

## Fly-fishing: The lure of rod and reel

By Don Anderson

Thursday, January 24, 2008

Fly-fishing is one of the most time-honored sports in the world. For hundreds of years, great books have been written about it, such as Izaak Walton's *The Compleat Angler*, written in 1653, Ernest Hemingway's *Big Two-Hearted River* (1924), and Norman Maclean's *A River Runs Through It* (1989).

But fly-fishing is not an activity lost in nostalgia. It is a fast growing sport, with thousands of newcomers trying out rod and reel every year. The Northwest is a perfect place for fly-fishing, and several rivers and streams around the Seaside area provide excellent venues for casting a line.

However, the question is often asked, Why fly fish? Possibly the most rewarding aspect of fly fishing is the natural surroundings that the angler finds himself in: secluded mountain streams, peaceful meandering rivers in deep forests, and quiet lakes, with no sounds other than the birds, and the faint noise of the line being cast.

Besides the scenery, fly-fishing provides an opportunity for anglers to test their skill against a natural opponent. It is an elaborate game of chess with nature: sometimes the angler wins, sometimes the fish. But even if the angler loses the fish, he feels like a winner for just being out in creation, rod in hand.

Fly-fishing is also the most peaceful of pastimes, involving skill, intelligence, even a sense of the artistic. Persons who fly fish are not out to merely score a mess of fish for dinner (although the taste of trout freshly grilled over a campfire is like nothing else in this world); rather fly fishermen, and women, fish because they respect their quarry, the river, and nature in general.

Anglers new to fly-fishing can find it intimidating, however. First, there is the equipment. Overall, fly-fishing equipment is more expensive and more delicate than other kinds of fishing gear, and the assortment of rods, reels, lines, leaders, wet flies, dry flies and nymphs can be alarming. In addition, learning to cast is an art in itself, as anyone who has seen a master "caster" can testify.

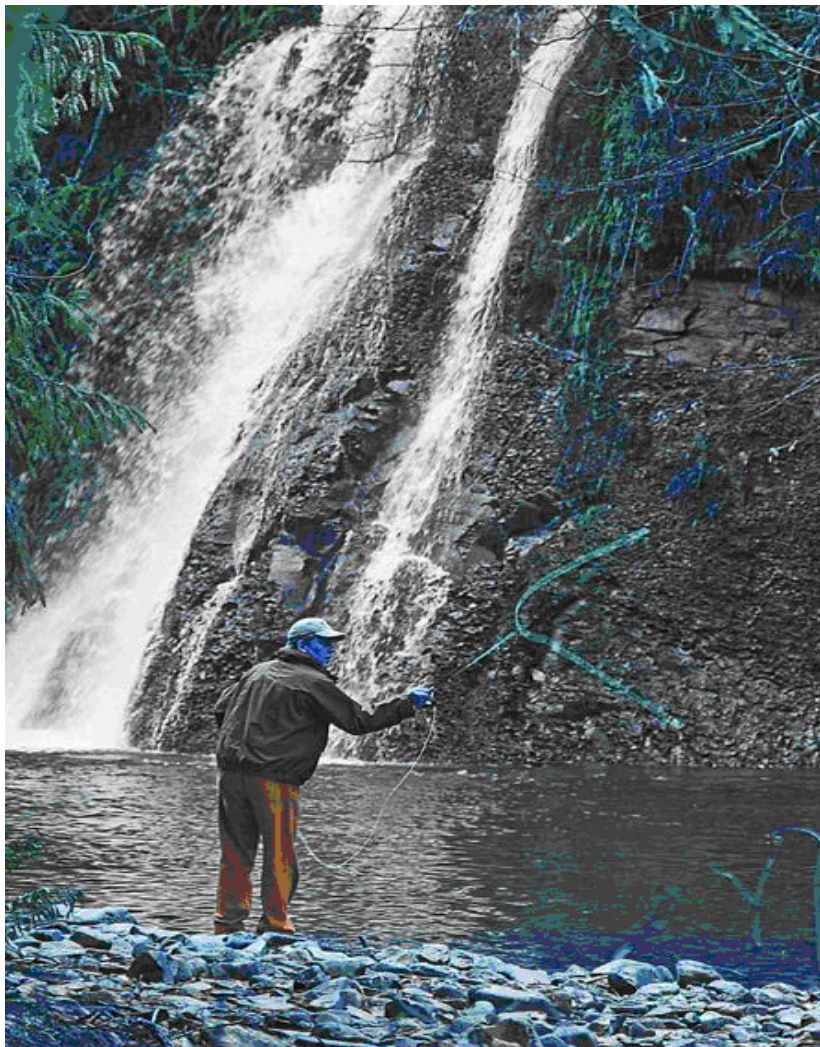
Persons who become good at fly-fishing are also good naturalists, and become intimately acquainted with the habitats of fish and other marine animals and plants. The knowledge of an experienced fly fisherman is encyclopedic, and the novice is wise to go along with a veteran until he or she learns the fine points of the sport.

In our area, the Necanicum and Nehalem are famous for their fly-fishing, where every year hundreds of anglers fish for rainbow trout and steelhead. Elk Creek behind Cannon Beach is celebrated for its cutthroat trout. Going down the coast, the four rivers in the Tillamook area are all good trout streams, as are the Lewis and Clark and Young's Bay Rivers in the Astoria area.

One of the best ways to learn to fly fish is to become involved with a local fly-fishing

organization. Fortunately, we have one of the best such clubs in our area. The Rainland Fly Casters are a group of dedicated fly fishers and naturalists. They meet every month on the third Thursday at the American Legion (1132 Exchange Street) in Astoria. Meeting times are 7 p.m. According to the club newsletter, "Before the meetings, join the program presenter and fellow members at Andre and Steve's Café for dinner and fish stories. We will eat at 6 p.m. Fish stories usually start at 5:30." You can also learn more about the club at [www.rainlandflycasters.com](http://www.rainlandflycasters.com).

Look for more articles on fly-fishing in upcoming editions of the Signal, as we explore some of the best places to fish, and discuss fly-fishing techniques.



Fly fishermen come from around the northwest to fish in area rivers. Here a fisherman from the Portland area fishes beneath Umbrella Falls on the Nehalem River for rainbow trout. Photo by Don Anderson