

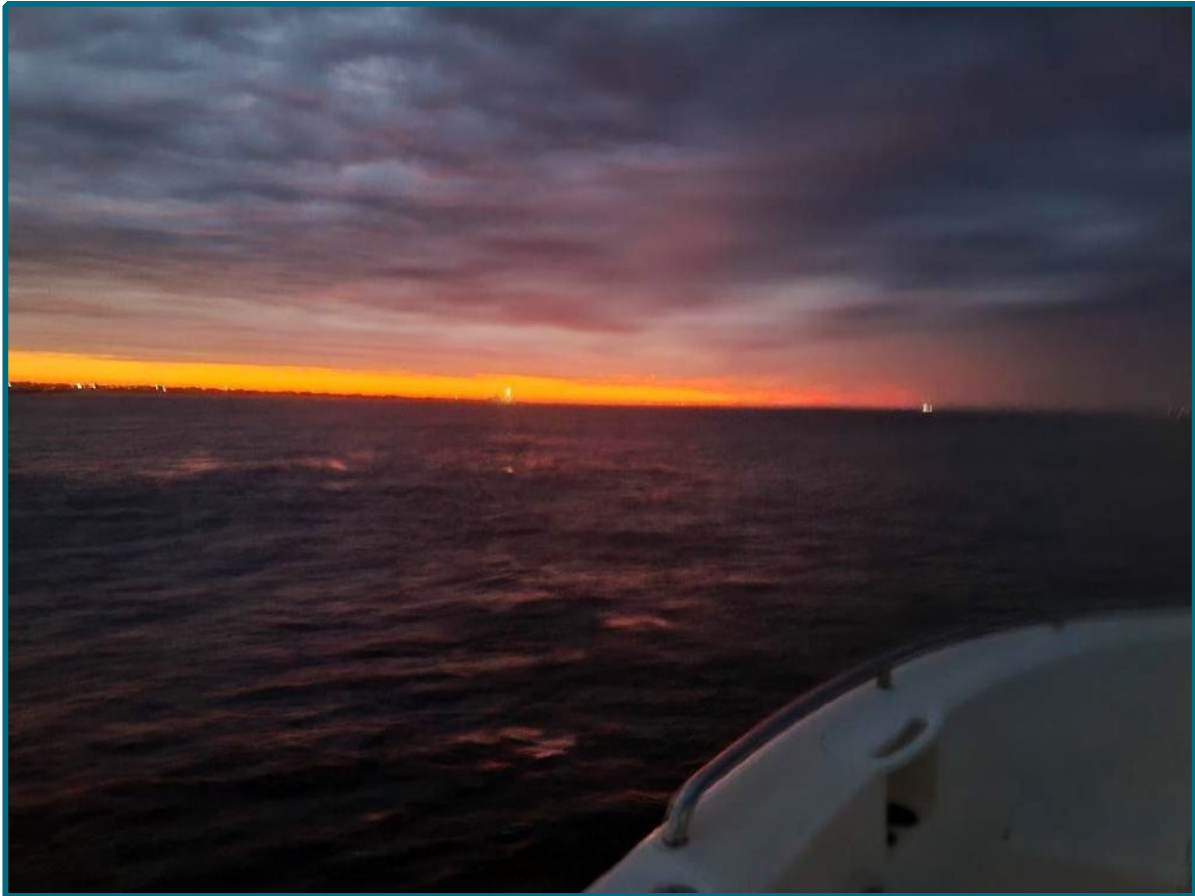


Rhody FLY RODDERS

America's Oldest Saltwater Fly Fishing Club

THE CURRENT

"The lifeline of the estuary and knowledge"



Summer Edition

Our final issue of our 2026 Summer Edition is here. Thank you to everyone who contributed photos, ideas, and feedback. Please send in photos and material for the September Issue.

