



# The Red Letter

*The Monthly Newsletter of the Red Stick Fly Fishers of Baton Rouge, Louisiana*

*July, 2005*

## **July Calendar**

July 11	Membership Meeting
July 15--17	Grand Isle Weekend
July 25	Fly Tying Session

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Red Stick Fly Fishers is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the promotion of fly fishing, conservation and outdoor ethics.

Programs are held the second Monday of each month at Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries located on Quail Dr. at 7:00 pm.

Dues are \$25 for individuals or families, free for students. Online memberships are available at the same rates. RSFF is affiliated with the Federation of Fly Fishers (FFF) South Eastern Council.

Submissions to *The Red Letter* must be received by the Editor no later than the first Monday of each month.

Correspondence or club information can be obtained through the club web site, [www.rsff.org](http://www.rsff.org), or by e-mail, or by snail mail at:

**RSFF**  
**PO Box 3761**  
**Baton Rouge, LA 70821-3761**

## **July Membership Meeting**

The meeting this month will be held at **Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) Building on Quail Dr.** at the regular membership program meeting time of 7:00 pm, on Monday, **July 11<sup>th</sup>**.

This month's meeting is going to be "Planning for Grand Isle!" The idea is to have brief programs in prep for the Annual RSFF Grand Isle weekend to include places to fish from boats, puddle craft or by foot. Also we will discuss tackle and fly fishing techniques for the main quarry fish of redfish, specks, flounder, drum, and possibly spanish mackerel and other Gulf fishes that may be in the surf.

This month's fly tying session will be on the fourth Monday of the month, **July 25<sup>th</sup>**, at the **LDWF Building**, on Quail Dr.

Jody Titone will tie, and among things to be shown is how to apply dubbing.

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## Announcements

Correction - This fall's Concordia Outing will be held on the weekend of September 30th through October 2nd and not earlier in September as was indicated in the Schedule of Events for the last two months. Sign-up sheets will be available for this month's meeting.

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### Grand Isle Weekend Primer

by Catch

#### What to bring?

You'll need a fly fishing outfit, for sure. Bring two if possible in case one breaks. My favorite outfits are a 6 weight for bank and bridge fishing, a 7 weight for the marsh, and an 8 weight for the surf and fishing poppers or vosi/droppers in the marsh.

Also, bring a medium action casting or spinning rod. This is a necessary evil for three reasons (and none involve wind). First, there is plenty of bank fishing along Highway 1 from the protection levee south of Golden Meadow all the way to Grand Isle, but because of traffic, fly casting is NOT recommended. Second, scouting an area for speckled trout is best done with a cork and sparkle beetle. While the fly rodder's version of this - the clouser under a VOSI - works as well and sometimes better, it requires a more patient approach and is not recommended to do while the trolling motor is operational. Third, sometimes you have to deal with dirty water. Remember Cormier's 2nd Law: "Clear water favors the fly fisher". Well, the converse is true for commie tackle.

Flies: 1/50 ounce chartreuse/white or purple/white clousers, LaFleur's Charlie in pink or black, spoon flies, poppers, gurglers, shrimp patterns such as the Crystal Shrimp (see laflyfish.com for tying instructions). Also Whitlock baitfish, red/white seaducers, and bendbacks have been popular with fish. Last year, most of the various species of fish taken were on chartreuse variations of different flies.

Leaders: I use 8-10 foot leaders, either store-bought tapered or my own 3 part construction. No matter what I use, my leaders are on the light side, usually 20# butt and 12# tippet. If I use a bite or shock tippet, I attach 6-10 inches of 20# flourocarbon except for spanish, where I use a double-lined bite tippet of 40# flourocarbon. The light leaders sink faster, and allow the fly to be more natural in presentation.

Sinking options: highly recommended. Specks will sometimes hug the bottom. Sand trout, whiting, flounder,

bull croaker all taste great and live on the bottom, why avoid them? An intermediate line is best, but it limits your options if you're in the water. The alternative is sink-tip sections, from 12" to 24", with quick-connect loops at each end so you can readily slip it on and off the end of your fly line (assuming you've a loop on your line).

