

## *Tuna on the Fly... Bruce Vail*

**B**ill Locher, John Brand, my youngest son Alex and I fished out of Venice, Louisiana on the 4th of January, 2003 for yellowfin tuna. The weather when we left the dock at 4:30 a.m. and ran out the mouth of the Mississippi river was frigid and all of us were bundled up to the max trying to stay warm. We were fishing aboard the Yankee Star, a 38 foot Maine built boat captained by Pete Fil. Pete had designed the boat and had it built in New England to his specs. When it was completed in 1999, he sailed it down the Atlantic coast and on up to Orange Beach, Alabama, where he fishes during the summer months. During the winter, Pete takes advantage of the great fishing off the Louisiana coast and keeps his boat at the Cypress Cove Marina in Venice.



# Flies & Lies

**FEBRUARY 2003**

Our destination on the morning of the 4th was the Midnight Lump. About 45 miles offshore, the "Lump" is a huge salt dome rising out of thousands of feet of water to within two hundred feet of the surface. It is a magnet for bait fish and predators such as wahoo, shark, kingfish, blackfin and our target, yellowfin. Two hundred plus pound yellowfin are caught here each year. Our hope was to land any yellowfin and hopefully, one bigger than the current fly rod 93 pound, 11oz world record caught off Australia.

As we generally do, we anchored up just as the sun broke the horizon while Brad and Tommy, the two mates, immediately began to chum with bits of pogie and bonito. They worked two lines back baited with 6 inch chunks of bloody bonito from a pair of 50 wide Shimano Tiagra reels. Within minutes, both rods were bent over and Alex and I were into fish. About five minutes later, a 100+ pound yellow fin was drumming

frantically on the deck. Both my hook and my son's in its mouth....We had double teamed him!

Shortly thereafter, Bill Locher was hooked up and soon had one for himself in the boat. Bill's tuna very nearly pulled Brad, the mate, into the water. Brad is a very, very big guy and managed to hold on long enough for the 2nd mate, Tommy to get a gaff in the fish as well. After the fish was in the boat, we noticed that the gaff was bent at a 45 degree angle....What a grip!

Just after Bill's fish was in the boat, John Brand was hooked up and soon landed another yellowfin on conventional tackle. After John's fish was in the boat, the remainder of the morning and afternoon became a blur of bent rods, huge drumming fish on the deck and a near constant adrenaline rush. Everyone caught yellowfin, as well as blackfin, kingfish and bonito.

Sometime before noon, Bill Locher latched into something on a heavy spinning outfit and started fighting it in a real tug of war. It was a battle that would last for an hour and a half before his line finally parted. We never saw the fish but from the way it fought and the power it had, can only guess that it was a huge yellowfin that simply was too powerful for the tackle Bill was using. Besides that, I can't recall who caught what or when until we started getting hookups on the flyrods.

I think John was the first to get a hookup. He was using a 15 weight flyrod, a BIG Abel reel and a sinking line. His fly, for those unfamiliar with it, is an upside down, pink and white Clouser Minnow that John has dubbed the "Deep Dead". He calls it "dead" because it resembles a dead baitfish (sort of, if you squint) ....See page 3

## **MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE DUE!**

**Please pay Karen Brand or Don Lupone at any meeting this month or send either a check.**

**FEBRUARY SPECIAL - Renew for 2003 for \$30**

**After February - \$35**

**NEW MEMBERS - \$35**

**ASSOCIATE MEMBERS - \$10**

# President's Report

**O**ur first business meeting of the year was well attended in spite of the cold weather. It was even colder for the fly tying session and the Saturday clinic. We had a nice fire, and Bill Locher brought his propane heater

which warmed the rest of the room. Hopefully, this year we'll get central heating and air conditioning, courtesy of the city's Leisure and Recreation Department. Wintertime is a great time to get out your gear, check it out, do the needed maintenance, and tie some leaders and flies for the spring. There are a lot of "wishbooks" to pour over on these cold nights. Art DeTonnancourt is putting together fishing trips to N.C. for March, April and May. These are great experiences for the freshwater angler, with a number of good teachers that will help you improve your techniques and productivity.