**"Pass on to all, who
ask, what you learn
here"**



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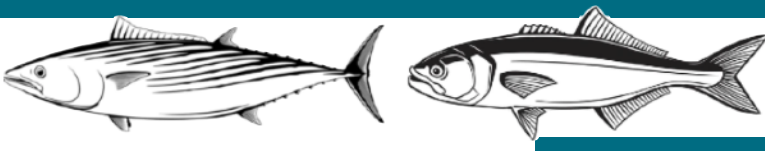
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Summer Edition

This is the last month of the slimmed down summer newsletter. Next month we will start the 3rd year of our magazine style publication. We hope you enjoyed the summer newsletters, and we hope it encouraged you to fish more this summer.



Rhody Fly Rodder Happenings

The next **RFR September Fishing Outings** will take place September 26 at 7:00 AM at Blue Shutters Beach. This is not a typo. The 26th is a morning event.

Ed Lombardo has two upcoming fishing schools listed below. [He needs volunteers and students.](#)

Adult Saltwater Fly Fishing School to be held on September, 26th 2026 at Narrow River, Narragansett RI, Sprague Bridge, on Route 1A. Start time is 8am for all volunteers and 9am for all Adult Students. All fly fishing equipment will be included. Cost for this 6 hour class is \$30.00 To register, please email kimberly.sullivan@dem.ri.gov. For those that would like to volunteer, email Kimberly or Ed Lombardo at edlombardo8@gmail.com.

The Warwick Veterans Fly fishing School will be held on October, 17th 2026 at Sprague Bridge, Narragansett, RI Route 1A. Start time is 8am for all volunteers and 9am for all Veterans. All fly fishing equipment will be included. This program is free of charge to all Veterans who are members of The Warwick Veterans Organization, you must be a member to participate in this school. To register, please contact your Warwick Veterans Organization, thank you.

We need pictures and articles! Now is the time to stock up on pictures and start thinking about contributing articles for the Newsletter this winter.

We will be compiling a RFR Year End Report and distributing it to club members. This will highlight the progress we made this year and some future endeavors we will be undertaking. While technical and boring, I encourage you to read the short report in order to have a better picture of the state of RFR.

How Did Fish Become Fish? Part 2

This month we will complete the story of how the fish we catch today evolved the traits that make them worth our pursuit. Last month we discussed how a changing more competitive and hostile ocean environment favored the evolution of the jaws, gills, and paired fins that we see today. Remember, these were all physical traits that appeared gradually over millions of years due to mutations and genetic variations within a population. These traits were selected for by the pressures these organisms were facing. Over time, the individuals who lacked these structures were less competitive and went extinct. This is an oversimplified explanation of evolution, but it suffices for our cause. Think of it as biological capitalism. On an individual level success is passing on genetic traits, and failure is death before successful reproduction. On a species level, success is flourishing and evolution, while failure is extinction. What we see around us today is only a snapshot of millions of years of a continuous slow moving story that is imperceptible on a human timescale, but remarkable when viewed across epochs. Now let's pick up where we left off!

Lets go back to 430-420 million years ago. Paired fins have appeared in our jawed fish who are now showing less archaic gills and features. These fins and their owners are still not what we think of today, but this beginning to change. The timeline is about to get complicated. Multiple major changes can all be traced back to around this same time period. The subsequent paragraphs are in rough chronological order, but many of these gradual changes overlap significantly. Let's get confusing!

Around this time the fossil record shows a major split in fish lineage. Two distinctive groups began to form and each would begin to develop its own "evolutionary tool kit." We still know these two groups today as the bony fish, Osteichthyes, and the cartilaginous fish, Chondrichthyes. While we call these two groups by the make up of the majority of their skeleton (FYI - sharks still have some bone and bony fish still have some cartilage), both mineralized bones and cartilage existed way before this split. This split has more to do with how features of the members of these groups would continue to evolve. This is simply where a tree branches. Cartilaginous fish are rays, sharks, and chimeras, while bony fish are pretty much everything else. **What is important here is that this is the rough point that we can trace back a branching of ancient fish into two groupings we still have today.**

One of the notable differentiations that occurred within these evolutionary "tool kits" that would have lasting effects on how we think of fish today and vertebrate evolution is changes to the anatomical structure of the paired fins. It is 420 - 400 million years ago and the world's oceans now contain numerous shallow water flats, lagoons, reefs, and shelves. **Continued on next page.**

[illegible]

