



# The Fly Line

August 2011

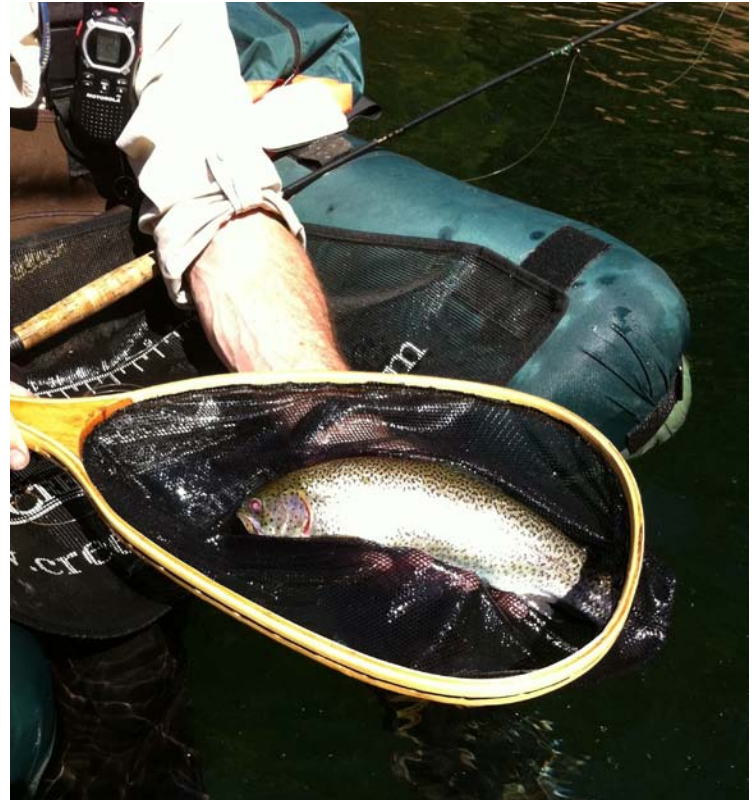
## President's Message

Well, Montana was a bust, so was most of the west. The good news is that the fishing is great now. Victor Babbitt of Tahoe Fly Fishing said that the streams are fishing well and should continue. The shop is on Lake Tahoe Blvd, on the left about a mile from the "Y". Stop by and they will give you the latest update.

Some upcoming events include the idea of a joint HTFF and TU Meeting. Sportsman's EXPO at the County fairgrounds is in September. The club meetings for August and September will be on the water. If you want an excuse to go fishing on the third Wednesday of each month, mark it on your calendar and get out. This month we will be on the South Fork at Icehouse bridge.

One thing the club needs is a meeting place for the winter. We are looking for a casual place where we can have workshops, tie flies, show movies and other club activities. If you know of a good spot, let us know.

-Karl



Dave Angelo lands a nice rainbow at Ice House – Check out his fishing report!

## AUGUST MEETING

THE NEXT MEETING IS AUGUST 17TH. WE PLAN TO FISH THE S. FORK OF THE AMERICAN RIVER AT RIVERTON. THE LOCATION IS ON THE NORTH SIDE OF HWY. 50 AT THE MONUMENT JUST WEST OF THE CRYSTAL BASIN (ROAD TO ICE HOUSE RESERVOIR) TURN-OFF. WE WILL MEET AT 6:00 PM. - LEW

THE JULY MEETING WAS A BLAST! GOOD FOOD AT THE ROCK CREEK CAFÉ FOLLOWED BY SOME GREAT FISHING AT A PRIVATE POND. LOTS OF BIG BLUEGILL AND BASS WERE TAKING POPPERS OFF THE SURFACE. IF THE ACTION HAD BEEN A LITTLE SLOWER, I MIGHT HAVE REMEMBERED TO TAKE SOME PICTURES. - JEFF