John Brand led another Louisiana tuna fishing expedition, with Secretary Skeet Lores, Bruce Vail, and others. We should get a report on that at our meeting, February 4<sup>th</sup>. Next year's budget possibly will be presented at the same meeting, but it will be a close question as we had to cancel two meetings in January, during which we had hoped to get the budget prepared. We are very dependent on our auction fundraiser each year for getting us a balanced budget. So, put aside some bucks, plan on coming to the auction, and enjoy the entertainment provided by our capable auctioneer, Travis Akins. Tight Lines, Jay

**"I would as well be here, beside this pool, right now, as anywhere in the universe. I have thought about such a place without knowing it existed. At times I have wished life as simple as this riverbank - the world a logical structure of bend, riffle, and pool, the drama already unfolding on the glassy surface and me, here on the bank, my ass wet, armed with some lovely balanced tools and some knowledge, prepared to become part of it for a few moments...."** Nick Lyons from *Spring Creek*.

## The Fly Fishers of Northwest Florida

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### COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

**AUCTION - Travis Akins**

**CONSERVATION - Terry McCormick**

**DIRECTORY - Jerry Aldridge**

**EDUCATION - Jerry Aldridge**

**FACILITIES - Jon Williams**

**FFF REPRESENTATIVE - Larry Goodman**

**FISHING TRIPS - David Bernard  
Travis Akins**

**LIBRARY - Kevin Cohenour**

**MEMBERSHIP - Karen Brand**

**DIRECTORS AT LARGE - John Brand  
Bill Locher Tom Regina**

### MONTHLY MEETING SCHEDULE

**BUSINESS MEETING - 1ST TUESDAY, 7 PM**  
**BULL SESSION - 2ND THURSDAY, 6:30 PM**  
**CLINIC - 3RD SATURDAY, 9 AM**  
**BOARD MEETING - 4TH TUESDAY, 6:30 PM**  
**FISHING TRIPS - AS SCHEDULED**

Meetings at Miraflores Park, 17th Avenue between Belmont and LaRue St

## *Continued from Page 1... Tuna on the Fly... Bruce Vail*

white belly up and colored back down and "deep" because of the huge lead eyes that take it down. As he was standing there stripping the line in, his reel suddenly began that screaming sound every angler loves to hear. It was a powerful fish and it soon became apparent that he was hooked into a yellowfin. I don't recall how long the fight was, perhaps 30 minutes, but do recall that it was a real battle. Eventually, the line went slack and a disappointed but still excited John reeled in the line to find the 10K class tippet broken. We think the fish crossed another anchor line but will never know for sure.

Bill was working his flyrod during this time and had a tremendous take that snapped his line instantly. Apparently, he'd set a little too much drag and the speeding yellowfin broke it in a nano-second.



John was soon back in the water with another deep-dead when his reel started singing again. This was a back and forth battle with a big yellowfin. John would get the fish near the boat and close enough to see but not to gaff. As soon as the fish saw the boat it would peel off another 100 yards of line in an instant and the fight would start all over again.

On this particular day, a saturday, there were over 75 other boats anchored on the lump. Anchor lines were everywhere and a constant threat to our fishing lines. Many of these boats were very close to our own. Knowing that John's yellowfin could easily break off on one, Pete Fil ordered the bouy thrown out on the anchor line and manuevered the boat from the stern wheel to help John avoid being cut off. As John hung on and fought, he gradually gained line in the see-saw fight. Eventually, he managed to bring the fish to gaff and into the boat. Sheer bedlam broke out aboard the Yankee Star as John's yellowfin drummed the deck! Congratulations were the order of the day. Little did we know at the time, but John's fish would have placed third in Louisiana for the flyrod. Unfortunately, the 60 pound fish was already boned out and on ice by the time we realized it. A bit too late to measure.....If you ever fish with Pete and have a similar fish at the dock, do not let Brad near it with a knife! Brad enjoys sashimi and eats as he works.....

