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Dead Drift Technique

By Brett Fogle

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The dead drift method of fly fishing with nymphs is the most effective method an angler can use. Remember, nymphs are generally at the mercy of the rivers current, and get carried wherever the current happens to take them. An angler who can simulate this "helplessness" of the nymph will be able to consistently take trout.

There are basically three different ways to accomplish a dead drift of a nymph. Each of these is covered below.

Dead Drift Method : Quartering for Wade Anglers

This is the easier of the two different dead drift nymph fly fishing methods for an wade angler to use. Basically, this method is not much different than dry fly fishing. Simply cast your nymph across AND upstream. Retrieve any excess line, throwing upstream mends as needed to allow the nymph to dead drift for as long as possible (you do not want to "drag" the nymph across the current). The mends also allow the nymph to sink to the proper depth as well.

Dead Drift Method : Direct Upstream for Wade Anglers

This is the most effective, and most difficult, of all nymph fly fishing techniques. It is also similar to dry fly fishing when you cast your fly directly upstream of where you happen to be.

This method is simply done but very difficult in practice - beginners can expect to lose many a fish. To do this method,

Dead Drift Technique

simply cast your nymph directly upstream (and in the same current seam, if possible) from where you are standing in the water. As the nymph makes it's way back down towards you, retrieve in all excess fly line - striking the balance between allowing the nymph to have a perfectly "drag free" float while at the same time not having to much line out (which will prevent proper hook set).

Strikes on a nymph fished in this manner can occur anytime since the nymph is floating drag free. Always follow the strike indicator using this method, setting the hook immediately whenever you see the strike indicator stop momentarily in the

water or suddenly change direction. With practice, you'll get a feel for what differentiates a "rock strike" from a "trout strike".

Also, don't be in to big a hurry to pick up the nymph. You can let it float right down almost to your feet (within 5–10 feet), assuming you didn't make too much of a commotion during your wading (thus scaring away all the fish near you). Remember, trout will be facing against the current waiting for their food to arrive - and you'll be downstream from them. Thus, they won't see you unless you make lots of noise to let them know that you are there.

The other reason you want the nymph to continue floating towards you is because you want to nymph to come up from the bottom of the river a bit - which simulates an emerging insect. As the nymph gets closer to you, simply raise the rod tip a bit. This will bring the nymph off the bottom of the river and put it in a gradual, but still downstream, incline towards the surface.

Once you pick up the fly, you will then want to wade just a bit to your right or left, then make another cast, allowing the nymph to dead drift through another spot in the river that is just a bit away from where your nymph previously floated through. By doing things this way, you can cover a lot of water in a hurry - in a very effective manner.

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Fly Fishing Techniques for Steelhead

By Cameron Larsen

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There are a few basic steelheading techniques that every steelhead fly fishing angler knows, or should know. Which one you use will depend on several things including water level, clarity, temperature and speed. Also one must take into account outside temperatures, time of year, and time of day. And finally which fly you are using, which also depends on all of the previously mentioned things and more. But we are here to simplify, to present a few basic techniques to give the fly angler a foundation on which to experiment.

The most popular steelhead fly rodding technique is the wet fly swing. This is used traditionally when steelhead are in fairly shallow water (less than seven feet) and water moving at about walking speed. To begin the technique, you cast upstream from where you are standing, you should be also be standing upstream from the designated target. Once you cast you need to mend your line immediately. And then do nothing else. The mending allows the fly to sink without hindrance. The fly then swings down in front of the desired target. When the swing is done allow the fly to dangle for a few seconds. And be alert, often this is when the strike occurs. Generally I give the same spot a few casts and then move a little and try it again.

Another technique is the dead drift. During this technique it is crucial that the fly drift without tension, and be allowed to drift freely. A strike indicator is mandatory, and a strike indicator that allows you to see whether or not your fly is floating without being impeded is the best. Some fly fisherman use macramé yarn, others use a corkie and a toothpick, both indicate whether the fly is floating as it should. Traditional indicators also work. The idea is to keep the fly directly below the indicator, than free floating has been achieved. Dead drifting is used primarily in pools or slower riffles. Dead drifting does not cover as much water as the wet swing, but when fishing in smaller streams, or a narrow concentration of where steelhead are lying it is a very precise and effective method. The indicator can be adjusted to vary the depth at which your fly is presented.

One last popular method is bottom bouncing. Bottom bouncing works well in faster water, when steelhead are lying on the bottom. It is, as the name describes, bouncing your presentation along the bottom. Cast your fly upstream and allow it to sink to the bottom. Generally a couple of split shots BB sized placed twelve to eighteen inches above the fly, will get the fly down. But sometimes more weight is needed. Once the bottom is hit, lift the fly line out of the water by lifting your rod tip up, keep excess line in your free hand. As the fly moves downstream away from you gradually lower the line and let more fly line out.

All the above methods work with nymphs, streamers or egg patterns. More on fly selection will be presented in upcoming articles.

Cameron Larsen runs the online fly shop www.bigflyco.com



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