

Improvements in the making of Fly Lines

IN the cabinet where I have my fly reels is one made of walnut and brass.

On the side opposite the handle is a metal plate marked "Exposition Universelle, Paris 1878"; the line on this 83 years old reel is one of twisted horsehair which is much older than the reel.

Unfortunately moths have played havoc with the line which is now in small pieces. Much patience and skill were necessary to twist this line into one to be used for trout fishing and I doubt if many such lines could be made today because of the difficulty in obtaining white and black horsehair. According to tradition it was necessary to pluck the hairs from the tails of stallions.

The line consists of 4 white hairs and 2 black ones, twisted together. Three such twistings are again twisted to make a fly line of 18 hairs.

At the fly end the line was tapered down to either 1 or 2 hairs and the fly attached.

Before doing this it was necessary to soften the horsehair in water. This required great patience but was child's play compared to the softening of the 18 twisted hairs.

Some 20 years ago I spoke of the skill necessary to catch a trout on such flimsy tackle and a friend, Ken Overton, decided he would like to try it. He managed to get some hair about a yard long and tested it for strength by lifting a pound weight on each hair.

On this flimsy tackle he managed to take several trout from the Loteni river, the heaviest weighing 1-lb. He had one or two breakages but was quite satisfied with his experiment.

The fly lines of today are so strong that, even in the double-tapered and forward-tapered, very few makers give the breaking strain. The thinner end of most trout lines has a breaking strain of about 12-lbs. which, because of its much greater strength than the leader, or cast, requires no designation.

Few oil-dressed silk lines are used in South Africa because, in hot climates, the oil dressing becomes sticky. This is unfortunate as silk lines are pleasant to use, are soft and smooth and, if used for dry-fly fishing, float well.

In the many South African waters I have fished, however, I have not

found them as floatable as on overseas waters. This may be due to what a friend describes as "the chemistry of the water." It must be remembered that when we make a cast with a rod, we cast a weight. In fishing a bait, with or without a sinker, we cast the weight of the bait, or the weight of the bait plus that of the sinker. In such fishing the weight pulls the line from the reel. In casting a fly, however, it is the weight of the line which pulls the fly out.

Let us examine some of the fly lines on the market today leaving out the "level" line, a line which is of the same diameter all through and has no taper.

There are metal-cored lines,

By GRIQUA

nylon line, polyester-terylene lines, line with a taper in the dressing only, lines with air bubbles incorporated in the dressing, and twin-craft lines.

It is impossible for any angler to try every line which is on the market—unless he be a very rich man. There are hundreds of fly lines made, each manufacturer claiming that his line is best!

The metal-cored line, as its name suggests, is woven around a metal core of copper to give weight and flexibility in casting and it sinks quickly. Because of this it is ideal for wet fly fishing but not for dry fly. Nylon lines float well if properly treated with a line dressing and polished off again.

Lines with air bubbles incorporated in the dressing also float well and need no dressing but I find they float even better if treated with a line dressing.

Both nylon and air-bubble lines are excellent for dry-fly fishing. Polyester terylene lines are heavier than nylon and air-bubble lines and they sink quickly.

A cheaper line, a German one, has a tough smooth outer dressing and it too sinks well. An unusual feature of this line is that the woven part of the line is level and that the taper is in the dressing only. The dressing is not forced into the line itself and this, I believe, makes the line slightly less

heavy than it would be otherwise. The "Twin-Craft" line is something new, one half of the line being of nylon and the other half of polyester terylene. If an angler, fishing the nylon end in dry-fly fishing, wishes to change to wet fly fishing he removes his leader, runs out all his line and rewinds it back on his reel from the other end. If he has backing on his reel he rejoins the reversed line to the backing.

While some anglers may think this a good idea I prefer to carry a spare reel, and always do. I consider this is less troublesome and makes a quicker change from dry-fly fishing to wet fly, or vice versa. The same rod is used and, while it may not be ideal for both types of fishing, I doubt if many anglers would be fussy enough to carry a spare rod.

And which of all the many lines is best?

That is a difficult question to answer. If we never indulge in dry fly fishing we won't want a floating line and should choose a line which will sink quickly. This could be either of terylene, or the green German line with the tapered dressing; both will be satisfactory as a sinking line.