**Molly sneaking up on some Red Lake Creek brookies.**

### **Dave's fishing report**

The rainbow in the picture is one of thirty plus trout landed at the back end of Ice House Reservoir. I lost at least 20 others as I got them close to the net. Mike Rivers and Ed O'Neill from the Solano Fly Fishers joined me on our monthly fishout. Ed and Mike each landed 15-20 trout apiece - also having many long distance releases. We each used a variety of flies and most were quite successful. I fished with a #8 copper crystal bugger and a #12 olive wooly bugger with crystal flash in the tail and ribbed body. Ed was most successful with a Denny Rickerts still water nymph and a black lead-eyed damselfly nymph, both size 12. Mike used a #10 sheeps creek. It definitely was one of our most satisfying trips this year. Ed landed the biggest fish with a 16" German brown.

"Stream fishing is still marginal. The massive spring flows seem to have flushed the bigger fish downstream and many of the local creeks are still running high and cold. Under these conditions, Red Lake Creek seemed a likely spot. We landed a fair number of very small brookies but judging from streamside evidence, others had the same idea and they weren't into catch and release. As usual, #14 renegades and #12 black foam ants worked well." (jn)

Continued.....

## Dave's fishing report continued...

My youngest son Matt and I headed up to the Caples Lake area to see how those lakes are fishing. We stopped at Kirkwood Lake at about 11, and the lake, as always, looked gorgeous. Bank fishermen were hooking up nice rainbows in the 12-14" range using power bait on the bottom. There were quite a few fishing the shoreline, which made it difficult for we tubers to gain access to the "fishy areas", not that we could get our flies down deep enough to where the trout were lying. We worked the entire lake with intermediate and #3 sink lines. Matt never had a grab, and it was only as we were heading back to take out that I had 3 grabs, 1 landed. This was after 2 hours of virtually no action. My activity was on the #10 crystal buggers, dark green for the hookup and grab, and gold for the ever so brief hookup. We moved up to Woods Lake, which still had snow down to the shoreline in places. I spotted some working trout in close to the shore and slowly moved in that direction so as not to spook them. I still had my tandem set-up from Kirkwood on, and that proved to work quite well. The gold bugger hooked and landed 5-6 nice 12-14" rainbows. Matt had moved down towards the back of the lake, getting his first grab of the day which lifted his spirits a little. He reported, via walkie-talkie, some surface activity appearing where the 2 streams converged. I suggested that he put on a #14 olive woolly bugger, and to my delight, he quickly called back to report the rainbows were very interested in that pattern. He landed several in a 15-20 minute span, nothing larger than 9", but fun none the less. I got down into the area some 10 minutes later, but the bite had slowed. I tried a #14 olive damselfly nymph to start, but only received a quick rejection on the first cast, then nothing. I switched to the same size olive woolly bugger but could only manage a brief hook-up. Matt moved over to the brushy area at the far end of the lake next and was greeted by a few willing brook trout. It was getting late and the cold wind convinced us that our 5:00 take out was quickly approaching. We headed back, but I decided to put my gold bugger back on for the kick back. Just before take out, I noticed some more working fish and quickly found 2 willing rainbows, landing one of the two. Caples and Silver Lakes both looked too windy to be worth the effort. Both lakes are very full, with snowmelt still entering them. They certainly should be worth the effort to fish them on a less windy day. We had thought about going to Indian Creek Reservoir, but the extra distance and the wind convinced us to stay in the smaller lakes of the Caples Lake area. Streams in the American River system are dropping their flows and for the most part can be waded with some care. The next 3 months should offer great fishing in the entire system.

Tight lines to all. Dave

## CLUB STUFF

### 2011 OFFICERS:

**PRESIDENT AND TREASURER – KARL WEILAND**

**VP MEETINGS – LEW ARCHULETTA**

**VP OUTINGS – DAVE ANGELO**

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If you want your pictures or stories in the newsletter or on the web site - email Jeff Nagel – click on my name & type in your message.

