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## **FLY FISHING FOR LOUISIANA REDFISH**

by Michael Patron

When I moved to Jackson Hole from Louisiana almost four years ago, I did not even



know what fly fishing was. I had only heard of it. A year after living in Jackson, Jack Dennis' Fly Shop manager Jeff Currier gave me the opportunity to work for him. Since then, fly fishing has become a passion, like no other I have had.

I have always fly fished in the spring creeks and rivers of Wyoming and Idaho. I had read about fishing for redfish on a fly and had been dying to try it, so one Christmas vacation I decided to go back to Louisiana and bring my fishing tackle along. I made arrangements with a friend of mine to go to a family camp in the bayous of south Louisiana (only about an hour from New Orleans) to catch redfish on a fly rod.

There are not a lot of people who fly fish in south Louisiana, but it is growing in popularity. I flew down to New Orleans where my family lives and everything was set for the weekend after Christmas. That Saturday morning we got up early and drove anywhere from 1 hr to 1 ½ hrs to where the boat launch was. In no time the boat was loaded up and we were heading off to the camp. The trip in was amazing. There is so much to see in the bayous, or as the Cajun's pronounce it "in da baya". The wildlife is so different from what I had become accustomed to in Wyoming.

After about a 50 minute boat ride into a lake, we anchored and began fishing. Within minutes of my first cast, fish were striking my fly, I hooked my first fish and landed it. I couldn't believe it. It was a speckled trout around 14 inches and it was the first of many that came that day. The speckled trout fishing was good but Mr. Redfish had been elusive. We moved back into the tributaries and tried different locations, such as dead ends or near the openings of a channel that runs in toward the lake. What is amazing about this area is how the water can be murky at times yet the fishing can still be good. The fishing continued until dark and then we returned back into the camp for some good food and rest.

The next day we woke up to rain. There is one thing about Louisiana weather, which is that it is unpredictable. It didn't matter to me as long as I caught my redfish on a fly. We had breakfast, threw on our rain gear and took off. This day I had a good feeling. We went back to a spot we had fished the day before. Moving around to different locations the fishing was toward the banks where redfish tend to hold and feed. A couple of hours went by and it was still raining and the fishing was somewhat slow. Finally there was a break in the weather and not soon after we started to see movement on top of the water known as "head wakes."



One of our friends in the other boat hooked into a nice redfish on terminal tackle and I know this was the moment. I made about four casts to this point, stripping each time slowly. All of a sudden I get this thunderous strike and my line begins running out toward deeper water. I knew I had a redfish! I couldn't believe the power in this fish. I had fought some big trout in Wyoming and Idaho, but nothing this strong. After a good fight I brought it in and it measured 20 inches and from what I was told depending on the time of the year that is not even the average. Nothing the rest of my trip quite measured up to the feeling of landing my first redfish on a fly rod.

The fly fishing in Louisiana is generally good year round. It is best if you check with a local fly shop before coming down because of how drastically the weather can change. Anytime from April till December are the best months for productive fishing. Recommended tackle is an 8 wt. or 9 wt. rod. You can, however, bring along lighter tackle such as a 5 wt. or 7 wt. for a bigger challenge. Fly patterns for redfish have grown over the last couple of years. The standard pattern is Clouser Minnows in red/white, chartreuse/white and pink/white. Then there are the patterns that have been gaining notoriety like the Gold Spoon Fly and the Black Widow, which are very effective flies and can be found locally. Poppers are great to use, especially during the spring when redfish actually crawl along the banks in search of food with the stomach's being the only part in the water. It is truly amazing sight.

I highly recommend a fishing trip down to Louisiana for redfish. There is other fishing in the area, such as largemouth bass, speckled trout, sheep head and many others. You can fly right into New Orleans, where several of the fly fishing outfitters are located. So if you are looking for a different fly fishing experience, come check out the bayou's of Louisiana.