

**FIRST
COAST
FLY FISHERS**
December 2010



Photo: Regan and Mom with Winter Gator Trout by Capt. Rich Santos

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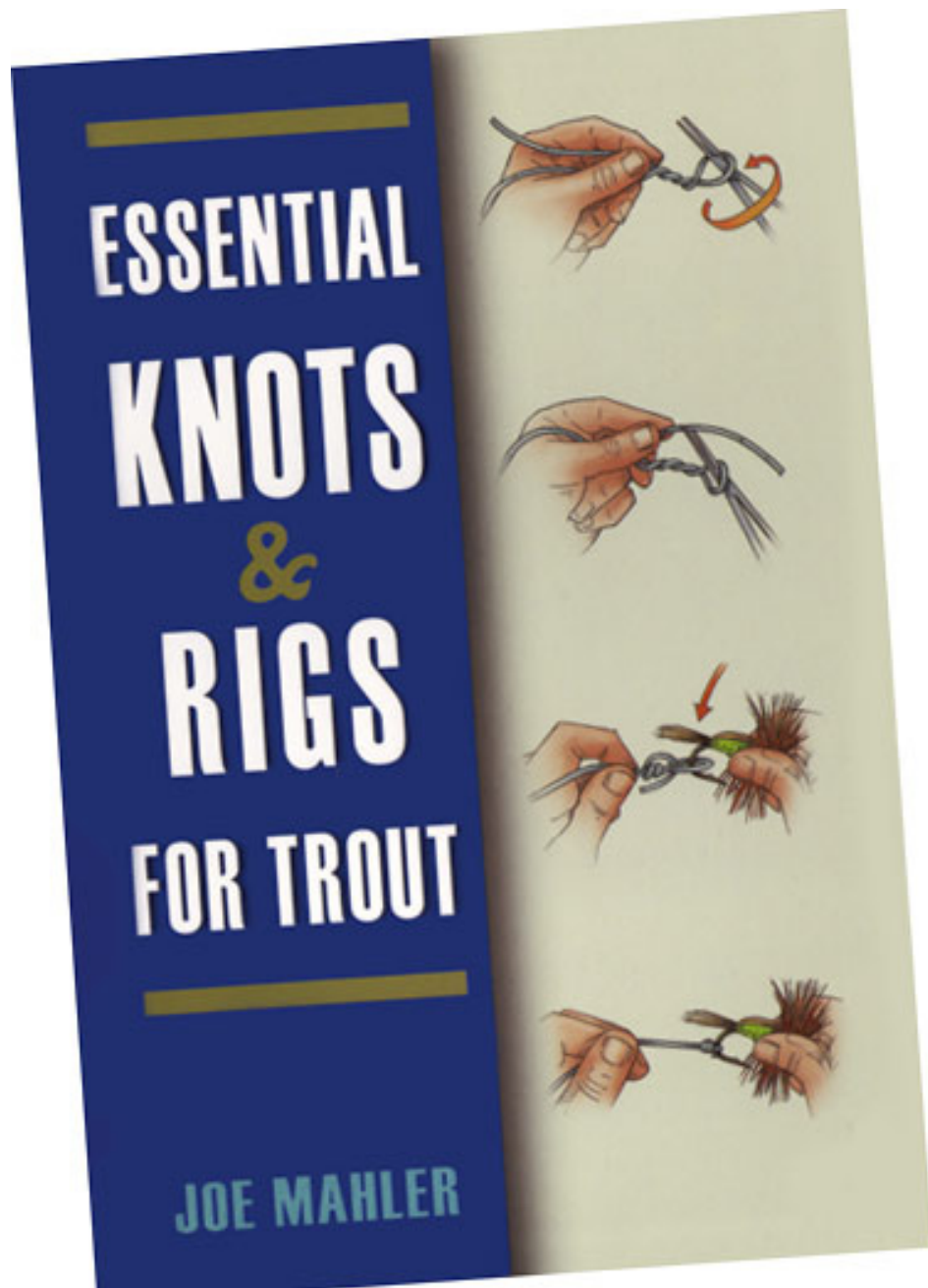
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Red Goes For Black

PHOTO BY BART ISAAC



NOT YOUR AVERAGE BOOK OF KNOTS

by David Lambert

I'm the easiest guy to buy for at Christmas. Give me a good knot book and I can stay busy, content even, until Valentine's Day, maybe Easter. So when fishing illustrator Joe Mahler told me he'd just completed work on an illustrated knot book, well, I was excited for him . . . and for me.

