

BAMBOO

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Some tackle tips for making the most of your bamboo rod.



To many anglers, the history and tradition of flyfishing leads them to bamboo. For others, cane rods are just great tools for fishing streams. Either way, there are associated tackle considerations that will help you get the best out of bamboo. In this column I'll discuss these, including some that will hopefully be of wider interest to small stream anglers using graphite and glass.

Silk Lines

A question I get asked frequently is whether bamboo rods should be fished with silk lines. The short answer is, not necessarily. Bamboo rods fish very well with modern plastic lines too. Silk lines are, however, excellent to fish with—on graphite and fiberglass as well as bamboo. Silk does have some different characteristics to plastic lines. Firstly, for an equivalent line weight, silk lines are thinner than plastic. This means that silk is good at cutting through the wind, shoots well, and also lands delicately on the water. Silk lines have virtually no memory so they don't need to be stretched to uncoil them before fishing. They are extremely low stretch, which gives them a positive, tight feeling when casting and fishing. They also become very supple after some use (though out of the box they can be a little stiff until worn in). These are all pluses for silk, but it's not a perfect world...

As mentioned, silk lines are thinner than plastic for the same line weight. This means they are denser—they will sink unless they are dressed with Red Mucilin or some other floatant. The dressing actually causes the silk line to float via surface tension rather than the positive buoyancy achieved in plastic lines which have tiny embedded air bubbles in the line coating. Dressing is done prior to fishing, and takes about as long as stretching a plastic line, so to me it's a 50-50 call on this one. During a full day's fishing, particularly when you are constantly casting, you may have to re-dress the end few feet of line.

Silk lines need to be taken off the reel to dry after use. If left wet on the reel they will rot and be ruined. Silk lines are also more expensive than plastic lines; up to about double the price. I would note though, that properly cared for a silk line should outlast a plastic line several times over.

In my view, silk fishes at least as well as plastic, but it does require more care. I use both, but I am leaning towards silk more and more. It's a balance between performance and convenience. I also use the artificial silk lines made by Terenzio Zandri in Italy. These lie somewhere between silk and plastic in terms of performance, maintenance requirements and price. For those not wanting to go all the way

with a natural silk line, they are worth a try.

If you do start fishing with silk, a line winder can be a handy accessory to have. Regardless, one of these can be useful for changing and storing fly lines.

Double Taper or Weight Forward?

For the same make and model of line, the front taper of most double taper (DT) and weight forward (WF) lines are pretty much the same these days. This means that for short to medium presentations it doesn't matter a lot which you use. The thin running line on a weight forward does give it a lower total volume than a double taper, so you can fit it on a smaller reel. I take this a step further and just cut my plastic double taper lines in half, splicing some hollow braid on the back end. This gives you a compact line for stream range casts and a slick, low tangle shooting line when the occasional longer cast is needed. You get two lines for the price of one as well.

I tend not to cut my double taper silks in half. They are thin and zero memory anyway, so a whole silk double taper will usually fit on a small trout reel, along with sufficient backing. For those who are determined to stick with weight forward lines, some silk line manufacturers do make their lines in this configuration nowadays as well as double taper.

Reels

To a large extent, reels are reels when it comes to trout fishing. A simple click drag to prevent overruns is sufficient for playing fish. Modern reels tend to be getting lighter and lighter, with ever



increasing arbours, for a range of reasons. I have one of these for saltwater fishing but never found the need for them when tackling trout. In fact a couple of super large arbour models have such a small gap between the arbour and rim that there's barely enough room for a line and backing without jamming. With the slight extra weight that bamboo rods have over graphite, most bamboo rods—even the shortest ones—are pretty flexible when it comes to reel weight. You can use these new ultra-light reels or something slightly heavier and still have your outfit balance. On bamboo rods over 7'6", a bit of weight in the reel can actually be an advantage.

Most bamboo anglers do like the look of a traditional, standard

arbour reel on their rods, and I'm no different in this regard. In the mass market, these reels have been overtaken by 'space age' models, but there are several craftsmen in the USA making incredibly durable, classic reels of heirloom quality. I have a few of these from Peerless, but I'm just as happy using an old 1920s Hardy with a few scratches and dents. By the way, a note to weight forward plastic line die-hards: it's not sacrilege to cut some of the running line off the back of your weight forward line to fit it comfortably, along with some backing, on a little, traditional trout reel. Still, if I do see you using a big, funky looking reel on a bamboo rod I won't let your tyres down or anything. Well, probably not...



Leaders and Leader Connections

Most bamboo rods being made and fished these days are short compared to graphite rods. I do most of my fishing with a 6'6" rod, often with a 10' or 12' leader. A consequence of this is that you'll often have the line to leader connection well up inside the rod when you start casting, even below the stripping guide. This isn't a real problem in itself. The self-loading nature of bamboo will just push the leader and line out through the guides, IF you have a smooth join.

I've used a knotless superglue line-to-leader connection for around 20 years, since it was first shown to me by Paul Bourne. It's quite simple to form, and I've yet to have one fail and lose me a fish. It's trouble-free through the guides, both when playing fish close to hand, and casting with the leader join inside the rod. To make the connection, you'll need superglue, a small piece of sandpaper to key the part of the leader butt to be glued, and a needle to make a hole in the end of the flyline. For the needle you can use something like a dubbing needle, or a C&F Nail Knot tool. Detailed instructions can be found on my website (under "Why Bamboo/Tackle Tips"). Better yet, just get a Dave Whitlock superglue connection kit from Peter Hayes – everything, including instructions and the right glue is in there.

Flies

There's not a huge amount to say about flies. Possibly the only point worth making is in relation to using shorter bamboo rods, say less than 7 feet. These rods are incredibly precise and give a fantastic feeling of being in contact with the fly. While you can use multi fly rigs (a dry and dropper, for example) on them, it can be a bit of work to manage two flies. These short rods really come into their own on small, overgrown streams, where two flies will lead to more tangles than flies on the water. You will probably find it more effective (and enjoyable) to take advantage of the precision of short bamboo rods with a single fly. Longer bamboo rods, from around 7'6" up, can comfortably handle two flies if you like to fish this way.



SUPERGLUE LEADER CONNECTION

FLYLINE-HOLLOW BRAID SPLICE





Landing Nets

I usually fish without a net, playing the fish close to hand, before grasping the tippet to take the stress off the rod tip, and landing the fish from there. This reduces the risk of high sticking and damaging the rod when the fish is at your feet. It's a commonly practised method, and once you're used to it, it becomes second nature. If the fish makes a sudden run, you can let go of the tippet and play it off the rod again.

Obviously landing nets have some value and recently, I've dabbled around using a soft mesh, knotless landing net. As well as being a useful fish-landing tool, it can also be used to set up a nice photo before releasing a fish. It's a personal choice of course, but a landing net may not be a bad idea for less experienced anglers wanting some extra insurance in caring for their bamboo rod. Just remember when you bring the fish to the net, hold your rod hand back behind you, keeping the rod as horizontal as possible, with as shallow an angle as possible between the rod and line.

Tweed Jackets

Just kidding, I thought I'd sneak that one in! It has been pointed out to me by more experienced anglers that tweed jackets are subdued in colour, naturally camouflaged, have pockets (practical), and are warm—useful at the beginning and end of the season. Polar fleece (yes I wear them too sometimes) wasn't available 50 years ago so I guess those old timers had to get around in something!

Monocles, pipes, neckties, cravats and ghillies? Now I'm really kidding. But then again...



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Visit www.taranskybamboo.com.au*