

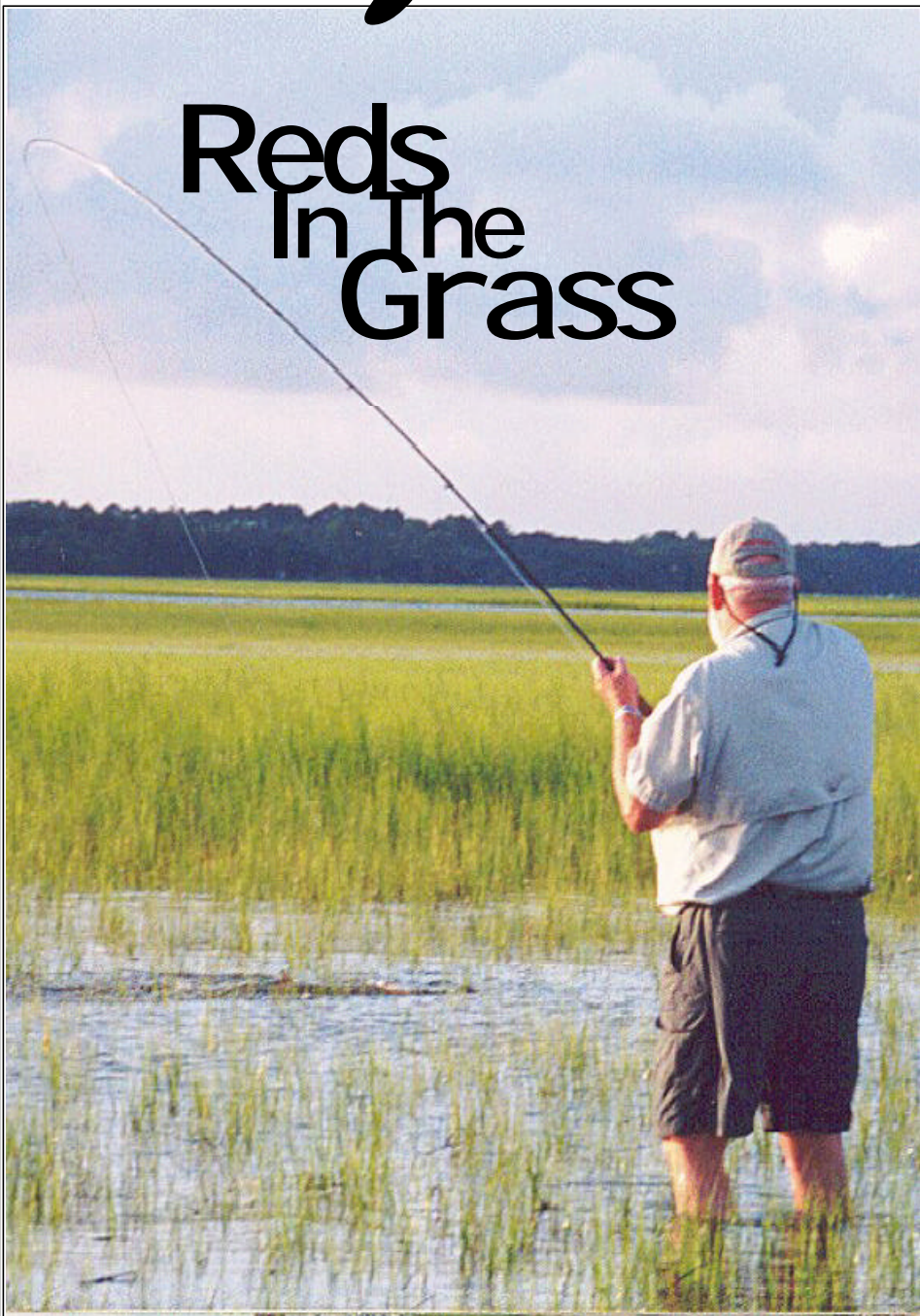
# First Coast Fly Fisher

October 2002

WWW.FCFF.ORG

Jacksonville, Florida

## Reds In The Grass



**Reds In The Grass Outing Sunday,  
Oct 6. See pg. 5 for Details**

## Jon Cave Casting Clinic Sat. Oct 5

Don't miss our annual Jon Cave Casting Clinic Saturday, Oct 5., at M&m Dairy. Jon is the consummate casting instructor and writer. He was instrumental in creating the casting certification program for the Federation of Fly Fishers and operates the oldest continuing saltwater fly fishing school in the world.

