

Pass It On





by Kelley Kirsch

photo by the author

Where did your fishing journey begin? How many people helped you along the way? I remember not too long ago being overwhelmed with everything I ought to know and feeling a lack of confidence on the water.

Fishing was not something I experienced growing up, and I did not find myself tangling with it until I was an adult. Now, all I think about is getting back onto the water to explore and find what nature will teach me next.

Passion for the sport of fly fishing is all-consuming. Full disclosure—I am no expert, guide or specialist, but I am on this journey of learning and know I will never learn it all. From bugs to ecosystems, species of fish, fishing techniques, gear and all the numerous ways to approach fishing, can you ever learn it all? I believe this is why it is an addiction for many and the reason I keep finding myself wading back into the water or on the bow of a boat aiming and casting to crack the code for the day like a detective.

For some, this may be a solo journey, and the solace can be transformative. However, I seek others to adventure with and share in the experience, because it makes the journey even more fun. I like to say, “I disconnect to reconnect with nature and fellow anglers alike.”

I have learned the most by fishing with others, sharing their passions, mishaps, successes and shenanigans. So, you don’t know what you don’t know until you know. Remember where you started and where you are now. Each of us, no matter what part of the journey you are on, can provide a nugget of advice or “a ha!” moments to fellow newbies or self-proclaimed experts.

Today, there is a ton of information available through social media. I personally belong to over a dozen fishing Facebook pages, where anglers share information and seek advice. These groups are so helpful and offer a wealth of knowledge, but they are also filled with negative comments. So, next time you see someone asking for help, consider educating instead of shaming. The more people we share best practices with while fishing and get connected to our waters, the better stewards of the environment they come to be. From state regulations, ethical practices, respect for others, techniques and conservation, there is so much to learn and share.

Taking things one step further, getting active and volunteering is a fantastic way to share your passion. Think global and act local. Doing your part in just a small way really makes a difference. There are programs to get involved in through the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, Trout Unlimited, Project Healing Waters and Casting for Recovery, just to name a few. You do not have to be an expert to share knowledge. Teaching someone a new knot, sharing how to read water, bug identification, fish handling, helping with gear or even safety tips makes a difference. These are all simple ways to share with others and help someone do better and be better. No one woke up one day and knew it all.

Community, I believe, is where it is at. Surrounding yourself with like-minded people will advance and enhance your overall experience on the water. Do everyone a favor and share your knowledge and experiences. Our waterways need us to be better together, and our future generations need opportunities to gain experience.

We are forever students of the sport and stewards of our resources, so please share and pass it on. ☐

2024 FISH-FOR-FREE DAYS!

Sunday, May 26

Independence Day, Thursday, July 4

No fishing license is needed to fish on either of these days. Introduce someone to the world of fishing. Visit fishandboat.com for more information. Remember that all other regulations apply.