

FIRST COAST FLY FISHER

DECEMBER 2008

*Merry Christmas
To Y'all!*



*Randy Reindeer Hoists a Big
Thanksgiving Weekend Redfish*



Rick Palasanta and Bob Klaus-er in 2003

Santa's Helper Bob Klaus-er Here For Clinic Dec. 7

Join us Sunday, Dec. 7 at M & M Dairy for Bob Clouser Day. Bob Clouser is a great friend to the club who is known for his broad sense of humor and devotion to the sport of fly fishing.

Bob Clouser introduced the fly-fishing world to one of the most famous and effective fly patterns--his Clouser Deep Minnow. The Clouser Minnow has become the fly of choice for many fishermen because of its effectiveness with a wide range of species, from the mountains trout to the coastal and pelagic species. The fly is said to be the most effective underwater fly pattern ever developed.

Clouser's awards include induction into the National Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame as a legendary angler, the Warm Water Committee Achievement Award presented by the Federation of Fly Fishers, and the Dr. James Henshall Award presented by the Federation of Fly Fishers.

This is a free program for dues-paid FCFF members and families. Lunch and will be drinks provided. The program begins at 9 a.m.

December 6 - Renzetti's Legends of Fly Fishing in Titusville: www.renzetti.com
December 7 - Bob Clouser Comes to the FCFF. Come join us for Bob Clouser Day, an annual event in FCFF. Bob is one of the best known names in fly fishing -- a great casting instructor, lifelong guide, and tyer supreme. M & M Dairy, 9 a.m. Lunch provided. Contact Rob Benardo at programs@fcff.org
December Outing - Dec 19 & 20. Homosassa. Contact Bob White, email: rgwhite@lycos.com for further information

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Cook's Critter

This Sand-Flea Imitation Fools Fish in the Surf

by Dana Griffin III

Someone has remarked that there are so many life forms in the ocean that, if you set your sights on catching a fish on a fly in such an environment, it doesn't really matter what the fly looks like, something out there will take it as food and will bite. Well, maybe. It's true that A.J. McClane once caught a Florida bonefish on a light cahill, but given that there are virtually no marine mayflies, this must surely be regarded as a stunt — which the famous author/angler undoubtedly intended it to be.

So, it is particularly satisfying to come across a fly pattern where the prey it imitates seems relatively unambiguous, to wit: Cook's Critter. This unique fly was the brainchild of the late Vance Cook of Pensacola. I had the pleasure of interviewing Vance on the subject of his now famous fly (it once made it onto a fishing calendar as the "fly of the month"), and I asked him what he thought it represented. "Beats me," he said, "but if you take it out here (we were in Pensacola Beach at the time) and toss it in the surf, odds are you'll catch something." I couldn't leave this alone. Vance had grown up in Pensacola. He had an intimate knowledge of all the critters that swam, crawled or slithered along the beaches of his part of the world. Surely he had some idea of what his "critter" imitated. And he had a fertile imagination.

Over many years he developed an astonishing number of innovative flies. Count yourself lucky if you have some of these in your collection. They are among the best for fly fishing in Florida's near shore waters. I told him I was going to look into the matter and would return at some future date with a list of possibilities. The best possibility didn't take long in coming. Cook's Critter (see photo) has the general shape and

size of a mole crab (*Emerita talpoidea*) (also known locally as the sand flea--Ed.). These crustaceans occupy the high part of the intertidal zone. As the waters move out they scurry into the sand. When the waves return they pop out and feed actively on plankton, detritus or whatever else they can find. Some, without doubt, get swept further out into the surf and are prime targets for cruising fish. The next time I saw Vance, I asked what he thought about Cook's Critter as a mole crab imitator. "You could be right," he said which I shall take as a positive, if tepid, affirmation.