The day starts at 9:30 a.m. Bring your tying tools, too, because Jon has promised to show us how to tie his famous Cave's Wobbler.

### MEETING TIME AND DATE

**Southpoint Marriott**

**Monday, Oct 7**

**Casting 6 pm**

**Meeting 7 pm**

**SPEAKER**

**Capt. John  
Bottko**

**TOPIC**

**North Florida**

**Fly Fishing**

**Opportunities**

**COMING SOON**

*Wednesday, Oct. 2 - Fly Tying Begins at Salty Feather, 6:15. Call 645-8998 to reserve seat.*

*Saturday, Oct. 5 - Annual Casting Clinic w/ Jon Cave. Free to all members. M & M Dairy.*

*Sunday, Oct. 6 - Reds In Grass Outing, Cedar Point. Info at Sept. Meeting*

*Monday, Oct. 7 - FCFF Meeting, Capt.*

*John Bottko, Speaker.*

*Wednesday, Oct. 9 - Fly Tying, 2nd Class at The Salty Feather. Reserved Seating*

# CRAB FLIES

by Jim McCully

When a crab senses a predator nearby, it always has the same instinctive defensive response. It will swim down toward the bottom at a steep angle, at the same time raising it's open large display claw toward the surface. Of course, this is a ridiculous and ineffective response, but a crab will always do this. This is a crab's only defense response, since it can't out-swim anything. The 'threatening' open claw may buy it some time until it can hide out in the bottom structure.



HOWARD MARSHALL  
W/ COPPERY REDFISH

Since redfish have seen thousands of crabs behave this way, they will be suspicious of (and less likely to eat) a crab imitation that does anything else. All saltwater anglers know that a baitfish imitation will elicit a strike if it is swimming away from a redfish but will be rejected if it is stripped toward the predator. Likewise, a crab imitation will be rejected if it is swimming toward the surface, for instance.

Saltwater flyrodders can use this little fact of marine biology a couple of ways to catch more tailing redfish. The first involves building or altering a spoonfly pattern. The second is a method of stripping or working the fly.

First, tie a crab-fly pattern that behaves like a threatened crab.

Here's how you do it:

1. Put a spoonfly in the vise.
2. Using a felt tip marker, color the spoon (the shell of the crab) with black, dark brown, gold, purple, or green streaks and dots - use your

imagination. Another color alternative is to start with a reddish-brown or dark gray spoon. Cover the new color with nail polish.

3. At the bend of the hook, tie in a bunch of dark brown calf tail (raccoon is better!) and six strands of gold, purple, and black Krystal Flash, using two stands of each color.

4. Again at the bend, tie on a 'claw' of light brown grizzly hackle. Before you do this, though, build up a small ball of thread at the bend. Then, tie on the hackle stems so that the ball causes the hackles to flair out into an 'open claw.'

5. Wrap two turns of .015 lead wire just behind the hook eye. Next, tie on a small bunch of fur and 4 to 6 strands of Krystal Flash which extend back over the point of the hook.

6. Use a loop knot to connect the fly to a 15 lb. tippet, then your spoonfly will automatically dive at an angle toward the bottom with the open claw held up toward the surface.

The second way to increase your hookup ratio is more important than your pattern choice. Use this with any fly pattern when fishing the marshgrass.

When you make a cast to a tailing redfish in the marshgrass, the flyline lays

(Continued on Page 6)

## Officers and Directors of First Coast Fly Fishers

President

Doug Moore  
757-3323h

mmdairy@aol.com

VP Programs

Dick Choate  
223-1571h

dickchoate@aol.com

VP Outings

George Durnace  
241-5697h  
354-8201w

bluegator@excite.com

Treasurer

Dick Michaelson  
641-1903

michaelson1@attbi.com

Secretary

Donn McKinnon  
777-3649h  
264-2440w

donnmck@worldnet.att.net

Librarian

Ray Waters  
389-7270

watersdr@aol.com

Information/Education

Mike Perez  
298-1164h  
777-7600w

gmperez@sar.med.navy.mil

Membership

Scott Sheridan  
730-2616h  
636-5602

flyrod@duvalgroup.com

At Large

Jimmy Ricks  
744-1897h

Jerry Bott  
221-8646

dreamontwo@aol.com

Robert Bouman  
246-0641

RBouman@msn.com

Newsletter

David Lambert  
249-2075

lambert321@fcoll.com

# Kevin Cohenour's Fly Tyer's Corner

**by Kevin Cohenour**

Late summer and fall, brings to the Jacksonville area "spring" flood tides, which cover the grass flats along the Intracoastal Waterway. As the tides rise and cover the flats, the redfish enter the flat in search of one of their favorite delicacies...fiddler crabs. After observing the native fiddlers, David Lambert and I developed a pattern, which has proven to be very effective.