I had been trying for a hookup on the fly as well and had tied on a fly that resembled John's in a remarkable way. I was using a custom built rod that is about an 18 weight and a Kerboom shooting head. Just as I got the fly out, I realized I didn't have a palming glove on and asked John to hold my rod. By the time I'd returned a minute later, John had already had a strike and a miss! Needless to say, that motivated me. Not long after retaking my rod, I had a strike and was instantly on the reel which started screaming like a banshee. That it was a big fish was immediately apparent. It had terrific power and was peeling line like there was no tomorrow when suddenly the line went slack. Reeling madly, I strove to regain line, not knowing if the tuna had spit the hook or was running to the boat. Soon I felt him again and the fight was on.

While I had been distracted with the fish, Pete had once again tossed the anchor bouy and was steering from the stern. This put me on top of the fish and away from the anchor lines of other boats. Reeling as hard as I could and horsing him as much as I dared, we suddenly saw him. He was gigantic! Easily a 140lb tuna was on the end of my flyline, just below the surface circling round and round just out of gaffing range. Not wanting him to sound, I applied all the pressure to my 10K tippet that I dared.....It was an ounce too much....With a sickening snap, the tippet parted and a definite world record fish swam away into the depths.

The disappointment in the boat was a palpable thing. Everyone had seen the fish and knew how big it had been. I felt disappointed and elated at the same time. What a high! I was pumped on adrenaline and didn't even know it until the short battle was over. I was shaking so badly after the fight that I had to have help removing my gloves. Besides that, my left hand refused to obey any commands and would only cramp, shake and spasm. It looked and felt as though it belonged to someone else. How lucky I felt then and feel now to have gone toe to fin with such a magnificent animal on my flyrod.....!

All in all, this was one of the best, if not THE best fishing days I have ever experienced. Fishing for tuna is all I can think about now. If it weren't for my wife and family, I'm sure I'd spend every cent I have over in Venice fishing for yellowfin. It really gets into your blood. We wound up with 8 yellowfin that day. All were over 120lbs except for the 60 pounder that John landed on his flyrod. We also had blackfin and king though I can't recall how many. Supper that night was yellowfin and king grilled to perfection at the Cypress Cove Restaurant.....What a wonderful trip.

Anyone interested in trying out this fishing needs a heavy rod, 12 to 13 weight minimum and a reel with a great drag, a sinking line and plenty of backing. If you are interested, give either John, Bill or I a call. I highly recommend

Pete Fil and the Yankee Star. Pete is a professional and specializes in tuna. He likes flyfishers and will go out of his way to make your trip a special one. He, Brad and Tommy work their rear ends off all day without letup. His boat is comfortable in any weather and he handles it Oh-So-Well. If you would like to contact him, call 251-981-4510 at Marina Charters. You might get Pete but will probably get Stella, his secretary (Boss?). She knows Pete's schedule and whether or not the fish are biting. She can set you up. If you do call, be sure to tell her or Pete that either Bruce, Bill or

## *Tying Clouser Minnows for Speckled Trout... Jerry Aldridge*

In Jackson Hole, Wyoming, the annual "One Fly" competition pits anglers from all over the world to see who can catch and release the most and largest trout (the fresh water variety). Hoppers, stonefly nymphs and dry flies, chernobyl ants and club sandwiches are just a few of the many different flies used. If a similar contest were held for speckled trout in the Pensacola area, the majority of anglers would use a Clouser Minnow. A few topwater enthusiasts would use their poppers and gurglers, others might try their Crazy Charlies, Gotchas, deceivers, epoxy minnows, etc. but most would stick with the Clouser.