While you don't have to use the fly in the surf (Jodi Slapcinsky of Gainesville, once hooked an American Shad on a Cook's Critter on the upper St. John's), it is perfectly tailored to be used in the surf environment. Cast it out, allow it to sink, and then retrieve slowly. Mole Crabs are basically at the mercy of the waves. Vance used to keep a list of fish species that had fallen to his fly, and while I don't have a copy of that list, I know it was impressive and included bluefish, jack crevalle, pompano, whiting, redfish, flounder and trout (not usually a surf species).

On one trip to Pensacola Beach, I saw some feeding activity in the surf just outside the hotel where the FFF was having its annual meeting. Excusing myself with some manufactured excuse about an emergency, I grabbed my fly rod and headed down to the water. The predators, whatever they were, were moving fast, and I barely had time to get in a couple of casts, but those casts got me into some fantastic action and a pair of nice ladyfish. It probably isn't necessary to reveal what fly I had knotted onto the tippet.

Are You Asking the Right Questions?

Questions by Marine Biologist Aaron Adams, PhD

by **Bill AuCoin**

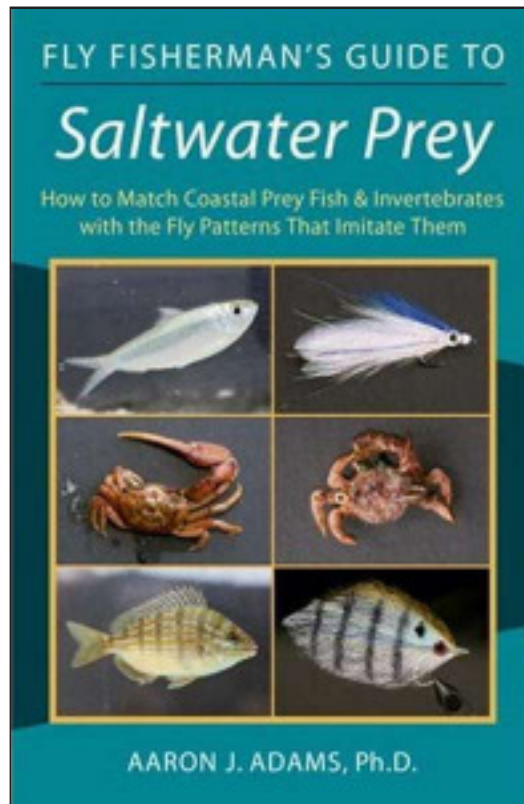
of the Suncoast Fly Fishers

The key question a fly fisherman should ask isn't what do fish eat. It's better to ask what are they eating right now. Matching the "hatch" has more to do with where you are fishing than what you are fishing for.

Aaron Adams, Ph.D., marine biologist and avid fly fisher, drove this point home in his talk to Suncoast Fly Fishers at the club's September meeting. Are you fishing mangroves or seagrass? How big is the bait? Is the tide high or low? Is the grass continuous or laced with sandy areas.

Adams is the author of two very important books for fly fishers and he gave members the major points, with lots of examples, from both. His first was *Fisherman's Coast – An Angler's Guide to Marine Warm Water Gamefish and Their Habitats*. His most recent book, which he autographed for SFF members, is *Fly Fisherman's Guide to Saltwater Prey—How to Match Coastal Prey Fish & Invertebrates with the Fly Patterns That Imitate Them*.

Every fishing expedition is a puzzle you have to solve. You need to know the basics. Fish eat. Fish eat what's available. Then solve for the conclusion, what is available to them right now? Offshore fish chasing a school of bait to the surface may look like they're feeding on everything. Don't believe it. In a situation like this gamefish can be very picky, believe it or not. Watch the diving



birds. What are they picking up? If you're fishing an area of patchy grass it's helpful to know that redfish like to hide in the grass and nose up to the edge so they can ambush bait moving from one patch to the next as the tide moves in or out. It's helpful to know that baitfish use these sandy lanes to move in and out with the rising and falling tide. If the grass is continuous without sandy patches that's good. But it may be bad. It's good because this habitat holds lots of fish. It's bad, maybe, because you may have to put the fly inches from a fish's nose – quietly! — so the fly will be seen.