Additionally, fish are now moving into brackish and freshwater environments, and these shallow seas and freshwater rivers begin to effect evolution. This environment may have favored fine scale movements to move around structure in search of prey or to hide. Fish who can use structure to their advantage likely have an evolutionary edge. Within the bony fish group we begin to see paired fins meet two separate archetypes, ray fins and lobe fins. Ray finned fish have bones called fin rays running out from a central “girdle” that support the tissue. These fin rays are what stab you when you get “spined” by a stripers pectoral fin and the bony lines you can see in a fin. Connecting the fin to the fish is a simple internal bone structure that anchors the fin into the flesh. These are effective for body control and fine scale movement within the water column. Lobe finned fish have fleshy fins. Inside the fin is a bone structure surrounded by tissue. We still have lobed fin fish today, like the lungfish. These fins are advantageous for a fish to “walk” along the bottom and thrust itself up and forward. This is not to mean that these evolved for bottom walking, but it was one possibility from the evolution of the structure. These are not true land animal type limbs yet and most would not be capable of supporting substantial weight outside the water, but we begin to see the evolution of the bone structures that will one day become the bones in your forearm, upper arm, and legs.

Around this same period, some bony fish began to develop airfield sacs connected to their digestive tract. The earliest sacs started as outgrowths of the foregut; essentially little pouches associated with the digestive tract. As part of the digestive tract, these pouches were connected to the mouth and were composed of a semi-permeable membrane. Like gills, these pouches were highly vascularized. Thus, the pouches could exchange gasses into the bloodstream. The important part here is that fish with this structure could take oxygen from the air, through the mouth, and into the blood stream. Remember, vast parts of the ocean were likely shallow, warm, and may have had lagoons with limited oxygen. Being able to breathe oxygen from the water or the atmosphere would have been a major advantage. Over millennia, bony fish lineages modified these in different ways. Being able to control the amount of air in an air filled sac would eventually allow some bony fish to control their buoyancy. Yes, these pouches eventually became the swim bladder in most fish we know today, but in other fish, particularly lobe finned fish, they became the first lungs. One could speculate that without the hot oxygen poor shallow oceans patrolled by bony fish, particularly lobed fin fish, you may not have the lungs you do today.

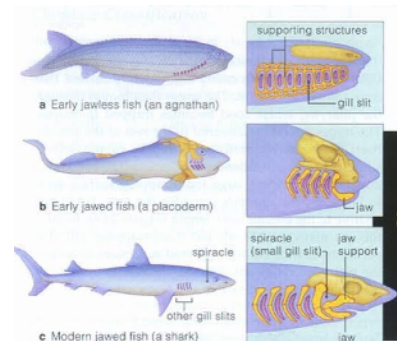
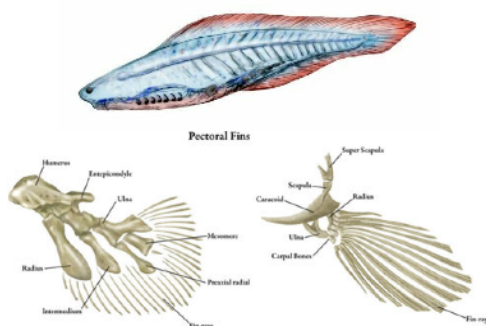
Fast forward to 380 million years ago, lobe fin fish have become increasingly diversified. Some species have more muscular fins**Continued next page.**

How Did Fish Become Fish? Continued pg 3.

...with substantial bony support. These species are still aquatic. About 370 million years ago, in a group of species these limbs developed a skeletal pattern that should be familiar to you. Each paired fin is connecting to the body with one substantial bone followed by two paired bones, just like your arm and leg. This is still a fin, its not an arm or leg yet. We can see this in fossils of Tiktaalik (~375 MYA) and similar animals. Notable is the development of the shoulder region and its ability to maneuver and support more weight. Fast forward again to 360 million years ago. The end of the lobe fin is beginning to show digits in some fish. These are bony ray like protrusions. Yes, *digits evolved in fish in water* and were first associated with aquatic environments! It's now 350 million years ago, a group of our lobed fin fish have now transitioned from the ocean to the land. They have lungs, limbs, and digits. These are no longer fish. They are now our first tetrapods.