Accessories: polarized sunglasses; SPF 30 sunscreen; a quick-dry cap with long bill; quick-dry shirt and shorts; flats booties, plastic water shoes, or at the very least, a good pair of pool shoes; a fish basket (no stringers unless you want to invite sharks over); ice chest for fish (and to take home shrimp - I highly recommended the 5 day/90 degree models); small ice chest with drinks - pack plenty; first aid kit with antibacterial lotion, soap or mild bleach solution in case of cuts, scratches, or scrapes (vibrio is most active in hot weather); fish pliers; small net; beach towels; wash towels; zip loc bags to take home extra filets; toiletries; fly tying bag. Check the rsff.org site for even more recommendations.

#### Where to Fish?

From the Intracoastal Canal at LaRose south to Fourchon, Highway 1, Highway 308 and Highway 3235 (aka, the four-lane "Bypass") separates the Timbalier estuary from the Caminada estuary.

The very first access comes just south of LaRose on 308. The Clovelly launch is back of some Sugar Cane fields to the east of Bayou LaFourche. For that reason, it's not a popular spot. But it does provide access to freshwater canals and the brackish waters below Lafitte, mainly Little Lake Caminada and Bay L'Ours. These are excellent fly fishing waters as they stay quite clear year round, and are full of big reds and world-record size drum. Watch for specks under schooling birds after daybreak.

Coming on the bypass south from LaRose, about 1 mile north of Walmart is an abandoned quickmart on the right (west) side of the road. The road adjacent to it is West 107th Street. It leads to Bason's Marina, access to the Sulphur Mine area. In summer, there are few trout this far up, but the waters teem with reds, drum, sheepshead, and flounder. A few miles north of the Sulphur Mine are canals loaded with marsh bass.

For boaters, the edges of the lake and points along canals and bayous are the places to go. For puddlers, the shallow areas north and south of Bason's are full of grass and full of fish. You won't encounter any boats unless they are bateaus running thru at planing speed (and happen to know where all the hidden stumps are). This is a graveyard for boats.

Further south. Golden Meadow has two launches. The public launch is at the south end of the community park. There is a private launch a couple miles down behind The Crab Shack. For puddlers, the public launch offers good access to the ponds north and west, as well as the northernmost canals in the complex east of Cattfish Lake. Most puddlers launch in the pit to avoid contention with boats at the launch. The private launch, aka Josh's, requires puddlers to paddle about 1/4 mile down the boat

canal before getting into a myriad of other canals. However, the two canals just north of Josh's are full of drum that do eat flies. My one-time state fly record drum (a measly 5 lbs) was caught within 100 yards of the launch.

For boats, head to Catfish Lake as early in the morning as possible. This is one of the best year-round speckled trout holes in the state. Try at the southeast end near the canal, the west shoreline near rigs and posts, the oyster beds on the north end, and on the west end near Bayou Blue. Once you've tried those spots, try the canals on the west side of Bayou Blue for lots of big reds!

As you head south from Golden Meadow... once over the hurricane protection levee, Bayou Lafourche becomes totally saltwater in nature. This is the start of good bank fishing all the way to Grand Isle.

The problem with fly fishing the bayou in summer is that water clarity is poor due to high algae content. In fall and winter, it's a great fly fishing water (keep that in mind). Also fly casting is NOT recommended along the shoulder of Highway 1 due to traffic.

However, if you have a commie rod and some bait shrimp (wow, can't believe I'm saying this) try the roadside rocks where the bayou meets the road. Just north of Leeville, they are loaded with sheepshead and drum in the first two hours after first light. I'm talking about enough fish to load a 48 quart ice chest! There are also reds in here that go anywhere from 3 to 30 pounds.

Just south of Leeville is good fishing in the bayou also, but for puddlers the vast flats east of the road offer excellent shallow water fly fishing on calm days. A shallow skiff can fish here also, but the fish are extremely wary of boats, and even standup fishing by puddlers will spook them off. So stay seated in your paddlecraft, and look for disturbances in the water. Or blind cast poppers. I've had many reds and some very nice specks come up in the middle of open water in this area and slam a popper.

Another option for puddlers, one that doesn't get much discussion, is to launch at Boudreauxs on the west side and head south or west to fish the canals. Some of these canals aren't very good for boat fishing, having shallowed out a long time ago. But the structure that holds reds, drum and sheepshead remain. Look for tails and backs.

