



# Hooked on Fly Fishing

*by Cora Reed*

*photos-George Daniel, Penn State University Fly Fishing Instructor*

**M**y name is Cora Reed. I'm a senior at Penn State University. I did not have much of a fishing background, but I did grow up ambitious for challenge and adventure and turned to fly fishing, which answered that call. I grew up in the small, rural Pennsylvania town of Mifflinburg, raised on a farm riding horses and showing lambs at our local fairs. Anything that had to do with animals or being outside, you could count on my participation. About a year ago, I was introduced to the sport of fly fishing and now I am fixated on it. I was originally introduced to fly fishing by a friend of mine who was a former student of George Daniel. Daniel is now my fly fishing instructor at Penn State University. When I started, he was patient and thoughtful of the fact that I had never tried it before, and thank goodness for that. My first few times trying to cast my line, I caught many more branches and had better luck hooking a squirrel in the trees above me than any fish.

One of the best parts of fly fishing for me is being surrounded by the beautiful woods that lay alongside the equally gorgeous and soothing water bodies. Although I only started fly fishing about a year ago, I have learned a lot from fellow fly anglers. I have surrounded myself with all levels of anglers and embraced their knowledge and skills. I have taken the time to fish the waters in my backyard that I

never knew, some of the best trout fishing waters around—Spring Creek and Penns Creek in central Pennsylvania.

Most important is being able to locate fish by reading the water. Knowing and being able to identify aquatic insects that hatch on the water and a fly that can be used to imitate the bug is critical to fly fishing success. Once you can read the water, you will be able to identify where fish prefer to reside. Fish that live in streams or rivers are motivated to find protection from the main current and predators, to find maximum feeding opportunities. Fish find breaks in the water from the current to exert as little energy as possible, especially when they are feeding. Some vocabulary of a fly angler includes the terms “feeding lie”, “shelter lie”, and “prime lie”. A perfect example of a feeding lie is when boulders in the main current of the stream give trout easy access to the main current and offer them shelter from the heavy current. A shelter lie is when a trout is only looking for protection and not out searching for food. A good example is dead fall. That is a tree branch or roots shading the edge of a waterway, near the banks of the stream, where the trout hide from predators and stay out of the main current. A prime lie is a combination of both feed lie and shelter lie, giving trout easy access to food and shelter from predators. A good example of a prime lie is the riffle, a shallow but fast moving part of flowing water, located at the head of a deep pool.

It takes a steady hand to tie flies. Some of my favorite flies are the simplest to tie and are the most effective on the water. For instance, mayflies, stoneflies, caddisflies, midges, and worms.

Mayflies are an important aquatic insect in a trout's diet, and fish will eagerly feed on them when they are present—a good representation of this insect is a Pheasant Tail Nymph. Whenever mayflies are around, trout will feed on these little bugs. Stoneflies are a year-round delicacy in their nymphal stage to trout. A good fly pattern to imitate this insect is a Kaufmann Stonefly. Caddisflies are one of the most prevalent aquatic insects in most trout streams across the country. A good representation of this bug is a Bird of Prey Caddis. Midges compose about 50% of a trout's diet. These little flies can be used year-round, and I prefer to fish them in a size 18 or smaller. When in doubt, worm flies almost always produce a hit. My favorite patterns are a San Juan Worm or a Squirmy Wormy in sizes 12 or 14. All these flies are great when drifting through your favorite runs and pools to catch trout.

I started with some simple bank fishing with friends who opened my eyes to the intricate world of fly fishing. This led to tying my first fly and wading into the rivers and creeks on a quest to catch a beautiful trout with my newfound knowledge. With this information and finding your fly fishing community, you can also be on your way to discover a love of fly fishing. ☐



*The author rettying her line and fly.*