For us, our story ends here, but fish evolution did not. Fish continue to evolve to this day and will till the end of our planet. There are many evolutionary advancements that we skipped like specialized jaw anatomy, feeding structures, and scales, evolution of modern cartilaginous fish, the teleost split, and more. However, we covered what makes a fish a fish, and how these features arrived. What I want to drive home is that fish share common traits that make them a fish, but the individual fish species evolved many different versions of those traits that are highly specific to their life history. Notably, many of our own defining characteristics can be traced back to fish. Jaws, lungs, limbs, digits, and more developed in fish and are key anatomical features of land animals and humans. You are more like a fish than you you think, while also being very different.

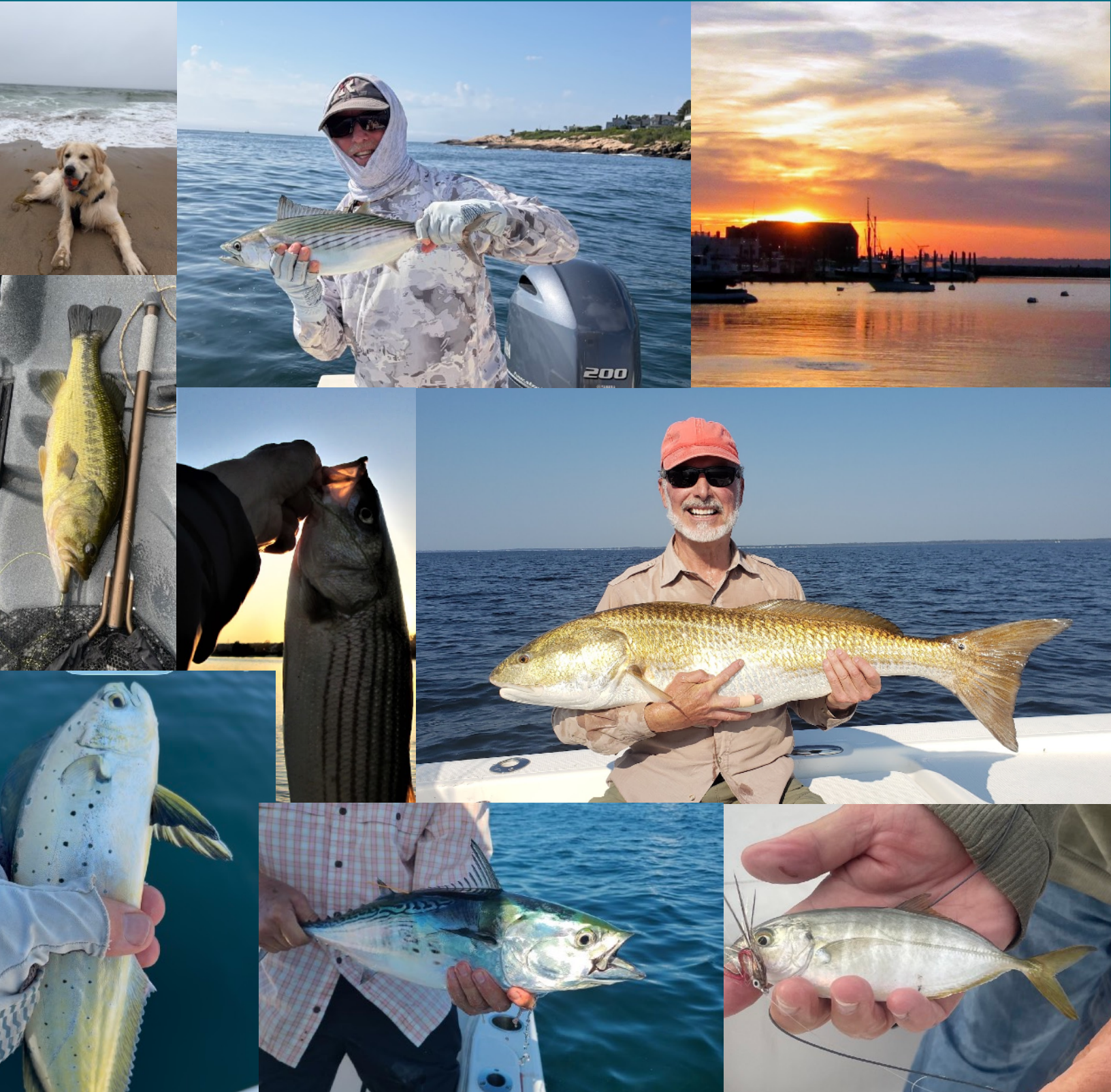
If you got this far, thank you and I appreciate you reading this article. Next month we will cover basic fish taxonomy, but in November we will dive into more interesting topics - fish anatomy, how fish work, and how to use that to your advantage.



