

# Fly Fishing

Fly fishing is one of those special outdoor activities that can quickly become a life-long passion. At its most basic, fly fishing is simple, using a flexible rod, a fly line, leader and a feathered hook. Yet the sport can quickly evolve into a pursuit unlike any other fishing method. Fly fishing is usually thought of as a stream surface fishing method, but techniques and equipment have changed over the years; all waters and depths can now be fished.

Quality, inexpensive beginner fly fishing kits are common and a fly angler can get started for less than a hundred dollars. The fly rod is usually 7 to 9

feet long with a fly reel mounted on the rear seat. Rods can have different flex characteristics, but the rod basically aims and transfers power to the fly line. Fly lines are shot forward with the power of the rod flex.

Like many activities, fly casting is simple to learn but difficult to master. Ask any veteran fly angler and they will tell you that their cast is a work in progress.

Fortunately, help is available for the beginner. Videos, DVDs and fly fishing classes (both from clubs and fly shops) are good places to start. And don't overlook an experienced friend.

Idaho is renowned for its fly fishing waters. Some of the more famous fly fishing rivers are: the Henrys Fork of the Snake River, the South Fork of the Snake River, Silver Creek, the South Fork of the Boise River, Kelly Creek, the North Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River and the St. Joe River.

Give fly fishing a try. You just might get hooked for life.



Rob Parkins

feet long with a fly reel mounted on the rear seat. Rods can have different flex characteristics, but the rod basically aims and transfers power to the fly line. Fly lines are shot forward with the power of the rod flex.

Fly lines are divided into two general categories: floating and sinking, with a dizzying variety in each category to meet fishing conditions. A monofilament leader attaches the fly line to a



Rob Parkins



# Steelhead and Salmon Fishing

Of all the fishing opportunities in Idaho, perhaps the most exciting is the yearly surge of anadromous (sea-run) fish to our rivers and streams. Wild steelhead and Chinook salmon, though much reduced from historic numbers, return from the Pacific Ocean every year by the thousands, swimming upstream as much as 900 miles to spawning grounds in the Snake, Salmon and Clearwater drainages. Hatchery-raised steelhead and salmon boost the overall runs and provide first rate fishing and harvest opportunity for big, hard-fighting fish.

**Steelhead:** Some consider steelhead to be the premiere freshwater sportfish and for good reason; few gamefish can match the steelhead's combination of beauty and fighting ability, as well as their excellent qualities on the dinner plate.



Martin Koenig

Run size varies from year to year, but Idaho averages more than 150,000 steelhead returning each season. Fish can range from five pounds to more than 20 pounds. They enter Idaho in late summer or fall, spend the winter in larger rivers, and make the final push to spawning grounds in the spring. With large numbers of fish, long seasons and more than 650 river miles of the Snake, Salmon and Clearwater rivers to choose from, Idaho offers one of the finest steelhead fisheries on the continent.

**Salmon:** Chinook salmon runs – and fishing opportunity for them – have been less consistent than for steelhead, but what salmon lack in numbers they make up for in brute strength. Most fish range from 12 to 20 pounds, but fish over 30 pounds are caught each year. Chinook salmon are classified



Carson Jeffries

into three groups – spring, summer and fall Chinook – based on the timing of their run and where they spawn.



Brett Bowersox

Spring and summer Chinook generally migrate earlier, travel farther to headwater streams and spawn in late summer. Fall Chinook migrate later and typically spawn in larger mainstem rivers in October. Chinook salmon fishing seasons are often very restrictive and limited to specific stretches of rivers.

**Fishing Rules:** Steelhead and Salmon seasons and limits can change each year depending on the strength of the run, so check the regulations carefully, use the Fish and Game website (<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov>) or call your local Fish and Game office when planning a trip. Note that all fishing for steelhead and salmon requires a special permit, barbless hooks are required, only hatchery fish with a clipped adipose fin may be harvested, and you must record any harvested fish on your permit immediately.



# White Sturgeon - Prehistoric Giants

North America's largest and longest-lived freshwater fish, the white sturgeon, is an Idaho native. Growing to 12 feet and living up to 100 years, white sturgeon are found in several of Idaho's larger rivers. Catching one is considered by many to be the ultimate fishing experience.

Popular white sturgeon fishing destinations along the Snake River include Hells Canyon Dam to Lewiston, C.J. Strike Dam to Swan Falls Reservoir, Bliss Dam to C.J. Strike Reservoir, and below Swan Falls Dam.

Whether you're new to the sport, or a veteran sturgeon angler, it remains important to use "low-impact" fishing techniques to insure the continuation of this great fishery.

Use only barbless hooks – which are required by law – in sizes 7/0 to 13/0. Pliers can be used to pinch down hook barbs; this practice makes hook removal easier and minimizes damage to a sturgeon's fleshy mouth.

Tie the sinker to a dropper line on a sliding swivel using line at least ten pound test lighter than the main line (see inset at right). This minimizes the chances of leaving a baited hook rig snagged to the bottom if break-off occurs. Beginning in 2011, the sliding sinker will be required when sturgeon fishing.