One of the things that makes Adams' newest book so valuable to fly fishers is the juxtaposition of color photographs of baitfish, crabs and shrimp with the flies that best imitate them. I'm not telling. Sometimes a book comes along and things start to make real good sense.Bill AuCoin



Rob Santanardo Shows The Xmas Spirit



Kudley Klaus--Need We Say More?



*Capt. Larry Miniard Demonstrates The Proper Way to Filet Fish At Deep Creek Lodge.
Learn How Catch Local Fish From The Best Area Guides at The Annual Banquet, Jan 31.*

Borries, Bottko, Bozzella & Miniard

Yearly Fest To Feature Area's Most Learned Guides

Mark your calendars; the **First Coast Fly Fishers Annual Banquet** is scheduled for Saturday, January 31, 2009. The theme for this year's banquet will be *fly fishing the First Coast*. Headlining this year's banquet, which will be held at **Deep Creek Lodge**, will be four of the best inshore guides in northeast Florida. Captain's John Bottko, David Borries, Tony Bozzella, and Larry Miniard have over 100 years of combined experience fly fishing the First Coast. Together they will present an all-day seminar on fly fishing northeast Florida, top to bottom and season to season. Following the dinner on Saturday, John and Nancy Bottko will give a presentation titled *Fly Fishing The World From Florida's First Coast*.

Deep Creek Lodge is north of St Augustine, along the western side of the Intracoastal Waterway. The Lodge is nestled on Deep Creek and is reminiscent of an old Florida fish camp complete with a main lodge, oyster house, dock and several brick-lined fire pits. It is the ideal setting to spend the day learning the nuances of fly fishing the First Coast. Those attending the seminar will be treated to lunch served at the old oyster house. Following the seminar the banquet dinner will be held in the main lodge.

This year *grand prize will be a Tibor reel and Sage rod combo*. We will also have several raffle and silent auction items from the Salty Feather, Black Fly Outfitters, Black Creek Outfitters and other area vendors. Each paid banquet ticket will receive one ticket for the grand prize drawing. If you are unable to attend the banquet, you will still be eligible for the

grand prize drawing. All membership renewal applications submitted by the January 2009 meeting will receive an additional ticket for the grand prize drawing.

The Board is finalizing preparations for the annual banquet. Detailed information regarding the banquet will be posted to the club website and sent out to the general membership (via email) by mid-December.



Casting Great and Scientific Angler's Line Designer Bruce Blitzen Searches for Tailing Reds Near Deep Creek



photo by Rob Benardo

Little Abaco Bonefish Trip

Good Fishing, Good Lodging, Good Friendships Built

by John Holt, Gainesville

On November 17, 2008, Captain David Borries of the First Coast Fly Fishers who guides out of the Salty Feather Fly Shop in Jacksonville took a few lucky fly fishers on his "Bonefish on a Budget" excursion to Little Abaco for a 3.5 day excursion. The cost was \$1300 all inclusive with roundtrip airfare from St. Augustine. The group stayed at the Tangelo Hotel (<http://oii.net/tangelo/index.htm>) on the northern tip of the island. The trip included a day of fishing with a guide from a boat and two-and-a-half days wade fishing the bonefish-laden flats near the hotel. Capt. David Borries provided personal instruction and guiding services. One of the lucky participants was a North Florida Fly Fishers club member, Gainesville's John Holt.

Here is John Holt's fishing report from Abaco: There were 4 members of the Jacksonville club on the trip with me. Three of them were skilled, veteran bone fishers, which meant that they preferred to fish on their own by wading the flats, sans guide. There were a couple of major flats near our motel, so they spent 3.5 of the 4.5 fishing days wading those flats on their own. Strong winds made it necessary to use my 8 or 9 weight rod and wind put a premium on distance-casting skill and when coupled with clouds, wind makes the fish difficult to see.