# The Belgian Cast

by **Macauley Lord**

photos by Zach and Lauren Matthews

*A two-plane cast helps you fish heavy flies, sinking lines, tandem rigs, and big strike indicators.*

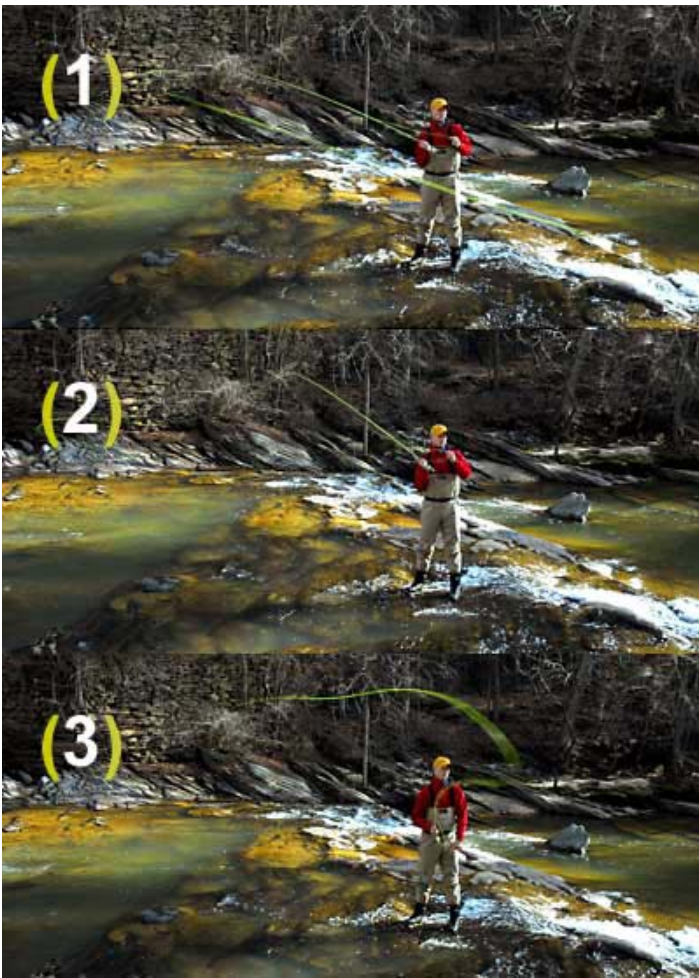


HIGH WATER ON IDAHO'S Big Lost River was forcing me to play a game I don't usually enjoy. The fish were deep and stodgy, and they wanted something dead-drifted. Their message was clear: No streamer madness, no hopper-dropper today; just tie a stone fly nymph to an anvil and feed us! So out came a size 6 Kaufmann's Stone and my biggest strike indicator. I rigged up the 6-weight rod, dusted off my Belgian cast and started catching fish.

## Keep It Moving

The Belgian cast differs in two important ways from the technique that most beginners learned on Day One. First, it is a constant-motion cast. The rod never stops until it's time to lay the cast down, and during the stroke the rod is always loaded. Second, the rod doesn't move in a straight line or through a single plane. Instead, the backcast is consciously made in a more horizontal plane than the forward cast. Because the rod rounds and blends the boundaries between backcast and forward cast, the Belgian is rounded in every way possible. Mel Krieger aptly calls it a "pull-around, swing-around" cast. It is this roundedness that gives it great grace and justifies associations with exquisite Belgian chocolates.

I had to dust off my Belgian cast on the Big Lost because I don't often hurl heavy artillery, such as Kaufmann's Stones, at trout. But it's the perfect cast for ultra-heavy flies. It's also the cast of choice for heaving a sinking shooting head. To cast heavy flies and dense lines, you need an open loop, constant tension on the rod, and the somewhat horizontal backcast to keep the fly away from your head. Even if you haven't heard of the Belgian cast before reading this, you may have subconsciously devised something like it as a way to cast these dense flies and lines.



