

PREFACE

I will plead my case right now. Why in your wildest dreams would you leave your nymphs and streamers at home and address a frozen river canyon with a box of tiny dry flies? Why would you restrict yourself? Why would you disadvantage yourself? Why would you give a fish every opportunity possible to kick your butt? What sane fly fisherman would accept a CHALLENGE so weighted in favor of a fish? That word...CHALLENGE defines exactly the reason why one would winter dry fly fish. In the world of fishing, there is no mountain this high, and that's the reason you try to climb it.

Now I understand the major objective in fishing is to hook fish. You sometimes compete with your fishing buddies on how well that can be done. You've watched that strike indicator, yanked a streamer, and you discovered you could catch a lot of fish. Well, you've done that. You know at any moment in any season that you could tie on a nymph and catch fish. And by gosh, you did that! When you've reached that level and dredging the bottom becomes the mundane, you'll begin to seek a higher test. You will demand more from fly fishing. You will forget what you know you can do and trade that in for something that pushes the limits of what's possible. At that exact moment, I would like to invite you into my world. Welcome to the world of winter dry fly fishing; and from this day forward, nothing will ever be easy. Every day you pick up the rod, another set of difficult circumstances will stand between you and hooking fish. In order to succeed, every skill you ever learned about fly fishing must be employed. Every strategy and tactic must come to the fore. You'll be forced to think like a fish, understand his tendencies, and exploit his weaknesses. This test will have tough beginnings and you will ask yourself, "Why did I leave my nymphs at home?" You will be frustrated, stymied, shut out, and flat-out whooped. But in the face of improbable odds, you will win small skirmishes that taught valuable lessons. Those lessons will be used to win larger battles. In time on most days, you will win the war and the rewards will appear in large fish eating your small bug. And then you will realize that you really gave up nothing to enjoy these wonderful prizes. You'll do the same thing that you did with a nymph and streamer—catch a lot of fish. Some of those fish will be enormous because winter hatches force large fish to eat small bugs. You will catch equal numbers of trout as you did with bottom bugs without the trash fish (suckers, squaw fish, chub, or white fish). And the really cool thing about succeeding in winter on a dry fly is:

- 1) You will have accomplished the crown jewel in fly fishing hierarchy and
- 2) You will be given the one most sought-after reward...watching that big fish rise to eat your dry fly.

For 34 years I have received these rewards. At present, the winter is my ultimate favorite time of year to fish a dry fly. In the coming pages I will do everything I can to jumpstart you, but this project takes a commitment. You can't jump ship when the fish aren't rising and go to the "dark side" by sinking something. It's important that you feel naked going in to show there is power in being exposed. A tiny

dry fly has remarkable magic, but you must believe in them for this journey to be fulfilled. When you encounter a stubborn river, no fish rising, and you are forced to “Searcher” fish, it’s imperative that you tie on another dry fly. Part of the quest is to fool that fish—whether he is rising or not. There are no crutches, no life lines; just you, a box of small dry flies, a fish and your will to make him eat. You will discover that combination will work and in many ways it will produce better than any offering served to a fish.

Come with me; believe in the message. Let’s explore Winter on a Dry Fly. I encourage you, no I CHALLENGE you to leave the nymphs at home. You think you can fish? Let’s see, because I will put a challenge on you that will test the outer reaches of your ability. This book is about preparing you for that mission: Catching fish on a dry fly in winter. If you embrace the principles, video clips, blogs, and other content of this book, you could own the winter on a dry fly. There will be a whole new season opened. There are a lot less fishermen, you’re out on a gorgeous winter day, and most importantly, fly fishing will have an awesome new inspiration. It’s called a “Great Challenge!”...and isn’t that what fly fishing should be? I will share a blog that must become your new attitude.

February 7, 2013 SF Boise River Report

If you dry fly fish exclusively, then you are subject to a good and thorough rear-end kicking! You can talk the talk, toot the horn, and thump your chest, but one day you'll be lowered to the quagmire of humility. You will show up to the river and the fish will treat you like dirt. No matter what tricks you use or techniques you try, it's all for not because the fish are just not going to eat your bug. Well that pretty much sums up my fishing day today. I flat-out got thumped!