The proof of the effectiveness of the "Pheasant Under Grass" is the gusto with which the fish take the pattern. Without hesitation, a red will turn on the "pheasant" and literally devour it. One of the reasons for the pattern's effectiveness is the orange/grizzly feathers used in the tail. The orange feathers are imitative of the orange claw of the male fiddler during mating season.

We developed the fly to be durable as well as effective. With its body of epoxy'd felt it is quick to tie. I can tie them in about 9 minutes. The pheasant feathers tied over the shell produce a very realistic look. The fly stands up well to both the fish and the grass. The weed guard keeps it weedless.

Tied on a size 2 or 4 hook, this fly is extremely effective on tailing redfish. In a size 6 or 8, the pheasant is very productive for bonefish. Just remember as you strip the fly that fiddlers don't cover the distance of a 6-12" strip as it tries to crawl away. A long strip can actually cause a fish, which is about to take the fly to refuse. One last advantage of the pheasant is that the fly does not land with a plop as many heavily weighted/epoxy covered crabs do.

So, tie a few up and give them a try during this fall's flood tides.

**HOOK:** Mustad 34007, size 2 to 8;  
**THREAD:** Brown Size "G" or 3/0;  
**WEEDGUARD:** 12 to 20 lb. Hard Mono;



## Pheasant Under Grass

**EYES:** Medium or Small Black Dumbbell;  
**MOUTH:** Krystal Flash; **CLAWS:** Dyed Orange Grizzly Hackle; **LEGS:** Smoke Gray Sili-Legs with Blue/Black Flake; **SHELL:** Cream Felt on Belly and Tan Felt and 2 pheasant feathers on top

Make a bend in hook immediately behind eye, "bendback style."

Secure hook in vise. Attach thread at bend. Cut a piece of weed guard about four hook shanks long. Flatten one end and attach at the bend. Wrap over mono about half way down the bend. The long end of weedguard should point down. Wind thread to bend.



Attach 8-10 strands of copper, gold, or orange krystal flash at

bend. Wrap over the krystal flash about 1/4 down the bend. Secure one orange hackle on each side of krystal flash, extending about 3/4" longer. Hackles should curve outward.



Cut a penny sized circular shape from the cream and tan felt, making a 3/8" tag on one end and a 1/8" tag on the other.

Secure cream felt at the bend by long tag. Felt should point rearward.



Attach eyes at the bend using "X" wraps. Wind thread forward to behind hook eye. Pull felt forward so the long tag goes over and between the eyes of the dumbbell. Secure the 1/8" tag at the front. Turn fly over in vise.

Select two sili-legs. Cut in half to make four legs. Pinch the cream felt sides together below the hook shank and gently pull downward to create a gap. Insert bobbin threader between the felt and hook shank; insert four

cut sili-legs through bobbin threader eye and "thread" between felt and shank. Arrange two legs diagonally each direction. Cut tags off tan felt. Mix one-minute epoxy (three or five minute will work but just take longer to set) and quickly coat top of white felt/



Strip the pheasant back feathers.



fuzz from two legs. Press the tan felt shell top in place and squeeze until the epoxy sets. The feather size should be about the same as the shell. Secure the stem of one feather at the front of the shell, angling over one side of the fly. Attach the 2nd feather angling the opposite direction.

Turn the fly over in the vise. Pull the weed guard forward and insert through the



hook eye. Pull the tag end back and secure weed guard so there is about a 1/4" gap between the guard and the hook point. Whip head, cut thread and cement.

### FOR SALE

9 wt., 3 piece, Redington DFR , new in the tube = \$250 or best offer. 4 wt., 4 piece, Sage RPL+, new in the tube (with warranty card) = \$250 or best offer. 6 wt., 3 piece, Sage SP, new in the tube (with warranty card) = \$250 or best offer. 9 wt., 2 piece, Sage RPLX , used in the tube = \$150 or best offer. 7 wt., 3 piece, Redington DFR , used in the tube = \$225 or best offer. Call Wayne Southwell, work (850) 942-8900 ext. 18; home, (850) 539-0074; or southwell@hotmail.com

# A Day On The Rogue

*by Donn McKinnon*

In late July, my wife Robin and I were sitting in our motel room porch gazing at the beautiful Rogue River just outside Grants Pass, Oregon. It was a lazy, warm evening in and I thought wistfully that I hadn't wet a line since stopping in Destin, Florida, on the first leg of our country-wide summer journey. I just didn't feel like hiking down 5000 feet to the Colorado River from atop the Grand Canyon when we passed through last week. Robin must have read my thoughts because she said, "are you sure you don't want to go fishing tomorrow?"