So let's take a look at a possible winning Clouser starting with the hook. Standard length steel hooks such as the Mustad 3407 and 34007 fill the need nicely. The 3407 is cadmium steel that will corrode fairly quickly if you have to break a fish off. The 34007 is stainless steel that is shinier, less likely to corrode quickly and is a hook-eye longer for a given hook size. Other manufacturers produce similar hooks as good or better but probably more expensive. Whichever brand you choose, buy sizes 2 and 4 to start with. Those who would like to tie in a wider range of sizes could go as large as 1/0 and as small as 8. The size of the rod you fish with and your casting competence should be factors in choosing the right hook size. Yeah I know there are some who can cast a 2/0 clouser with heavy lead eyes 90 feet with a 2 weight rod. But for the average angler casting with a 7 or 8 weight, size 4 clousers are an excellent choice. Don't forget to sharpen the hook and bend down the barb!

Size 3/0 or 6/0 thread in white, black, red and brown will more than cover thread needs as far as the fish are concerned. The advanced or intermediate tyer will probably buy a wider range of colors to match or complement the color of wing material chosen.

The distinguishing feature of the clouser is the eyes tied on top the hook shank usually 1/3 shank length behind the eye of the hook. It is these weighted eyes that cause the fly to ride "hook point up" and to stream through the water with an up and down "jigging motion" like a wounded minnow. Eyes can be light (bead chain) to fish fairly shallow or very heavy (lead or even tungsten) to fish deep. A look at a tying catalog will show lots of choices including bead chain, cast lead, machined lead, brass in hour glass shape, brass indented to hold decal eyes, etc., some finished or pre-painted in a variety of colors. My favorite is the silver finished brass eyes, hour-glass shaped and indented for decal eyes, either flat or 3- dimensional. The decals also come in many colors; I usually use silver or gold with a black pupil. An eye unpainted or without a decal may catch just as many specks but a tyer must tie to please himself as well as the fish.

Clouser wings may be tied with many natural and artificial materials. Bucktail and other tails (squirrel, calf, fox, raccoon, etc.) plus body hair (bear, yak, goat, etc.) will do for folks who choose to tie with natural material. Artificial include fishair, ultra hair, super hair, unique hair, neer hair, craft fur, etc. Some of the artificials foul easily but are generally more durable, sink quicker, cost less per fly and are easier to work with. However, nothing artificial that I have seen will so accurately mimic the shape of a minnow as high quality bucktail with its tapered hairs. The material I use for most of my clousers is super hair.

These days, lots of accent materials are available to the tyer to add shiny stuff and flash to the wing. Brand names such as flashabou, holographic flashabou, crystal (or Krystal) flash, angel hair and sparkle flash, all available in lots of colors, are widely sold. My favorites are the simple, cheap and most widely stocked - flashabou and crystal flash. To start with, you don't need many colors; silver, gold and pearl will do just fine.

So, how do you tie all this together (and in what color combinations) to tie the winning fly? It would really be nice to be able to give an unqualified answer. If there really was one magic fly for specks or any other species for that matter, what would fly tyers do with their time and how would purveyors of tying materials make a living? If I had to choose one fly knowing nothing of conditions beforehand, it would probably be the red and yellow (see Kevin's article on front page). Shown below are some other favorites that are always in my tackle bag when I'm not in a one-fly contest.



**PUMPKIN** - This one is tied with "fishair", the only artificial I can find the right shade of orange. I usually tie it with bucktail. The inner accent is copper (gold would work fine) flashabou; the outer is orange crystal flash. The eyes are brass with orange decal inserts. A great color for fall and winter.



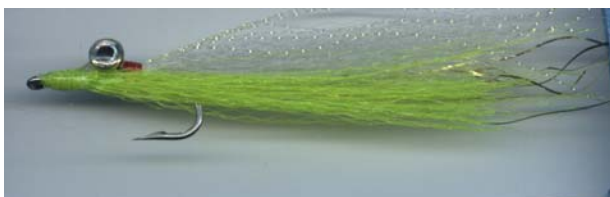
**TAN/OLIVE** - "Super hair" is the wing material. The inner accent is copper flashabou; the outer is root beer crystal flash. The eyes are brass with pearl 3-D holographic inserts. A good all around color combo.