Mahler's new book, *Essential Knots & Rigs for Trout*, is a top-shelf, lovingly and beautifully illustrated primer for those of us who love to fish with a fly. And it's published by Stackpole Books, the trusted name in fly fishing tomes. Despite the title designation "For Trout," many of the leader and terminal ties are effective and efficient for small to medium saltwater species, too.

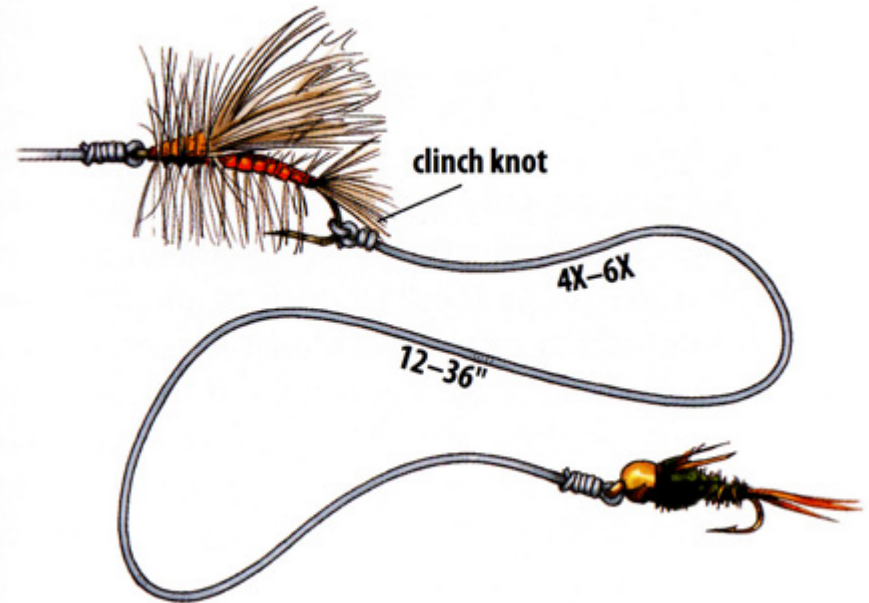
Essential Knots is intelligently partitioned into seven sections. It begins with knots for attaching backing to fly reel and runs logically through the full fly fishing system, with a couple of chapters at the end dedicated to multi-hook rigs and strike indicators.

What sets this book apart from the lower order knot books is Mahler's choice to include knots like the 16-20 Knot (a.k.a. Pitzzen), Seaguar, Orvis/Becker, and the Eugene Bend, none of which are your everyday knot-book fare. But these are all knots I've used and now champion. Of particular interest to me is Mahler's chapter on leaders and the art and info depicting multi-fly rigs, which will can benefit fishers of waters both sweet and saline.

Simple, clear written descriptions accompany the artwork, but Mahler's visuals are so expertly and vividly rendered that the written is almost unnecessary. And that's a good thing, since trying to follow written directions from a knot book is confusing, like trying to follow driving directions from a slow talker.

You've seen Joe Mahler's illustrations in most all the good fishing publications recently and you'll see much of his work in Jon Cave's new casting book, due out late this year. Pick up Mahler's book and you'll see why the magazines love his illustrations — they're exceptional and accessible, just like his new book.

Available at fly shops, fishing stores, and online. *Essential Knots and Rigs for Trout*, © 2010 by Joe Mahler, 92 pages, full color slicks, \$14.95, Stackpole Books, ISBN 978-0-8117-0716-9



Exceptionally strong illustrations are the hallmark of Joe Mahler's book on knots. Don't let the title fool you, these knots and their applications are just right for many salt- and warmwater species, too.



