

Dry Fly Fishing

As summer approaches we will have more opportunities for dry fly fishing because there will be Mayfly and Caddis fly hatches on the local rivers. Add to this a smorgasbord of terrestrial insects that may end up on the surface of the water and there will be trout rising at times during the day and evening until after dark.

Here are some observations from a club member. For more information on rising trout look in the club library and on the internet.

It is not always easy to predict when a rise will occur but there is usually a pattern during the early days of the season. There will often be a hatch of Mayflies during the warmest part of the day. In fine weather we can expect an evening rise of Mayflies as well, then a good hatch of Caddis Flies as the daylight fades. Of course there will be times when Caddis flies are hatching virtually all day and I have seen Mayflies at first light in the morning during summer. All we can do is, to be prepared for rising fish by carrying a selection which includes dry flies, emergers, unweighted nymph patterns and some wee wet flies.

When trout are surface feeding it is important to take advantage of this opportunity and not to waste time, simply because a good rise may only last for a quarter of an hour before it suddenly subsides.

Let us consider the different types of feeding activity an angler may observe during a rise. These rises can be accompanied by distinct sounds caused by the feeding trout breaking the surface. All these factors give the angler clues to the type of feeding behaviour.

Where there are no sounds but the surface is "bulging" then the trout are feeding on rising nymphs or emergers just below the surface. A dry fly floated over the top of this type of rise is likely to be ignored. The angler can tie an emerger pattern, truck and trailer style, 50cm off the bend of his dry fly and expect that this fly will be taken by the feeding fish as it drifts in the surface film or slightly below.

If the angler sees trout "porpoising" then once again they are mainly taking emergers. The trout's back will show above the surface as it comes over onto the fly. With this feeding behaviour the head does not break the water surface.

Occasionally trout will feed on the bottom for nymphs and their tails are seen sticking completely out of the water. In this instance they are most unlikely to take a floating fly.

Trout may be observed taking flies in a very delicate manner with only the tip of their snout seen above the surface. This style of feeding makes very little disturbance i.e. only a small ring and is usually silent or may make a quiet "sipping" sound. Fish will rise to a dry fly but are usually very selective when feeding like this. The insects that trout are taking are very often tiny and may include spent Mayfly spinners. I rose three trout one day recently, when they were feeding in this way and failed to hook

any of them. Some people talk of fish rising “short” in this instance but this explanation is more of an excuse.

When trout are making large swirls on the surface resulting in a big expanding ring and this is accompanied by a slurping sound then they are taking confidently and the angler can be certain that they are feeding on floating flies. Using an emerger is likely to result in a hook up as well. After dark it is often only the sound that tells an angler if his targeted fish has risen to his fly.

It is not easy to generalise on how quick to tighten when a rising fish takes a fly but the general rule would be that a sudden take which looks like an explosion on the surface requires a rapid “strike” whereas a leisurely rise especially in deeper or slower water requires a pause before tightening. This is especially the case where a trout has turned to intercept a fly and is facing towards the angler. The fish needs to turn away otherwise the hook may be pulled straight out of the trout’s mouth without contact.

Some anglers will use a highly visible dry fly as indicator and tie a small dry fly below this at the point. This technique can reduce the eye strain in trying to spot a tiny fly. The large fly helps the angler to quickly spot where his small fly will be floating. In most cases the presence of a larger fly will not spook a feeding trout. Have a chat to some of the experienced club members for recommended fly patterns.

If you are tempted to fish at night with a floating fly then casting distance gets harder to judge as daylight fades. It pays to shorten your leader to about 8 ft length because it is much easier to control a fly on a shorter leader and easier to know where the fly is in the dark.

In closing, there is evidence that a drop in atmospheric pressure does encourage mature waterborne nymphs and larvae to rise to the surface and hatch into flies, so you may see a really good hatch of flies on a day that is not particularly warm or otherwise suited to hatching insects.