## *Tying Clouser Minnows for Speckled Trout...continued*



SMOKE/BLACK - Super hair, silver flashabou, black crystal flash, brass eyes with silver inserts. The “go to” fly in deep or murky water or winter time.



CHARTREUSE/WHITE - Super hair, gold flashabou, chartreuse crystal flash, brass eyes with pearl inserts, red thread “gills”. The go to fly for summertime grass bed or “under the lights” fishing. For some reason, this color doesn’t work as well in the winter, for me anyway.



OLIVE/BLUE/WHITE - Fishair, rainbow flashabou, blue rainbow crystal flash, brass eyes with silver decal inserts. A good all around combo. I would tie this one even if it didn’t catch fish because it’s so pretty. I think I first saw it tied by “member emeritus” Vance Cook;

## **A “Unique” Clouser Trout Can’t Resist....Kevin Cohenour**

It was just a couple weeks before Christmas, when former Fly Fishers of Northwest Florida President Jerry Aldridge called me to ask if I would like to go fishing for speckled trout. He said he had been out the previous day with another club member, and each had caught over 50 trout. My answer (of course) was “Let’s go!”

Jerry and I met right after lunchtime. It seems like the winter trout fishing here is better in the afternoon when the water has warmed up a little. We motored to a small bayou off of Pensacola bay, and began casting. Jerry had a red and yellow “super hair” Clouser minnow tied on. He told me it had done real well the previous day and offered me one. We fly tyers are a funny bunch (well at least me), and would rather fish with a fly we have tied ourselves, so I thanked Jerry for the offer and tied on another Clouser I had tied in



olive and white. Jerry immediately (as he so often does) began to catch trout. By the time he had caught his tenth I finally hooked my first, a nice 15” speck. Jerry asked if I wanted to reconsider and take him up on the red and yellow Clouser. I said no and tied on a Chartreuse and White Clouser. I had a hit right away and thought this might be the right fly. Jerry continued to catch fish after fish as I periodically had a hit. About the time he had his fly in the lip of the 30<sup>th</sup> trout, I decided to swallow my tyer’s pride and ask for a Red and Yellow Clouser. He handed me one in size 4, which I quickly tied on, and made a cast.

Wham! I had a hit. A short fight and release, another cast and again...Wham! This pattern continued until just before what proved to be a gorgeous sunset. We motored in at days end with Jerry being over the 50 mark and me at 30 trout. It was a great day of fishing and I was a believer!

As I went to buy some red and yellow super hair, I saw a new material called “Unique Hair”. Super hair is quite durable, but maybe a bit stiff. Bucktail is not as stiff but doesn’t stand up real well (I can sure tear one up with my hemostats removing a fly from a fish’s jaw). Unique Hair is kind of in the middle. It is a bit finer than super hair but every bit as durable. It is also easier to work with than the super hair, tying in much like bucktail does on a clouser. Unique hair and super hair are both available in a wide variety of colors to cover most any pattern combination we need. I think if you give it a try you will be very pleased with the results. Tying instructions for the Red and Yellow Unique Hair Clouser are on the next page.

**HOOK** Mustad 34007 or equivalent, sizes 2 to 6  
**THREAD** Red 3/0 or size "G" thread  
**EYES** Dumbbells  
**BODY** Red and yellow "Unique Hair" (or substitute "super hair")  
**FLASH** Pearl krystal flash and silver or gold flashabou



1. Secure hook in vise and wrap thread to the 1/3 hook shank point. Not wrapping back far enough causes many tiers to crowd the eye and not get a nice cone shaped head.

2. Using 8-10 diagonal wraps each direction, secure the eyes at this point. Make 4-5 horizontal wraps around the base of the eyes to lock in. Place a small drop of super glue on bottom of wraps. This helps to better secure the eyes.