For boaters, there are a trio of launches in Leeville, two on the bayou and the one at Boudreauxs. My advise for boaters is to head straight to Little Lake or further into Raccourci at daybreak and hit the specks under birds. When bird action dies down, head north for the marsh ponds off Bayou Blue. Many of these reds are aggressive and will strike anything you throw at them.

Just south of the Chevron complex, there's an area just past some tank batteries on the east side. This is a good area for puddling. However about a mile or two past this point, you enter an area deemed as "private lease" all the way to Fourchon Road and then onward past some camps on the way to Grand Isle. The west side of the road has a limited amount of water for puddlers, but some of the canals leading to Bayou Lafourche ponds are dammed

off. This section has lots of tidal movement and lots of fish, but often the water is milky and not best for flies.

Fourchon Road goes all the way to the beach. Along the road, there's little opportunity for bank anglers or puddlers until you get to the last canal. The last canal on the east leads to Bay Champagne, one of the great flounder holes. At Fourchon Beach, wading is decent for specks around the barges (be very careful of the riptides). A much better area is to the east, past where the barges end. This area has lots of good sized specks late in the afternoon.

For boaters, there's a launch just before the bridge. You can either head east to some oyster ponds full of reds or out to Bayou Lafourche where the big boys roam, or even out into the Gulf on calm days. You don't have to go far out in the Gulf to get thick into cobia, kings, and other pelagics. They are often within the structures less than a mile from the beach. Also look for spanish in big schools busting pogies. The great sand trout and trophy speckled trout holes lie to the west at Penrod Pass and East Timbalier rocks.

Along Highway 1 past the camps, it returns to marsh. The first large section of open water on the right is a former sand pit called Rabalais' Hole. It used to be THE spot for winter fishing until it's banks washed away. I've not tried it lately, but I've heard that there are some big reds in this hole. Maybe worth a try.

The next pit down is called the Oklahoma Pit. If you looked at it from an airplane heading south, it's shaped like the state of Oklahoma. There are dredges still at the east end. This is a good spot for specks in winter, but during summer it's loaded with drum along the shoreline. For bank fishermen, it's one of the few spots you can fly fish. Park on the east end of where the pit meets the road. Here the shoreline starts to form the "panhandle". You wade this section very slowly, staying very close to the bank and fan casting out 90 degrees as you go along. Be observant for the drum tailing. A gold spoon fly in quick, tiny strips has caught many a drum and redfish here. When you get to the panhandle, the shoreline heads east. You will need to get out the water because it drops off quite a bit, even right next to the bank. Just cast from the bank and continue east.

The next pit down on the right is the famous Telephone Pole Hole. Again, a great winter spot for specks. But it does hold reds year round. Across from the TPH is a stretch of marsh to the west of Lake Laurier, good for reds and drum. Laurier and nearby Lake Palourde are good for specks even in summer.

The next stop further down is the FAA Hole, renown with puddlers! The FAA Gate is on your right. You can't fish here, and you don't want to because the FAA Hole is on the other side of the road (north side). Turn back and head west to Fourchon about 75 yards and you'll see a structure on the right. This is the best place to launch your canoe or kayak. The pond is about 6'-8' deep and is good for specks early in the morning. The shorelines have reds as well. There is a cut on the east end of FAA Hole that leads to Hess Lake, Hess Hole, and the eastern end of

Lake Laurier. All good spots for specks.

The next spot down is the famous 1st Car Bridge. Here you can launch a jonboat, skiff or paddlecraft. The areas north and south lead to good redfish ponds. For bank fishermen, either side of the road west of the bridge holds flounder in good numbers early in the morning. The earlier you get there, the bigger the flounder seem to be.

Past the first car bridge is the Snake Pit on the right, and the Hog Hole on the left. The Snake Pit is a sand pit that the locals named as such in an effort to keep folks away. Didn't work. Everyone knows this is a GREAT speckled trout hole in wintertime. In summer, the place for fly fishers to be is near the cut on the very southeast corner. Be there just after first light for a few specks and the opportunity for one or more big reds.

The Hog Hole is a good spot for one or two puddlecraft. Be VERY SLOW moving in here, almost from the time you launch at the road. The fish are very spooky, but they are big. This is where I once caught 62 reds in one day!

The 2nd Car Bridge is next - Bayou Thunder. The good section is behind the Snake Pit.