One guided trip was included in the price, and on that trip I caught 5 bones. However, on another guided trip the next day, I didn't get a shot. The skilled guys all caught fish wading on the nearby flats. I waded also but could not see the fish well enough to score. My vision is 20/20 with glasses, but seeing the fish is challenging indeed, and in 4 days I improved some,

but not enough to fish effectively on my own.

The weather is dicey this time of year. We had one clear day with an average of about 70% clouds on the other days. And it was cold as a rip a couple days (water temp was 60° one morning). The fish are bigger in the fall and winter. I caught from 3 to 5 pound bonefish and that was typical. One guy caught a ten-pounder and there was an eight and a sprinkling of sixes. The other trip participants will be going again in April where the fish are more plentiful and the weather is fine, but the fish are smaller. In the spring it is common to find schools of 2 pounders.

I'm really glad I went. Catching a bonefish was high on my bucket list. I'd love to go again, and I will if I can raise the money. In total, Sunday through Friday, I spent \$2,000 for plane, lodging, meals and tips. The motel was clean, the people were very nice, and the food was good (Dave, who is a gourmet cook, said "For camp food, it's adequate."), if calorie-laden. Our host, David Borries, is a really good guy and I intend to fish with him again. If and when I go to Abaco again, it will be in the spring, and I'll want to hire a guide and fish from a boat (which adds to the expense @ about \$400 per day) because of my inability to see the fish and the ability to cover so much more water. There is one superb guide there at Wood Cay, Abaco Islands: Donald L. Rolle (1-242-365-0282). He can see fish 5 minutes before anyone else, is a master at maneuvering the boat, and is a courteous gentleman.

(From Dec. 2008 Picayune, the newsletter of North Florida Fly Fishers, Gainesville, for this article)

Five Hardcore Flyfishers Hit Little Abaco



***text and photos
by Rob Benardo***

I went down to Little Abaco three weeks ago with Dave Borries and a great group of five hard core Bone fishermen. We left Sunday morning around 9am and we were walking out onto the Bahamian flats by 2pm. We caught some nice Bonefish throughout the week that ranged from 5 to 10 lbs. in some challenging conditions. November is the month for big fish and questionable weather, we experienced both. The food was great, the after-fishing camaraderie memorable and the unbelievable power of a big Bonefish emptying my reel at blistering speeds made this trip worth the effort.

Sawmills, Oil Wells and Trout

Will PA Use or Abuse Its Natural Resources?

by Jason C. Sheasley

The water is clear and cold. My feet and legs slowly become numb despite my insulated waders. The cold is refreshing, a change of pace from the tepid Florida waters that are my normal fishing environs.

For the past 40 minutes I have watched a trout feed in a small pool at the end of a series of riffles. A fallen tree to the left of the pool protects it from birds and anglers alike. To the right, a slipstream brings a never-ending supply of food to the waiting fish. There are no visible hatches coming off so I try my luck casting a few attractor patterns to the head of the pool. I make one or two casts with each pattern before putting the fish down. In five minutes, the trout resumes feeding. After digging through my meager supply of dry flies I find and attach a #20 midge pattern.

My first cast with the midge is perfect curve that puts the fly right in feeding zone. Shadows from the trees make the midge hard for me to see, but the fish has no trouble. He rises to the fly, but I set the hook too soon and miss the fish. My second cast is less perfect and the fly lands precariously close to the fallen tree. Just as I've decided to save my fly from the tangle ahead, the trout rises to my offering. This time it hooks itself. At first sign of pressure from my line, the fish makes two leaps, then takes off for the head of the pool. I keep the fish away from the tangle and bring to hand a carryover 12-inch brook trout.

In Autumn Central Pennsylvania's mountains take on the hues and coloring of a brook trout, which become aggressive as water temperatures cool. At summer's end, most sportsmen turn their attention to hunting season, abandoning trout streams in favor of deer stands. With the first trout of the day under my belt, I am eager to explore the solitude of this small stream. Above me, an old railroad bed promises an easy walk upstream.



