient of several Guggenheim Fellowships during his career and taught in Cuba before becoming a professor at the University of Miami in 1947. In 1971, Rivas took a position as biologist for the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service, serving in Panama City and then in Miami until 1981 when he became Resident Adjunct Professor of Ichthyology at the Nova University Oceanographic Center in Dania, Florida. A friend and associate of Ernest Hemingway, Rivas served as technical advisor for the motion picture production of The Old Man and the Sea. Rivas had a lifelong interest in billfish and sport fishing activities as participant, judge, consultant and contest organizer. The Nova University Oceanographic Center has established the Luis Rivas Scholarship Fund for Marine Biology, that helps support students carrying on Dr. Rivas’ research tradition and continues to enrich our understanding of saltwater game fish.
Parting Shot – Chandeleur Sunset

Bob Effinger

Rod Fields’s Everglades boat shares the water at sunset with a pair of pelicans, Chandeleur Guide Fishing’s Pelican fish camp.