The 3rd Car Bridge is Elmer's Island. It remains closed again this year - a travesty of our state's incompetent leadership! Let me not get started here, my blood is reaching boiling point...

Past the cluster of camps, there's a billboard on your left. Slow down the minute you see it. Next to it is a small dirt pulloff. This is a good spot to launch a yak or noo. There are good numbers of reds in the canals here, but the water is never clear. Still, I've never fished it without catching a few. The main canal leads out to open water - the lower end of Bay St Honore. Hard sand bottom means sand trout.

Finally, the Caminada Bay bridge. You can launch your yak or noo at the southside across from Bridgeside Marina and fish the rocks in the pass. Excellent for sand trout, specks, spanish, bull reds, flounder, and jacks. Bank anglers can fly fish off the bridge - yes, it works! If you work a clouser off the bottom in July or August, expect to catch sand trout and possibly flounder. If you work it near the surface just after first light, expect to catch spanish or speckled trout. This is a great spot for night fishing.

For boat fishermen, bull reds, spanish, jacks, and other big fish run from the pass all the way to the bridge and inside. For specks, there are sand bars on each side of the islands north of Grand Isle heading east, and also in the bays around oyster beds and up to the points off Bay St Honore heading northwest.

Grand Isle offers surf fishing, of course, and some puddlecraft opportunities backside of the island, as well as wade fishing the ponds at the Grand Isle State Park at the east end. The boat launches at the east end offer access to some famous waters such as Queen Bess, Independence Island and both sides of Grand Terre Island. There is also a fishing pier at the state park, but the fly fishing is better a few hundred yards west of the pier (heading away from the pass).

## When to Fish?

Moving tide helps, but in summertime on the Louisiana coast, tide isn't as important as time of day. At first light, you want to be walking the beach, making casts out into shallow water. If the water is calm, use a popper, otherwise a clouser. Once you locate a fish, or there's no action, wade out into knee-high water and work the first trough. Continue to work the first trough until someone else proves the fish are in the second trough (past the first sand bar).

If surf conditions aren't right, and you're without a boat, be prepared to be on the bridge or along the roadside or at the right locations of the Snake Pit or Oklahoma Pit around daybreak. This is THE best time to catch fish at these locations.

Same thing if you're puddling. The best action in late July comes within the first two hours after daybreak, and also on the ebb low tide (when reds and drum backs are hopefully exposed!).

## Night Fishing?

Every year I'm making believers out of club members about fly fishing at night for specks and sand trout! Option 1 involves fishing off the bay bridge. This is usually best on weeknights and after midnight when all the idiots are off the bridge. If the tide is coming in, the north span is best, if the tide is going out, the south span is best.

You will need to bring your own light. Most of the bridge lights don't work, and the few that do get crowded with commie tackle folks. All you need is a 12V battery (rechargeable), one of those styrofoam lights - 200,000 candlepower - like they sell at Academy, and about 30 feet of 1/4 nylon rope. I use a size U1 AGM battery, but your standard lead-acid group 24 will work.

Here's a few tips on lights off the bridge. First, clousers and small seaducers work best. If you don't feel like flycasting try a commie rod using a size 1/16 ounce jig and sacalait minnow plastics. They best imitate the silversides these fish feed on. Second, Cormier's 8th Law of Light Fishing: "Success is inversely proportional to the number of anglers working the light". I'd say two persons working a light is good, three's a crowd.

I said there was a second option... it happens to be taking your light out in your boat or paddlecraft and staking it out in the marsh. That works very well at times, but the location has to be right. You need a spot with moving water, and deeper than 4 feet or adjacent to deeper water. Plant your light holder into the water, and hang your lantern so it sits a few feet above.

If anyone is interested in ideas for paddlecraft night fishing rigs with battery and halogen lamps, I can post on the website forum and discuss at the July meeting.

Finally, remember to bring bug repellent and make sure you are compliant with regulations for being on the water at night (lights on boat on; single light on paddlecraft on).

## Eternal Novice #40 By Bill Brown

### Finally Casting Bamboo

It was back in October of last year, if I remember correctly, that I wrote about my trials and tribulations in making a split bamboo rod. At that time I was deep in the middle of the planeing phase. That's the part of the method that takes the most work. Well, now I can report, as I promised I would, that the rod has been completed.