Autumn Colors In Central Pennsylvania's Susquehanna Valley

I find it also makes an excellent elevated vantage point for scoping out pools and lies.

Central Pennsylvania was known as the "Lumber Capital of the World" in the 1800s. Railroads once transported timber to sawmills that populated the Susquehanna Valley and old railroad beds like this one are still commonplace. The lumber that built our nation came from these mountains and men from all over the world came to make their fortunes here. At one time Lycoming County had more millionaires per capita than any other place in the world.

In old photographs of this valley, the mountains have been logged out, the hills are stripped bare. Standing in this third-generation growth of oak, walnut, cherry,

chestnut and pine, it's hard to imagine a bare mountainside. Native Americans who once occupied this valley say this very stream once teemed with trout. Regrettably, when loggers destroyed this habitat, trout populations in major freestone creeks and streams were all but wiped out.. When the industry waned, conservation became the order of the day. Decades of hard work by sportsmen and conservationists brought Central Pennsylvania's trout population back from the brink of annihilation. Habitats were renewed and the area became a sportsman's paradise.

~ ~

I make my way to a calm stretch of water to a long cut-bank that looks promising. The same midge I cast earlier proves unreliable here and I switch to a black leach pattern. Autumn may very well be the most challenging time of year to trout fish. The water is generally low and clear. Having managed to survive the spring and summer, these fish are now wary; it doesn't take much to put them down. A stealthy approach is mandatory.

continued on next page

'In Autumn, Central Pennsylvania's sportsmen turn their attention to hunting season, abandoning trout streams in favor of deer stands.'

(continued from previous page)

Midge, hopper and streamer patterns are the most productive flies for Autumn fishing in central Pennsylvania, depending on the time of day. I work my leach pattern along the cut-bank, casting it upstream as close to the bank as I can, allowing the fly to drift freely and bounce along the bottom. I wait until the fly has cleared the bank before picking up the fly and casting again. Occasionally, I twitch the fly during the drift. My technique brings me two browns between 10 and 12-inches.

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The lumber boom in central Pennsylvania coincided with the discovery of oil in the western part of the state. The area enjoyed the riches of the new petroleum industry for a few decades. Eventually, due to higher-yield oil discoveries in Texas and Oklahoma, Pennsylvania's petroleum industry went the way of the lumber industry. Now, on the eve of the 21st century, a new oil boom crests the horizon. About four miles from here, a huge drill rig penetrates the Marcellus Shale, a known natural gas reserve that runs along the spine of the Appalachian Mountains in central Pennsylvania. Geologists estimate the Marcellus Shale holds 500 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, enough to supply the demands of the United States for two years. The cost to harvest this gas is estimated at \$1 trillion; until recently these costs were considered too high. Advances in drilling technology coupled with increased petroleum costs and demands have made the Marcellus Shale deposits desirable. What effects will gas drilling have on the surrounding watershed? Drilling a well up to 8000-feet deep requires millions of gallons of water. Consumption of the necessary drilling water could have far-reaching effects on the watershed, as could the disposition of millions of gallons of drilling waste



Top: An Oil Rig Sequesters in the Central Pennsylvania Hill Country. Bottom: Author Jasanta Sheasley with A Pretty Central PA Rainbow Trout

water. Local trout streams could take a big hit. Like the effects of the logging industry, local trout may suffer. . .or they may be wiped out entirely. Pennsylvania is a state rich in natural resources. Beginning with the lumber boom and continuing through the drilling of the Marcellus Shale, the State's economy is linked closely to its natural resources. Lumber, oil and gas, and coal are all vital products of Pennsylvania. But just as vital are the trout streams and mountains that make this one of the premiere states for hunting and fishing in the nation. Hunting and fishing contributes an estimated \$9.6 million daily to the State's economy. I make a few final casts to deep pool as I stand midstream in the waning Autumn light. My line goes taught and I'm convinced I've snagged the bottom, but then my line moves gently through my fingers. I secure the line against the cork handle and let the fish set itself. The small rainbow on my line rockets from the water and somersaults in mid-air. I favor a quick release. As the trout slips from my fingers, I think of the nearby drill rig. These trout streams survived the ravages of the lumber boom

and they will most likely survive the looming gas boom. Nevertheless, I will be watching from afar to see how my home state manages to simultaneously exploit and preserve its natural resources.