3. Cut a fat matchstick's diameter of yellow "unique hair" (for a size 2, less for smaller sizes). I pre-cut the butts. Secure immediately in front of the dumbbell eyes with 3 or 4 wraps. Wrap over the butts towards the hook eye and make a small cone. Wing length should extend at least a hook shank's length past the bend. Pull wing over the eyes and make 5-6 wraps immediately behind the eyes. Move thread to in front of eyes.



4. Secure 8-10 fibers of krystal flash on top of and slightly longer than the bucktail. Repeat with 8-10 strands of flashabou.



5. Cut a slightly fatter bunch of red "unique hair". Again I pre-cut the butt ends to make the red wing the same length as the yellow. Attach on top of flashabou. Wrap and make a neat, tapered head. Whip and cement. If desired, coat head and eyes with epoxy.



## *Go Trout Fishing in North Carolina*

Tom Regina and Art deTonnancourt will be trout fishing on the Nantahala and Tuckaseegee in N.C. in April and May of 2003. The dates are April 6th to April 13th and May 4th to May 11th (2003). This is from Sunday to Sunday, but participants may come later or depart earlier within these dates. **(EDITOR'S NOTE: At press time the April trip has two openings and the May trip is full with one standby)**

They plan to use the "Oconoluftee Lodge" which is a nice 4 bedroom vacation home, with 2 baths and 6 separate beds, fully furnished, located between Bryson City and Cherokee, N.C.

The cost will be about \$175 per person for lodging, and in addition each person will furnish the food and cooking for one full evening meal.

The "Nan" and the "Tuck" are both designated delayed harvest streams by the N.C.. wildlife division, and as such fishing is limited to catch and release and artificial lures/flyes from October 1st to the first Saturday in June when general fishing rules apply. There are over 3000 trout per month stocked in these two streams and the fishing experience is usually outstanding in March, April and May.

Interested members can get more information about these trips, and must make a commitment prior to the deadline March 4th (Tuesday) at our March meeting. Contact Art at [artdetonnancourt1.cox.net](mailto:artdetonnancourt1.cox.net) or 492-3833

## *Tyer's Corner*

February is "Clouser Fest" at ye old club house. So bring your tying tools to the bull session on the 13th and tie the red and yellow version on page 6 with Kevin. We will tie some of my favorites on pages 4 and 5 at the clinic on the 15th. During both sessions, there will be many different colors of wing material and flash so you can tie your favorites, too. Learn some new tricks (even if some of us are old dogs) with Kevin and Jerry....and there might even be an adult beverage for those so inclined.

## *2003 Directory*

The 2003 membership directory will be ready by mid-March. Please check last year's directory for the accuracy of **NAME, SPOUSE NAME, ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBER(S), E-MAIL ADDRESS**. New members not in last year's directory should provide the required info. A working copy will be at all the February meetings for your corrections and additions. If you can't attend, please contact Jerry Aldridge at [jamayfly@aol.com](mailto:jamayfly@aol.com) or 478-9255 to make sure your listing is in our new directory.

Once again, the FFNWF will teach a spring flyfishing class at Pensacola Junior College from March 5 - April 30, every **Wednesday evening from 6-8 PM in Room 1704, Building 17**. To enroll, call PJC Continuing Education, 484-1797.

**WORKING PARTY - We will inspect and repair our rods, reels, lines, vises and tool kits for the PJC class during the February bull session and clinic. Please help!**



## **MORE TUNA PICTURES**



**FLY FISHERS**  
  
**OF NORTHWEST FLORIDA**

**PO BOX 1041**  
**PENSACOLA, FL 32591**



# February



2003

<i>S</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>S</i>
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<b>MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE DUE - PLEASE PAY KAREN BRAND</b>						
2	3	4 Business Meeting 7 PM	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13 Bull Session Fly tying and fish stories 6:30 PM	14	15 Clinic- Casting tying, tall tales, gourmet lunch 9 AM
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25 Board Meeting 6:30 PM	26	27	28	