You may have heard of this cast by other names, such as oval, elliptical, tension, or circular. They're all synonyms for the Belgian. More and more beginners are learning it these days as a way to cast the two-fly rigs that have become ubiquitous on some rivers. By opening the loop and making the backcast more horizontal than the forward cast, you reduce the amount of tangling that these rigs invite. The longer your leader and lighter your trailing fly, the more you'll need this cast, as you will if you are fishing with nearly any strike indicator. Heavy flies, dense sinking lines, strike-indicator fishing, and two-fly rigs all have this in common: they are hostile to tight-loop casting, with its precise stops and crisp turnover. Instead, they work best with wide loops and languid turnover. At this the Belgian excels.

## Getting Started

As a reference point, start by making some 40-foot pickup-laydown casts in your normal casting style, the way you'd cast a dry fly. Be sure to make the forward casts stop with the rod pointing well above the horizon. Now feel the difference of the Belgian cast. During the backcast, make the rod move as though you're swinging a searchlight just above horizontal, through some nearby trees. During the forward cast, swing the searchlight through the sky almost directly overhead. (Keep the rod tilted a bit off-vertical as you come forward to avoid hitting yourself in the back of the head with your practice-yarn fly.) In order to make a smooth transition from a near-horizontal backcast to a near-vertical forward cast, you'll notice that you cannot make a crisp backcast stop. Do 10 or 20 of these with your eyes on your forward cast. If the forward cast fails to extend, it may be because you need to stop the forward cast with the rod pointing at the tops of the trees rather than at the trunks.

Repeat this drill of 10 to 20 casts, but this time close your eyes. You should feel that your rod is in constant motion. You should also feel the line's tension on the rod throughout the stroke and that the rod doesn't unload until after your forward stop.

At this point, experiment with the size of the loop. Do this by imagining that your rod is drawing the edges of a giant egg—it's three feet long—that levitates rod-side with the long axis in the direction of the cast. Your backcast draws the outside edge of the egg and your forward cast draws the edge nearest your ear. To change the size of your loop, make the egg skinnier or fatter. For very heavy flies or bulky strike indicators, you'll make the egg very fat. When fishing a hopper with a small, light nymph trailing behind, you'll only need to draw a skinny egg.

The Belgian is also useful on breezy days. You can use it to pickup and backcast a hopper-and-dropper almost horizontally on your upwind side and make the forward cast with the rod butt traveling *over your head* on the forward cast. By pointing the rod downwind during the forward cast, you prevent the flies from being blown into you or the rod during the forward stroke. So try some casts where the egg now sits on top of your head. Make the backcast along the egg's upwind edge. Make the forward cast along the egg's downwind edge, with your tip-top passing over your left shoulder. If you've never cast this way before, with the rod butt traveling over your head during the forward stroke, this cast will feel quite awkward at first. However, I promise that after about 20 or so repetitions, it will become more comfortable.

Here is one final drill: As you round the back end of the egg from backcast to forward cast, elevate your rod hand *gently* and *slightly* by lifting your elbow. This is called drift. It's a technique normally used in distance casting because it lengthens the forward stroke, which is useful during a Belgian cast. All that rounding of the loop slows down the loop as it unrolls in back. To be sure that you've pulled all the slack out of the line after the backcast's lazy turnover, a longer forward stroke will help to straighten the line fully in front. This is especially helpful when circumstances warrant using the Belgian but you need to really push out far to reach the fish. Drifting will always help your distance, and we'll look at it in more detail in a future article.

The Belgian cast will help you in a lot of situations, from technical trout fishing with strike indicators to launching huge flies in the surf with shooting heads. It may not have come from Belgium but it'll certainly make you a more worldly fly fisher.



*Macauley Lord trains and certifies casting instructors for the Federation of Fly Fishers and is head instructor at the L.L. Bean Fly Fishing Schools. This article is excerpted from his book, [L.L. Bean Fly-Casting Handbook, Revised and Updated](#), and first appeared in [American Angler](#) magazine.*