Talk about a golden opportunity! I called the Ashland Fly Shop to ask about a fly guide and was directed to try Mark Swisher, who guided out of their shop. Mark was available the next day and was eager to go. He explained that he had been fishing the upper Rogue River close to Shady Cove and said that, due to the summer heat, a half-day trip was his recommendation.

I met Mark the next morning, jumped in his rig, and we drove upstream about two-and-a-half miles to a launch site. I strung two rods with floating lines, a 5 wt. with a large hairbug skater, and a 3 wt. with a brown nymph. Mark rowed 40 yards upstream and released the anchor. He rigged a 6 wt. with a nymph and a dropper, in case the steelhead would not come to the surface.

Small trout started hitting the nymph on the first cast. It was a simple pattern, dark brown dubbing that tapering in a torpedo shape. It had several strands of pearl crystal flash for a carapace. Since the fly was a #4 tied on a long shaft, the real small ones had trouble getting it in their mouths. On most casts, eventually a trout large enough to inhale the fly got on. After a couple of casts, Mark said to allow the nymph to rise at the end of the



A COLORFUL ROGUE RIVER RAINBOW

drift to "skate." As soon as I did this, "boom!" a 24-inch steelhead came to the surface and ate the fly, rolled over and was gone. Upon inspection, the tippet had parted. I had left my old 6-lb. tippet on the three weight and it was obviously no match for these fish. Mark tied on an 8 lb while I tried "skating" the large hair bug.

I never got a rise on this skater, but the small fish left it alone.

In the next riffle, Mark had me try the nymph with a dropper, but nothing was doing there. I went back to the nymph when we settled into a nice run where Mark backed the boat down. He positioned the boat just outside the main current and directed me to cast across into it, explaining that the steelhead would be in the area just outside the current. They would most likely strike when the nymph rose up to the surface at the end of the drift or at the "swing." I caught about a dozen small trout, then a nice rainbow, about 14

inches. Then a beautiful 10-inch cutthroat ate the nymph. Boy, this fly really worked! Toward the end of the run which was about 200 yards long, I commented, "Mark, this looks like perfect steelhead water." My nymph came up and started making a V in the water and the water erupted! The steelhead grabbed the fly and went deep. I had a hard time moving him with the little three-weight. Man, I had forgotten how hard these fish fight! After five minutes of the fish taking line and me trying to retrieve it back on the little reel, the fish came up for several jumps. This is what steelheading is all about. What a show! I threw line when the fish jumped and tried to turn him over when he got lazy. All of a sudden, the line went slack. The fish had cut the tippet again, probably when he rolled over on it. I felt badly not getting the fish to the boat for a photo-op, but that's fishing.

(Continued on Page 5)

# October Outing: Reds In The Grass

Never caught a redfish in the spartina? Here's your chance. Our second yearly reds in the grass outing is happening Sunday, Oct 6. Due to the probability of very high tides, we're meeting earlier than we originally announced. *We will now meet at 6 a.m.* Fly fishers with small boats and kayaks, launch from Cedar Point no later than 6:15. Boaters and riders, meet at the new Sisters Creek Marina--*not the Carlucci ramp*--no later than 6 a.m.

This is a very high tide--6.0. We'll also likely have some easterly winds from Hurricane Kyle to our south. The window of fishing opportunity may be as little as 45 minutes. So be on the flats by daylight, if possible.

If it's windy, 9 and 10 weight rods with floating lines won't be too big. Otherwise, 8s or 9s are fine. Black spoon flies, Pheasants, Fiddlers, and Deadly Headly flies work well. All with stout weed guards, of course.

See you there.

## Rogue River Trip=Lots of Action

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Mark tied on a 10 lb tippet and we went back to fishing. Many, many more trout were caught. Then, after I had cast to a spot Mark had said held a fish yesterday, I got my line fouled in the pile in front of me. I thought I'd better straighten this out in case a big fish hit. As I looked down and grabbed the line, it jerked up into the rod guides and Mark yelled that a big fish had rolled on the fly. I quickly held the rod upside down and the knot went right through the guides. This fish pulled even stronger. The fight went about 10 minutes. I managed to get it about 10 feet away with mostly leader out of the rod tip when he rolled. The line snapped again. Double darn! The fish appeared to be about 30 inches long and bright chrome color.