Now, I could say the wind was howling all day, or I chose the wrong section of river, or maybe the barometric pressure was working against me, but there is one fact: I fished all day; I saw one fish rise, and I went home with my tail tucked between my legs.

It's very difficult to extract something positive from a fishing experience like that, but the one fish I saw rise, I caught. So the heck with self-flagellation--at least I didn't get SKUNKED!

Fly that Caught [one] Fish:

#20 BWO Comparadun

In the previous paragraphs before the blog, I have tried to motivate the experienced fisherman to attempt a new kind of fishing. For all of you who are new to the sport of fly fishing, I would like to introduce you to Nick North and Riley Timmons. They were absolute “newbies” when I introduced them to dry fly fishing. At present Nick and Riley are both avid and very successful dry fly fishermen. They catch more fish in winter than most veterans. Both of them have a message for all rookies, “YOU CAN, TOO.” Here are their dry fly stories in their words.

December 2016:

I am Nick North and I have been fly fishing for three years. The first year I nymph fished. I found an online company called Dry Fly Innovations where I purchased an instructional DVD called "Winter Dry Fly Fishing." I studied the information and attended a seminar with Nate Brumley called "Winter on a Dry Fly."

I immediately started having success on a dry fly. The first time I saw a big fish rise to a dry fly, I put away all my nymphing gear. In fact that gear is in a storage container collecting dust if anybody wants it. My days of getting skunked became fewer and farther between.

The first winter I fished, I joined the 20-20 Club. I had numerous trips where I landed a lot of fish—and big fish. I was amazed how the big fish loved the small flies. The smaller, the better for me in winter.

If it weren't for Dry Fly Innovations, I'd probably still be bobber fishing catching more white fish than trout. Their winter instruction sets you up for success step-by-step; from gear to approaches, to holding water to bugs. I simply took the instruction to the river and it worked. For two years now I have been a dry fly guy and I love the winter.

February 2017:

I'm Riley Timmons and I started fly fishing about six years ago. I didn't really have a clue what I was doing at the time or what flies to use. I just knew I wanted to be out on a river catching fish. The first three years I fly fished I would use flies from various retail stores not really knowing what they were or when to use them—just the hope that a fish might be interested in the take. I would get lucky at times and catch a fish once in a while, but nothing was ever very consistent in my fly fishing technique. I remember one evening I had my phone with me and I was watching YouTube videos. I stumbled across a Dry Fly Innovations video of Nate Brumley fishing on the South Fork of the Boise River. I was hooked instantly and knew that if I wanted to improve my game, this might just be the way. I started watching every DFI video available on YouTube. I applied what I saw Nate do on the river. I cut off my sinking tip line and replaced it with olive-colored dry fly line. I gave Nate a call and he designed a dry fly box with instructions on how and when to use the flies.

The flies arrived and I immediately went to the South Fork of the Boise to try them out. I had never fished during winter and didn't even know bugs hatched in that time of year. When I arrived, there just happened to be a blue wing olive hatch that day. I watched the river waiting for the first target to present itself. I had a Colored Emerger tied on when I saw the first fish rise. I slowly made my way into the river positioning myself in front of the fish. As I watched the fish rise again, I sent a cast right into his feeding lane. I watched as the fish rose up and sipped my bug. I landed the first fish I had ever caught in the month of November on a dry fly. After that experience on the South Fork, my imagination went running.

I called Nate again and asked him about the South Fork of the Snake. He explained how the blue wing olive hatches in the wintertime on the Snake can be amazing. I watched the weather and saw cloudy days and above 30-degree temperatures. So I hit the road and went to the South Fork of the Snake. I had never caught a cutthroat trout before and couldn't wait. The same experience I had on the Boise happened on the Snake. I saw feeding fish, got into position, and laid my fly right in front of them.

I caught my first Yellowstone cutthroat. Watching the fish rise and take was an amazing experience. I have been addicted to the sport since that first winter.

After that experience of catching fish in the dead of winter on a dry fly, I knew that Dry Fly Innovations was the real deal. My success at winter fly fishing came because I was willing to change. I have read all Nate's blogs, viewed videos and read his book, *Addicted to the Rise*. It changed everything about how I approached a river. Today I use nothing but dry flies and I will say this about the experience—I continually put fish in my net. If there are fish in a river, I feel confident that I can hook them with a dry fly. If you're willing to learn and apply the principles, you will too.