From Left to Right: Tiktaalik fossil showing lobe fin anatomy (zoom in), A rendition of an early jawless fish with pocket gills and no paired fins above a lobe fin (left) and a rayed fin (right) diagram. A diagram of the evolution of the jaw.

August

SEPTEMBER 2026



From left to right top to bottom: Wayne the newest RFR member, Jeff Perry with a nice bonito, Sunset over the harbor submitted by Paul Pezza, A nice largemouth bass caught by Patrick, a rare schoolie caught by Paul Pezza, Paul Pezza with a nice redfish, Jeff Perry with a RI caught Mahi, John Fields posing with an albie caught by Ray, Ray with a small jack caught in RI

Hardtail Spots

The hardtail are here! Your best shot at them will be in the next two weeks, so **let's spot burn!** Kidding - these are all well known spots.

Jetties and Rocky Areas

West Wall: This is the primary fishing spot in RI for bonito and albies. It will be crowded. Some days you have to arrive before sunrise to secure a spot.

East Wall: This is less popular, but harder to fish and not as good as the West Wall. The first couple hundred feet are easy to fish, but the tip should be avoided unless you are spin fishing.

Sakonnet Break Wall: This has limited parking and can get crowded, but its a good change of pace from the above mentioned walls.

The Breachways: These are more known for stripers or boat fishing, but they are worth checking out. Boaters should target these on outgoing tides.

The Avenues: Black Point and Hazard Ave are the main spots here. When they are good they are great, but they get crowded. Its also hard to land fish here. Avoid the area in rough seas.

Sachuest Point: One day in a storm, they blitzed for 4 hours just out of casting range here. Less wind or a spin rod could have made for a very memorable fishing trip.

Not Jetties

Fort Wetherhill: The bulkhead is easy to fish, but parking can be limited. Hardtails typically show at least once per day, but opportunities are less frequent and short lived.

Fort Adams: Sometimes it happens here, but often it doesn't. If the winds right, its worth checking out.

Charlestown, East, and Moonstone Beach: Its tough to catch these fish with your feet in the sand, but it does happen. Find the bait and stick with it. The bite can develop fast or never develop at all.

East Matunuck Beach: Sometimes fish are caught in the west corner here where the sand meets the rocks

State Pier #5: This is in Narraganset by Monaghan's. Its worth a stop if you can get parking.

URI GSO: A Hail Mary spot usually more productive in late September or October.⁸

Staying Safe This Summer

Fishing Around Others

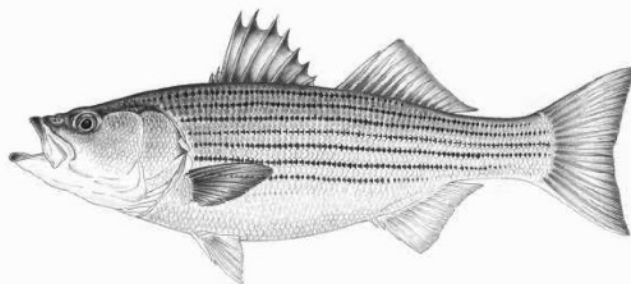
Fly fishing around other people requires more than knowing how to cast and navigate. It requires **awareness**, **communication**, and the **humility** to recognize that **everyone shares the water**. Most people will not know the space required to cast or the danger your hook presents. The goal is simple: don't become a hazard, and don't assume everyone else sees you.