The rest of the trip resulted in many more trout caught, but no more steelhead. The bright sun along with smoke from the nearby southern Oregon fires made it feel like time to get off the river.

The upper Rogue is a beautiful stream with perfect steelhead and salmon water. We saw a bald eagle, cormorants, and many other birds. I asked Mark if any half-pounders make it up as far as Shady Cove. Half-pounders are the name give to immature steelhead that run up the rivers. He said that no, they usually didn't make it past the Salvage Rapids dam between Grants Pass and the town of Rogue River. They are normally between 1 and 3 pounds so their nickname is not very appropriate. Mark also explained that this year's summer steelhead run was the best in many years. Two thousand fish had already been counted at the dam this year. Normally 700 to 900 fish are expected by this time with around 7000 for the entire year. Winter is time for the big run and goes from October to March. Mark expects the total run to be much bigger this year.

Mark Swisher guides out of the Ashland Fly Shop, PO Box 864, Ashland, OR, 97520. Their phone is (541) 482-1420 and their web site is

[www.ashlandflyshop.com](http://www.ashlandflyshop.com).

**Please Support  
These Contributing  
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Capt John Bottko, 645-8998  
feather2@ix.netcom.com

✱

Capt Hamilton Franz, 626-6983  
hamiltonfranz@yahoo.com

✱

Inst Will Gray 683-7476  
willgray@attbi.net

✱

Capt Warren Hinrichs  
384-0996

✱

Instr. David Lambert, 249-2075  
lambert321@fcol.com

✱

Capt Randy Lanier, 384-4187h  
645-8998 w  
feather2@ix.netcom.com

✱

Capt Larry Miniard, 285-7003  
captlmin@bellsouth.net

✱

Capt Doug Moore, 757-3323  
545-0602 Cell  
mmdairy@aol.com

✱

Capt Jimmy Stockton, 285-4884  
477-2065 cell

✱

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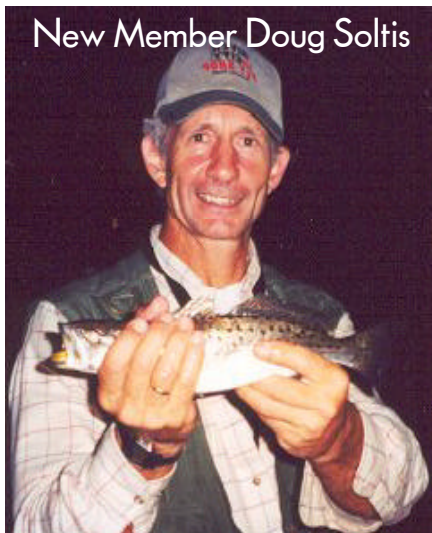
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St. Augustine, FL 32084  
904-824-8322

✱

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Jacksonville, FL 32216  
904-645-8998

New Member Doug Soltis



Donn McKinnon



Julie Marshall



John Manuel



Bud Larsen

# CRAB FLIES

(Continued from Page 2)

horizontally on the top of the grass, but the tippet and the crab fly usually hang vertically from the grass.

If the redfish sees your fly heading toward the bottom (immediately after you have made the cast), he will eat it. But what should you do if the crab pattern is near the fish, but he hasn't seen it yet? How should you strip it?

The answer is: *Do Not Strip It!!*

Because your leader and the fly are suspended vertically from the surface, if you begin stripping, your fly will 'swim' up toward the surface. This is the last thing in the world a crab would do if it was on

the bottom near a predator. Furthermore, a tailing fish is looking at the bottom, not toward the surface.

The best advice I ever received was from an experienced tailing redfish angler: "Don't strip the crab at all - instead, just twitch the line with your index finger and the crab will make small nervous movements up and down the nearest blade of grass."

I immediately began to hook-up a much higher percentage of reds when I employed this advice. Later I figured out why this is so effective; it imitates the behavior of a threatened crab, which would never swim from the safety of the bottom toward the surface. A stripping motion moves the fly vertically because of the grass. It may fall back down off the top of the grass, but it also may not. It is always better to leave the fly on the bottom, where the cast fell and where the fish is looking.

## First Coast Fly Fisher

P.O. Box 16260, Jacksonville, FL  
32245-6260

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