

Retrieving the Fly

By Jack "The MainMan" Blackman

This newsletter is great, amusing, interesting and educational and may it so continue. Congratulations to the Editor, Sudesh Pursad. Keep up the good work. As the editor of a sister newsletter, The Leader, I know how difficult it is to persuade members to put pen to paper so their experiences can be shared with others.

I am not going to talk about flies, but about how to retrieve those flies that have come from your vices, lovingly tied while dreaming of that monster fish that will take your new creation. Many anglers blame the fly for no takes and change from fly to fly while using the same retrieve all day long. As an experiment some years ago I used the same fly pattern (in sizes 14, 12 and 8) for a whole season and my success was as good as when I used a variety of flies. I can hear you asking, what fly? It was the Hot Cat.

I put my success down to very varied retrieves and depths that I fished the fly. I must also add that a number 14 Flat Cat represents quite a different underwater insect from one tied on a number 8 hook with a long shank. Some were also heavily weighted to be fished deep and some unweighted to be fished 5 to 50 cm below the surface. When I have made my cast, I take the line over my middle finger of the rod hand so that when I let go of the line with the line hand, this finger can trap the line against the cork handle. This finger acts as an additional rod eye. Immediately after the line lands on the water I make two fairly long strips by pulling the line with the line hand over the extended finger. Many times a trout (the last fish taken in this way was a springer) has taken on the first or

second strip.

I then allow the fly to sink. How long you wait for the fly to sink depends on the depth of the water and your patience. I sometimes wait 60 to 90 seconds and suddenly while everything appears to be static the end of your floating line gives a slight movement forward or to the left or right. If you do not set the hook, pulling the line hand and lifting the rod tip you will have lost a good fish. This is known as a fish taking on the drop.

If there is no take before you lose patience waiting, make two or three short strips, this will lift the fly up. Stop, allowing the fly to sink again repeat until about half the line has been retrieved, then make continual short retrieves, a fish could be following the fly and as the fly comes closer. Speed up the retrieve. It is important that you retrieve the fly until you can see it in the water. Do not start the next cast until you have seen the fly for at least ten seconds. I lost a good springer recently because I took the fly out of the fishes mouth as it was taking. Vary the speed of the retrieve from very very slow, through to fairly quickly. Remember most of the aquatic fish food cannot move very fast, particularly in fresh water.

When using an intermediate or fast sinking line the retrieval process is similar. After the initial first two pulls, wait for the line, leader and fly to sink. The count down method is used to get the fly down to whatever depth the fish are feeding and should be done, one and two and three through to say thirty. If you feel the line on the bottom or the fly collects weed, make the next count down to say, twenty and again to

fifteen. At whatever count down number you connect with a fish, you can count down to the same number with the next cast.

When using a sinking line the retrieve should also vary in length and speed of strip. I believe that the fly used represents a tiny minnow and often a take will come on a fairly quick retrieve. If you have observed minnows in the water you will see they move very fast for 20 to 50 cm and then stop before moving again.

There are many different retrieves and you will develop your own methods. Never, never use what I call the static retrieve, ie. retrieving the same amount of line at the same speed hour after hour. You will catch fish but many will turn away.

A word about fishing a dry fly. It should be left to float naturally without any movement by the angler. Occasionally a light twitch can be made, moving the fly only 10 mm. I have seen anglers pulling a dry fly across the top of the water and wondering why they do not get a take.

Perhaps this article will encourage others to write of their experiences with tactics or flies. I like "Samaki's" Grizzle Minnow.