GUIDELINES FOR CATCH-&-RELEASE

by Ron Taylor

The most important steps an angler can take to ensure a successful release are to hook and land the fish as quickly as possible, leave the fish in the water while removing the hook, and release the fish quickly. There are several other ways to improve survival rates:

Whatever you do, do it quickly. Keeping an exhausted fish out of water is like holding a bag over a runner who has just completed a marathon. They both need oxygen to recuperate.

Wet your hands or gloves before handling the fish. Do not injure the eyes or gills. Placing the fish on a wet towel will help the fish retain its protective slime. To keep the fish still, place it on its back or cover its eyes with a wet towel. Control the fish at all times! If you drop the fish, its chances of injury and death increase.

Decide beforehand which fish are to be kept; immediately release all others. Do not engage in a prolonged debate over whether or not to release the fish after the fish

has been landed. Never place a fish in your live well intending to release it later if you catch a larger one. Once you make a decision to keep a fish, stick with it. The fishes you release from your live well have a decreased chance of survival.

Avoid the use of gaffs, and never remove large fish such as tarpon from the water. Large fish can injure themselves and the crew and should, therefore, be treated with respect. Take a photograph of the fish in the water and release it.

Refrain from holding fish in a vertical position when inspecting or photographing them. Internal organs are displaced and stress is increased in this unnatural position. Large fish should never be held by the bottom jaw only, with a boca grip or otherwise (any tool designed to grip the lower jaw of caught fish to facilitate handling). Hold the fish horizontally by the lower jaw with one hand, and support the belly with the other hand. If unsupported, many large fish, especially snook, will rupture the isthmus—a cartilaginous bundle of ligaments that connects the head and body—and the fish will die a slow death from starvation. This connection is necessary for the tremendous gulping action during feeding.

If the hook is difficult to remove by hand, use long-nosed pliers or a hook-removal tool. Do not tear additional tissue by removing the hook. Back the hook through the original wound. If this fails, cut the leader and pull the hook forward through the injury. Regardless whether or not you intend to keep the fish cut the leader close to the hook when releasing large Goliath Grouper (jewfish), tarpon, sharks, and other fishes that are gut hooked. Do not lift a gut-hooked fish out of the water by the leader; this can increase damage to the fish.

Try fishing with barbless hooks, or crimp and remove the barb. Catch rates using barbed or barbless hooks are not significantly different. Barbless hooks are easier to remove, and they cause less physical damage to the fish.

Use circle hooks. They cause less injury and increase catch rates.

If your fish is in good shape, immediately return it to the water headfirst. If it does not swim or is lethargic or erratic, some “resuscitation” may be needed until the fish can swim on its own. Revive exhausted, but otherwise healthy fish by first placing one hand under the tail and holding the bottom lip with the other. If the fish is in fair to good shape, merely hold it headfirst into the current. If it is severely lethargic, depress the bottom lip to cause the jaw to gape and gently

continued on page 11



Just in time for Christmas — The redfish come back to Louisiana. And they come back en masse.



This from David Kudley: My grandfather that lived in Dixie County, 70 years ago at Steinhatchie, on the Gulf, schools of fish these size were common, but the schools were 1/2 mile wide and as long as you could see, both ways. When you ran out of bait, a cloth or pieces of you shirt would do. Those were the days.

HOW HAS FLY FISHING CHANGED?

by John Berry

I was fishing with a client the other day, when he asked me an intriguing question. How has fly fishing changed since you started? I started going through some of the changes in my head. Most of it was positive. I began fly fishing three decades ago and I must admit that I spend most of my time trying to manage change.

The most obvious change to me is that there are more people fly fishing now than when I first started. Back then there were precious few fly fishers. Now it seems like there is parity in the numbers of fly fishers versus bait or lure anglers. A lot of the increase is due to technological advances in fly fishing gear. The advances in fly fishing gear have had a profound effect on the sport by making it easier to do and to make the anglers more comfortable.