Next we must decide if the line be double-tapered or forward-tapered, and here again we have different opinions. Some extra distance may be cast by using a forward-tapered line but this line cannot be reversed as the back end finishes as a thin level line.

I have heard some anglers say that the forward-tapered line causes a splash as it enters the water. This however, is not the fault of the line but that of the caster. Accustomed to a double-tapered line the splashy cast is usually the result of putting too much "beef" into the forward cast.

If the back cast is timed correctly, a properly timed gentle flick forward will put the line quietly on the water. Under normal fishing conditions we rarely cast more than 15 yards. Double tapered fly lines are made so that they may be reversed and many anglers prefer them because of this feature.

The choice of a dry-fly line rests between nylon and the lines which have air bubbles trapped in the dressing.

Here again, we have different opinions, I have used both and cannot

Turn to page 33

FIELD AND TIDE FEBRUARY 1951

He would have made good his escape with jewels and all but for a careless mistake. In the stolen collection was an historic cross formed of diamonds which had once belonged to the Queen of England and mysteriously landed among the duke's collection. Shaw thought that by offering the jewel to the Prince of Wales—later King Edward VII, for a few hundred thousand francs he would secure royal protection against the duke. But kings and princes do not, as a rule, dabble in stolen goods, and his letter was sent to Scotland Yard and from there to Paris, and Shaw was run to earth in Boulogne.

The duke was satisfied to recover most of his jewels and declined to prosecute. The French authorities, however, were not satisfied to leave matters there and Shaw was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment which he failed to survive.

For many years after his conviction fortune seekers dug up the back yard of his house, believing that he had buried treasures there to the value of £50,000. If this fortune was ever found the lucky finder kept the secret—and the jewels—to himself.

IMPROVEMENTS IN THE MAKING OF FLY LINES

Continued from page 20

decide if one is better than the other but, in the choice of a dry fly line, I use one with a double taper and, because I like a thin line for this type of fishing, my line is H.E.H.

In some issues of the London "Fishing Gazette" different opinions have been expressed regarding the colour of lines, many expert anglers say they prefer a white line.

A white line, be it a sinking one or a floater, is much more easily seen by the angler. The green or brown lines cannot be seen so easily. It is also maintained that it is less visible to the fish.

The experts "proved" this by lying in their baths and floating a white line, a green one and a brown one and looking up at them as would a fish.

The white line was least visible.

All lines should be washed occasionally in warm water and a detergent, rinsed thoroughly in clean water and, when dry, polished up again and the floating ones dressed with a good line dressing to keep them floating.

All lines pick up a certain amount of dirt from the rivers and dams and it is surprising how discoloured the washing water appears after having washed the line. The majority of anglers never wash their lines and, because of this the line does not shoot through the rod rings easily. Nor do many anglers possess a line-drier.

If one has ingenuity it would not be difficult to make one and the benefit of such a gadget makes the job of changing a line an easy one.

HOW WRONG THEY CAN BE

Continued from page 16

acquired a degree of caution which preserved him until last September, when he died in mid air; at uncomfortably close quarters. Finally; the hyrax has an official life-expectation of five years, but we have a tame one in the garden who was a staid old bachelor when we built this house in 1948.

We have even found too much credence of expert opinion very embarrassing on occasions. Some twenty five years ago we decided to become professional crocodile hunters. Before launching forth in this new field we studied all the literature available, not only upon saurians but concerning the other riverine animals we were likely to encounter. We garnered a wealth of curious information; one of the items being that the sight of a hippopotamus is so poor that he relies almost entirely on

scent; so much so, in fact, that should rain obliterate his trail when he is grazing inland he is often unable to find his way back to the water.

For the first week or two we had fair success, though it soon became clear that the crocs were extremely ignorant about their own habits. Then, one day, I shot one in a small, reed-girt pool, crawled down a narrow path to collect him, and suddenly found myself rubbing noses with a large cow hippo. There was little glamour in that close-up and I did not stop to kiss her goodbye, but sped up the bank with the lady in hot pursuit—not with any desire to remedy the omission either, for we afterwards found that she had a baby concealed among the rushes.

However, I neither lost my head or forgot my book-lore. The foothold was slippery so at first I had the advantage, emerging from the reeds some distance ahead. Here the ground was broken, and studded with a series

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