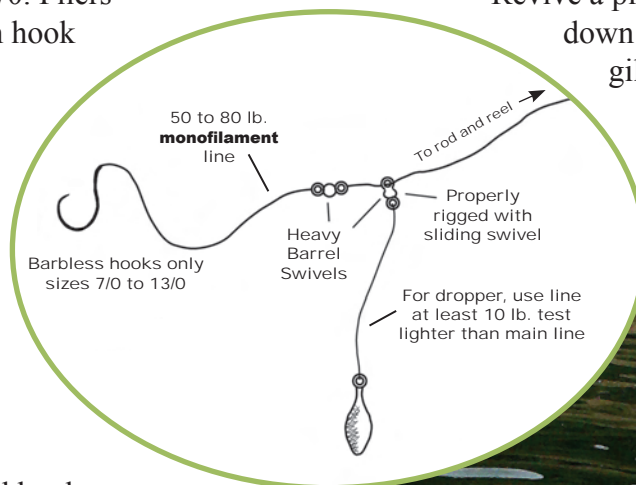
Avoid overstressing the fish during the fight by using 50 to 80 lb. test monofilament line or 130 to 150 lb. test superbraid line to work the fish quickly to shore or boat. Monofilament line generally has much higher abrasion resistance and stretch that makes it much more forgiving when fighting large fish. Use a heavy rod and quality reel capable of landing large fish quickly. A quality sturgeon reel is

well machined with a smooth drag and line capacity of at least 250 yards of proper line. Be realistic about your chances of landing a large sturgeon when choosing a fishing hole, especially when fishing without a boat.

Keep the fish in the water (it's the law). Sturgeon have only cartilage, not bones, and may be injured if lifted out of the water. Never pull a fish up on shore for any reason. Gently roll the fish belly-up to remove the hook; a tired sturgeon will almost always remain calm when held in this manner. Never tie a fish by the tail, as a tail-rope fish will struggle and can easily injure itself if it starts thrashing.

A great sturgeon photo is best taken with you in the water with the fish. Keep water flowing over the sturgeon's gills at all times while snapping a picture.

Revive a played-out fish by rolling it belly down and allow water to flow over its gills until it swims away. Never touch the gills.



Mike Demick, IDFG

**Watch the low-impact sturgeon fishing video on the Fish and Game website: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov>**



# Dealing With Invasive Aquatic Species

**I**nvasive species are animals, plants and disease organisms that are not native (and not wanted) in Idaho. Some invasive species pose a risk to fish and wildlife by taking over habitats, crowding out native species, competing for food or making them sick. Do your part to stop the introduction and spread of these organisms – your future fishing may depend on it.

Several invasive aquatic species have already found their way to Idaho. A European import, whirling disease is a microscopic parasite that has had a major impact on some western wild trout populations. Because the parasite clings to waders, boots and other fishing equipment, anglers – without even knowing it – can spread the disease to new waters.

**Eurasian water-milfoil** is a non-native aquatic plant that arrived in the U.S. in the 1940s and has now spread across the country, including Idaho. This nuisance plant grows fast and can quickly cover the entire surface of smaller lakes and ponds, making fishing and boating impossible.



U. of Idaho

Eurasian water-milfoil

A single piece of milfoil can start a new infestation, so it is easily spread by boat trailers, float tubes or wading boots.

**New Zealand mudsnails** are now dispersed across southern and central Idaho. These invaders crowd out native snails, consume algae and reduce aquatic insects.



D. L. Gustafson

New Zealand Mudsnails

Their effects on fish populations remain unknown. Mudsnails can survive for hours or even days out of water. They can cling to waders, boots or other equipment and go along on your next fishing trip.

## Stopping new introductions...

The best defense against invasive species is to keep them from getting here in the first place. **Zebra mussels and quagga mussels**



100th Meridian.org

Zebra Mussel

are the newest threat. First seen in the Great Lakes in the 1980s, both species quickly expanded through much of the Midwest and more recently to the western U.S. They thrive in reservoirs, lakes and larger rivers, attaching to rocks, ropes, chains, docks, dams, irrigation pipes and even boat hulls and motors. Filtering algae from the water, they can disrupt the food chain which then impacts fish populations. Spreading can occur when an infested boat is moved from one water to another.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Quagga mussels

Neither mussel has been found in Idaho, and efforts focus on keeping them out. Special boat inspection stations along major highways and boat cleaning stations near some boat ramps are intended to detect mussels and other invasive species and decontaminate infected boats.

## Help Prevent the Spread of Invasive Species!

**Inspect fishing and boating equipment** and remove all obvious debris.

Clean items by spraying them with a two percent solution of household bleach or allow the items to dry thoroughly (at least 48 hours) before using them at another water body.

**Never release fish or any other living creature** into any water where it did not originate.

**For more information on aquatic nuisance species, visit these websites:**

<http://www.protectyourwaters.net>

<http://www.100thmeridian.org>

<http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu>

<http://www.invasive.org>

<http://www.agri.state.id.us>

<http://www.esg.montana.edu/aim/mollusca/nzms/id.html>

<http://nas3.er.usgs.gov>