(Jason Sheasley is president of First Coast Fly Fishers in Jacksonville, FL. He is a geologist/hydrogeologist who works with waste-water reclamation.)





The Modified John Adams Bluegill Fly

text and photos by Bart Isaac

Bream fishing is a ton of fun, especially in the spring. From early Spring to late Fall, you might find me in the evening heading to the local pond casting to these “land locked” hard fighting fish. They’re pretty tough on flies. I have found that this fly is easy to tie, durable and best yet, the panfish and bass really like it! Fish it as you would any topwater fly. However, for bedding bluegills, just let the fly sit for a while; twitch now and then—it’s killer. You can tie this fly in many different colors; no need to use the same colors that I have chosen below. You will find that this fly is very similar to a “gurgler.”

Hook: Your choice of freshwater hook, for this I use a #8 Dry fly hook

Thread: Denier 210, Brown

Tail: Yellow Rabbit fur clipped from the skin

Legs: Sili Legs, Barred clear/pearl

Body: Green 2mm Craft Foam and Krystal Flash Chenille in Brown

Step 1: Start the thread on the hook near the bend.

Step 2: Clip the tuft of rabbit fur from the skin and tie it onto the top of the bend of the hook.

Step 3: Tie in 2 sili legs on each side of the rabbit fur. I do this by taking a 4 inch leg and cutting in half. Then use these two, 2” sections to tie onto each side of the fly. (You can tie in as many legs as you like).

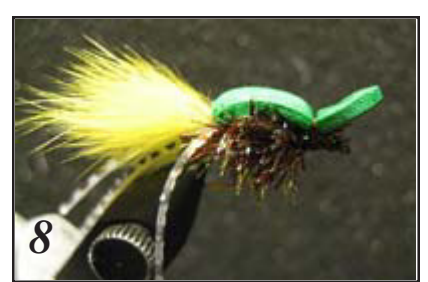
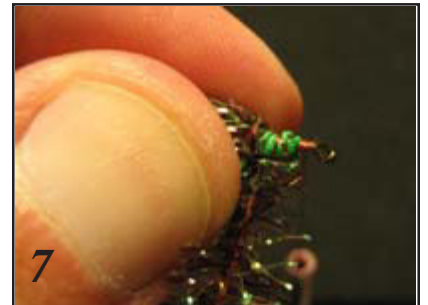
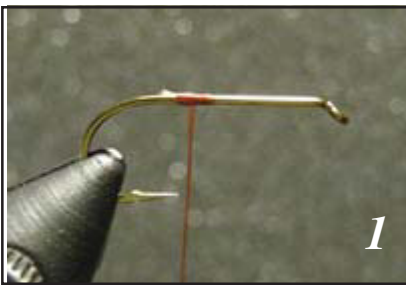
Step 4: Clip out a section of foam as shown in the picture below. The length of the foam should be at least double to length of the hook shank.

Step 5: Tie the foam onto the hook as shown and keep the thread near the bend of the hook to tie in the chenille.

Step 6: Tie in the chenille and wrap the thread forward toward the eye.

Step 7: Wrap the chenille forward toward the eye. Note how I pull the chenille back with my left hand as I wind it forward with my right.....kind of like palmering a feather.

Step 8: When I get the chenille to the desired spot behind the eye, I tie it off and clip it. The only thing left is to lay the foam forward to create the “shell back” and lip. Whip finish and you’re done!





*Top:
Redfish
Scales;
Left,
Rich
Santas;
Right:
Daniel
Isaac;
Bottom,
Redfish
Twice*





Goodby's Creek

by Rick Palazzini