As is usual for a first time endeavor, there were a few problems that popped up as I went along. The drying oven I built from a two-inch pipe had a hot spot in it, so the coloration of the rod is not uniform. I discovered that I had cut the groove for the tip in the planeing form too wide for the rod I was making— this was only because I picked a taper that required a very small tip cross section, a 7 1/2' 4 weight. I thought about revising the dimensions of the tip, but I was finally able to make a temporary form just for the first few inches of the tip section which allowed me to complete the taper as it was designed.

Most of the problems that came along were ones that could be worked around or if not, didn't seem to make a real difference in the function of the rod – so far as I know now, at least. Of course, finding these little roadblocks and figuring out how to overcome them added extra time to the fabrication process. All in all, it took me about 18 months from the decision to make it until I first cast with it in the back yard last weekend. I didn't work on it during the hot summer months since my workshop/garage has no air conditioning, so the actual working time was less than it sounds. But, my friends and neighbors would see the light on in the shop most evenings when it was cool enough to work. They would first want to know what project I was working on. When I told them, most of them would say, "Oh, yeah. That's neat." and add little else. One afternoon, a friend of my son came over to help him get his boat prepared for a fishing trip and asked the same question the others had. However, when told that I was making a bamboo fly rod, he replied, "Why?" in a way not trying to be smart. He really wanted to know why I was spending so much effort and time making an "old-fashioned" rod. I can't

remember what answer I gave, but his question started me thinking about why I was making it.

One clue to that is in the term I, and others, use for the fabrication of such rods – the work "making". Most people who fabricate rods from split cane are considered to be the "maker" of the rod as opposed to being the "builder" of the rod. It seems the term rod "building" refers to the adding of hardware, reel seat, grip and guides, to an already constructed rod blank. A person who starts from scratch and also makes the blank is said to be the Maker of the rod – a small but distinct difference, especially since building can take only a few hours and making can take, as in my case, months. I think I wanted to see if I could be a Maker. There are those rod Makers who also make their own reel seats, grips and even snake guides (I've seen a device offered for sale that one can use to twist chrome or stainless steel wire into snake guides if you wanted to go that far in the do-it-yourself mode. I prefer to buy them already made and filed.) I believe that part of the reason I wanted to "Make" a bamboo rod was to see if I could – but that wasn't the sole reason.

One of the main reasons I set out to make a split bamboo rod was so that I could have a bamboo rod. Even at flea markets, bamboo rods are known to be high-price items, so my only hope in obtaining one (at least from my wife's prospective) was to make it myself. After quite a bit of thought I came to the conclusion that the reasons I fabricated my bamboo rod would be a lot the same as if I were to building my own 1956 Corvette. It's neat to have; it's nostalgic and rare. It's fun to use; they both do what they do well. And, it's probably the only way I could get either one. But, there is that sense of satisfaction from having made it yourself; like having tied your own fly that caught the big fish (haven't caught anything yet on the rod.)

As far as the rod is concerned, there are some positive and negative characteristics to this particular rod that wouldn't be associated with a new one I'd purchase. There is that color thing mentioned above. The tip, especially the part just above the ferrule, is darker than the rest of the rod. Oh, it's not only because of the hot spot in my oven. It got darker when I tried to straighten a slight bend in that section of the tip (I didn't see it when gluing the strips together) with heat. Unfortunately, the bend didn't come out – the

base of the tip only got darker. I guess they give the rod character (for want of a better positive term.) Other than that, it casts well and seems to be the correct strength to cast a 4 wt. line, but can handle a 5 as well. One of the most difficult things about making your own rod is determining the proper casting weight. I wasn't sure – it seemed to cast both a 4 WF and a 5 WF well, so when I signed it I put “# 4/5” on it. I figured that probably couldn't be too far off.

I didn't finish it using traditional ways. I didn't use hide glue to put the strips together, I didn't use silk thread to bind the guides and I didn't use a post dip in varnish after the hardware was put on. I used modern methods: epoxy glue, nylon thread, flex-coat (low build) for the threads and gave it 2 coats of urethane spar varnish before adding the hardware – the first sprayed and sanded before dipping the second. There seemed to be some good reasons for doing it that way - most to improve the weather ability that is lacking in the traditional finish methods.