Fly rods have undergone significant change. When I first started fly fishing, my first fly rod was made of fiber glass. It was heavy and had a very soft action. I remember casting a graphite rod for the first time. It was a Sage and it cast like a dream. It was lighter and had a much stiffer action than my fiberglass. I was so impressed that I went out and bought one (my daughter still fishes with it). The rods then were mostly eight footers. The rods now are much longer. Most are nine feet and several are ten feet. The actions are stiffer and they weigh less.

Fly lines have undergone some fundamental change. Years ago they were either level (no taper)

or they were double taper with a distinct taper on each end. The level lines were inexpensive but cast poorly. The double tapers were popular because you could use one end until you wore it out and then turn it around and use the other side. Now the most popular lines are weight forward which have a distinct taper and are heavier on the tapered end. The other end is smaller and lighter. This allows the line to be cast further. There are also a variety of specialty lines that did not exist then. We now have sink tips, which have a front sinking section and a floating rear section, this allows us to fish deep and still cast the line easily. We also have bass bug lines designed to cast wind resistant bass flies and nymph lines designed to cast double fly rigs, weight and strike indicators. There are more.

The fly reels used when I first started were basically unchanged since the nineteenth century. They used a simple spring and pawl drag. The big change since then is that most fly reels sold today feature a disc drag system similar to that used in automobile brakes. Reels with disc drags weigh a bit more than spring and pawl drags. The current trend is toward larger arbors which allow you to reel in line more quickly. Larger arbors weigh more than smaller arbors. So, while rods are getting lighter, reels are getting heavier.

One change that we don't think about often has been the improvement in leaders and tippets. Back in the day we made our own leaders. We would take several sections of different sized tippet material and carefully join them with blood knots to produce a tapered shape. The knots had a tendency to grab algae or any trash in the water. We now buy knotless tapered leaders that perform flawlessly. Tippets have gotten much stronger over the years.

The change in waders has possibly been the greatest change of all. When I began, I used a borrowed pair of rubberized cotton boot foot waders. They were clumsy, bulky and clammy. The first pair that I bought were neoprene. They were the hot new thing at the time and great during the cold months when their insulating properties were appreciated. They were stocking foots with separate boots that were much more comfortable and provided significant ankle support. However when the summer came, they were stifling. The new style breathable waders are the perfect waders for our area.

The last major change that I have seen has been in fishing ethics. Thirty years ago we kept everything we caught. A stringer was a regular part of our fishing gear. As I grew with the sport, I came to realize that the fish were too valuable to kill. I would rather release them so that I can return and catch them again. As our rivers get more crowded and fishing pressure increases, this is the only viable strategy to provide a quality fishing experience. Years ago, I also fished over spawning trout. I caught some great fish but I came to realize that it was more important for the trout to naturally procreate than to provide me with a little recreation. Others have come to agree with me and the major spawning grounds are now closed during the spawn.

I have seen a lot of change in the last few years and it has been for the better. I have better gear that is much easier to cast, it keeps me more comfortable and I regularly catch quality fish that are the equal of good trout anywhere. Sometimes change is good!

CATCH- &-RELEASE

(continued from page 7)

move the fish forward. Moving the fish in an erratic back and forth motion will just induce more stress. Have you ever seen a fish swim backward and forward? At the first sign of the fish attempting to swim away—let it go. Prolonged attempts at resuscitation will be stressful to the fish.

Large pelagic species such as sharks and tarpon should be brought alongside the boat within 20 minutes of being hooked. If you are consistently landing exhausted fish that require extensive efforts at resuscitation, you should consider using heavier tackle.

To vent or not to vent? Several studies have been conducted to determine if venting distended air bladders of fishes hauled from deep water increases survival. It is inconclusive whether it is beneficial to vent snappers; however, venting groupers has been shown to positively increase survival. It is important to learn and use proper procedures.

Practice and share these techniques! Teach your children and inexperienced anglers these few simple procedures to help ensure abundant fish populations for the future.