Shore Fishing

When fishing from shore, always **watch your backcast**. People, swimmers, and dogs can appear behind you with little warning, and most have no idea that your fly is traveling backward. Listen as well as look, and before casting, make sure your entire casting area is clear. If swimmers or other people are nearby, **communicate politely**. Let them know what you are doing and, when appropriate, ask for a little space or ask them to be aware of your cast. The same principle applies to boats. If a cruising boat needs your water, give it to them. Get your line out of the way rather than risking a lost fly line. Fishing defensively means understanding when you present a hazard to others and preventing lost gear and conflict. **Don't ruin your day or someone else's**.

Boat Fishing

On a boat, don't let confidence turn into negligence. **Stay alert** while underway, watch for other boats and hazards. On the bow you block the captain's view. Do not assume the captain sees a kayak, jet ski, or a hazard. Communicate buoys, oncoming boats, and shallow depths you may see that they may not. Around rocks and other hazards, slow down and give yourself room. **Be aware of your boat's drift** and the boats around you. Drifting into trouble is very common. Don't drift into another boat or cut off another angler's drift. When boats are crossing, **it is often better to give way**, even when you technically have the right of way, because not everyone knows or follows the rules. During a run-and-gun blitz, **think ahead**. Try to finish on the outside edge of the school, within casting range, so you don't get trapped when the second and third wave of boats arrives. **And remember even on a boat, around other anglers, and other boats, you need to watch your back cast**.



We Need Your Help!

Did you read a good fishing book or go on a trip somewhere? Do you want to share your knowledge of a **well known** spot with members new to the area or new to fly fishing? How about just some pictures of the fish you catch? ***U dun't hav 2 worry about gramma or speling***, we can fix it! Let us know and we will include it in the next issue.

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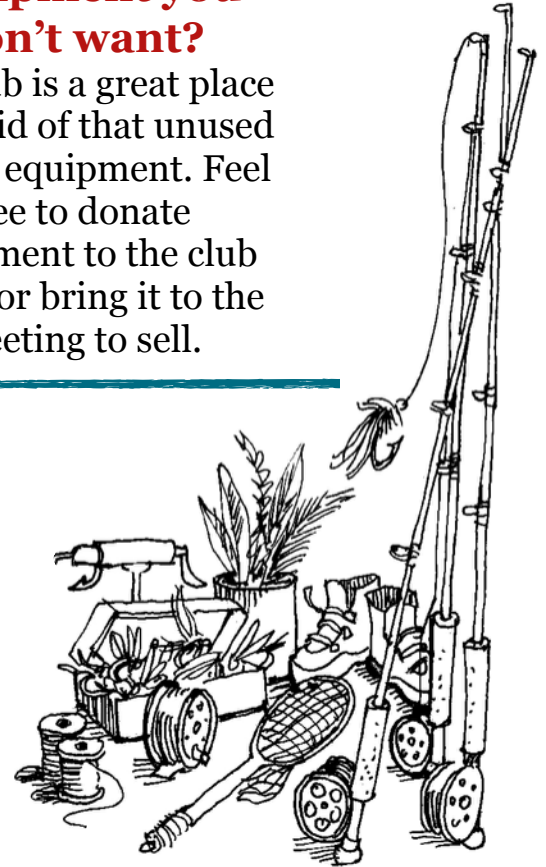
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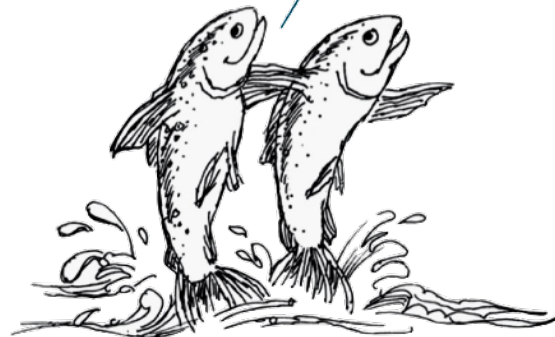
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Do you have unused fishing equipment you don't want?

Our club is a great place to get rid of that unused fishing equipment. Feel free to donate equipment to the club raffle, or bring it to the meeting to sell.



Good Times!



Artwork by: **Peter Nilsen**