Well, here I am with a new bamboo rod. I figure it cost me a little over \$350 cash (excluding time spent), most of which was for tools that can be used again. And, I have enough bamboo left over to make two more rods (it should have been enough for three, but I messed up some of it learning how to split it right.) I had a lot of fun making tools, accumulating the various measuring devices and supplies, figuring out how to best do some of the things and just working on something that, if done right, would turn out to produce something worthwhile. (I built a computer from a book once back in the '70's, that turned out to be able to add 8+8 and come up with 16, but little more.) I guess I'm like the guy with a new car. All new cars look good and work well. You have to wait until they're older to really determine their true value – You know, that's probably true for fly-fishers too.

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## From The Kitchen

by Catch

### A New Way to Fry Shrimp?

Every year for the Grand Isle surf weekend, most of the attendees come back with fresh shrimp. The seafood dealers along Highway 1 offer premium product at a good price. A few of the good spots to buy shrimp include Estays on Grand Isle, Seafood Shed in Leeville and Golden Meadow, and Gayle's in Leeville. This year, the price for 16-20 count shrimp has hovered between \$3.00 and \$3.50 per pound, depending on availability.

My family loves shrimp, whether it's in an etoufee, pasta, or seafood gumbo. Seafood-stuffed bell peppers are a favorite as well. For all these dishes, anything from 30 count to 60 count works well. (smaller than 60 count is too much trouble for me to peel, but I'm sure it'd work also). However, nothing draws everyone to the dinner table faster than fried shrimp. That 16-20 count size is just perfect.

Lord knows I fry a lot of fish. But when it comes to shrimp, I've never been enthusiastic. It always leaves such a mess in the pot, all that batter - most of it loose flour - just comes oozing off. By the time the last batch of shrimp goes in, the grease is dark brown, and the shrimp take forever to fry. They also come out really greasy. On top of that, you have to throw the oil away after one use. Call me "old school", but in my opinion, frying oil is best second time around!

One evening I was fixing a mess of fish to fry, and had forgotten about a bag of peeled shrimp in a ziploc bag. My daughter, who can't eat fish (but she loves to fish), reminded me about the shrimp. I quickly prepared a marinade consisting of a little salt, red pepper, one egg, and milk, and put the shrimp to set. When I went looking for the flour, there was less than a cup left.

So I put together the same mix for the shrimp that I use for my fish: 1/3 seasoned corn flour (Zatarains), 1/3 corn meal, 1/3 biscuit mix. This mix I picked up from Frank Davis, who writes in his book, "Frank Davis' Seafood Notebook" that this combination of ingredients for fish coating results in little or no residue left in the frying pot, and the perfect granularity everytime!

Sure enough, this mix worked great on the shrimp, and left the oil in excellent condition to be used again. But the best part was the taste of the shrimp - absolutely fantastic! The secret is to remove the shrimp just as the bubbling starts to slow down. Shrimp is a very, watery meat. If you wait til the shrimp stops bubbling, then you've cooked off most of the water, and consequently, overcooked the shrimp.

Give this mix a try - you'll like it!

2005 Events Calendar  
Catch Cormier, Events Chair

**July 15-17 - Grand Isle Weekend**, great fishing and great food. Check Forum or Red Letter for details.

**Sat, Sept 24 - National Hunting and Fishing Day**, 9am-3pm, Waddill Outdoors Center, 4142 Flannery Rd. Sponsored by Louisiana Dept of Wildlife and Fisheries. Exhibits, youth fishing contest, wild game cooking, food, refreshments. Free and open to public.

**Sept 30-Oct 2 - Lake Concordia Fall freshwater trip.** Check Forum or Red Letter for details.

**Oct 7-8 - Southern FFF Conclave**, Baxter County Fairgrounds, Mt Home, AR. For registration form and list of programs, tiers, workshops, vendors, and other activities, check their web site at [www.southernCouncilFFF.org](http://www.southernCouncilFFF.org).

**Nov TBA - Fall Catch-and-Eat marsh trip.** Check Forum or Red Letter for details.

**Nov 4-6 - Southern Fly Fishers Rendezvous**, North Toledo Bend State Park, Zwolle. For details, check the check the Rendezvous web site (link at rsff.org).

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