If you have any questions, please e-mail: ron.taylor@myfwc.com



MEETING OUTINGS *FISHING* MEETING OUTINGS

- **December Meeting: Monday, Dec 6. Speaker: John C. Owens, Coastal Fossil Adventures.** John holds a JD from Florida Coastal School of Law and degrees in both history and anthropology. Learn where to find fossils in NE Florida.

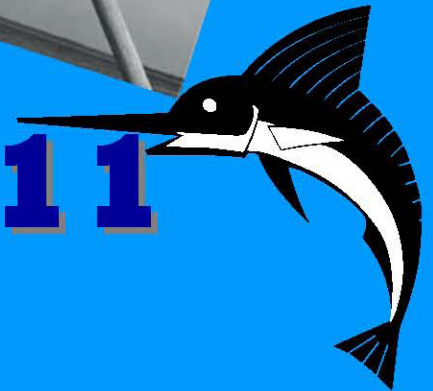
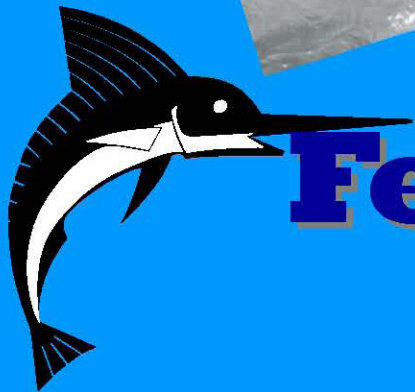
First Coast Fly Fishers Annual Banquet
Featuring
IGFA Hall of Famer



Stu Apte

February 12, 2011

South Point Marriott
Jacksonville, Florida



Don't miss this rare opportunity to spend the evening with one of saltwater fly fishing's greatest legends.

Stu holds several dozen world records including two tarpon records set in ONE day. He was the first person ever to catch a tarpon weighing over 150 pounds. His tarpon flies are world renown. One was even featured on a U.S. Postal Service stamp.

His new book, *Of Wind and Tides*, is an autobiography that takes you through his life as a combat fighter pilot, commercial pilot and fishermen. We will have this book available for purchase at the banquet. This is your chance to get a personalized autographed copy.

In addition to \$1,000s in raffle and auction items, this year's banquet evening will include our first ever **Indoor Fishing Contest**. No equipment, knot tying or casting skills necessary. Fish, Fishermen and Fisherwomen will be competing for a one of a kind **"Apple Fishing iPod"**. You need to see it to believe it!

All members who pay their 2011 dues by the January 2011 meeting will qualify for a chance to win a custom, redfish engraved, 6-7-8 weight **Tibor Back Country CL Wide Reel** valued at \$400. It's guaranteed to catch big fish and you'll look good sporting it.

More information about the banquet will be available at the December meeting and in forthcoming emails.

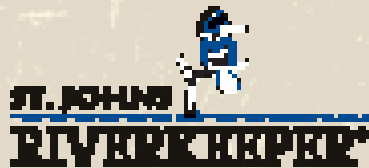
For up-to-the-minute details contact Jim Fallon (fallontest@comcast.net)

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New Board & Officers Elected

First Coast Fly Fishers elected its 2011 Board of Directors with a level of civility and decorum that unfortunately wasn't seen in the recent State and National elections.

This year's cadre of candidates included both new and returning Board members;

Rob Benardo, President

Seth Nerke, VP Programs

Mike Harrigan, VP Programs

Buddy Price, secretary

Ken Nimmich, membership

Don Edlin, treasurer

Jim Fallon, banquet

Bob White, librarian

Bart Isaac, education

Scott Shoher and George Lyncker, at-large Members in 2011.

Dennis Hold, Brad Bravo and Troy James, who served on the Board as Programs Director, Secretary and Librarian in 2010, will not be returning to the Board in 2011. We would like to thank these gentlemen as well as the remaining 2010 Board members for their service and dedication over the past year. We would also like to thank the newly elected 2011 Board of Directors for their dedication and willingness to serve our organization. And we would like to wish them much luck and success in the year to come.