

The Wind is Coming!

by Bruce Richards

Spring is here, and it is usually a windy time whether you are fishing for trout or tarpon. As I am sure you know, strong winds can cause big trouble for fly casters. Here are some tips for helping you deal with the wind.

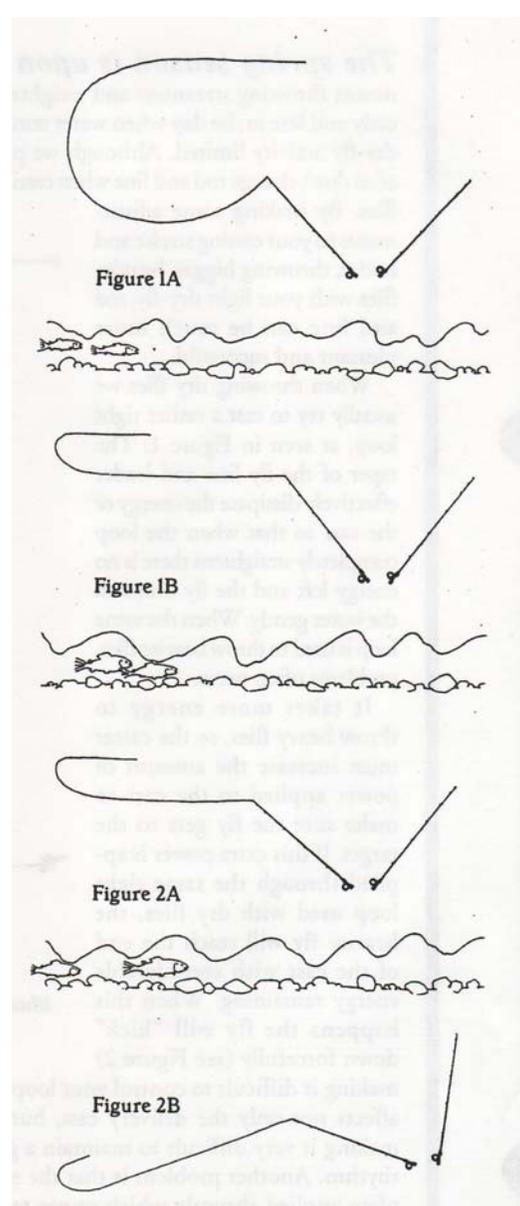
First, be realistic. In spite of what you may have heard or read, no one is throwing 100 ft. into a 30 knot wind, not even into a 20 knot wind. Usually on windy days the fish can't see as well as on calm days so casting distance isn't as important. If you can make an accurate 30- to -50 ft. cast on most windy days you are in the ball game.

Casters generally do one of two things wrong when casting into the wind. First, they throw loops that are too big and wind resistant. (Figure 1A). To achieve any distance or accuracy into the wind the loop must be small to reduce wind resistance. (Figure 1B). Often casters who can throw tight loops on calm days throw big loops on windy days. This is usually caused by the fact that the caster thinks that he or she must cast very hard to be effective. This additional power often results in stopping the rod too late on the forward cast which drops the bottom of the loop. To solve this problem, remember that a tight slow-moving loop will usually go farther into the wind than a big, faster loop. Stopping the rod tip sooner in the stroke, with less power applied will always get a better result.

Once you are able to throw a tight, but slow, loop into the wind it's time to add

some power. To be effective you must maintain the tight loop.

If you are going to cast harder, to maintain the straight rod tip path that makes tight loops, you also need to make your casting stroke longer. If you try to apply a lot more power with the same stroke length you use for a slower tight



loop you'll wind up throwing tailing loops. This is what usually causes the dreaded 'wind knot' in your leaders. Not caused directly by the wind, but by the caster's failure to adjust casting stroke length to the power applied

Just throwing a tight, fast loop into the wind does not insure a long, accurate cast. If you cast this good loop too high (Figure 2A), the wind will often shove it right back in your face. It is often advised to cast sidearm into the wind to keep the loop 'below the wind', but while there is a cushion of slower-moving air near the water's surface, it is very thin, and it is not possible to keep your loop low enough to take advantage of it. What is critical is to make sure your loop is aimed low and right at your target on your forward cast. If your loop opens properly, your fly will be inches above the water and will have a very short drop which prevents the wind from having it's way with your cast. (Figure 2B).

Tight loops, aimed properly, are the key to making those windy days a lot more enjoyable. Use your next windy fishing day for a little practice.