

WADE FISHING

By Mike Buss

With the weather and water warming up, the fish we like to go after are starting to appear in the shallows and good fishing can't be far behind! Fishing opportunities are increasing every day. But what if you don't have a boat?

Don't lose your excitement, there are lots of places where you can fish if you just open your eyes and look for them. That's right, I'm talking about wade fishing, and we are blessed to have a lot of real good places to wade with a very good chance that the fishing will be excellent!

In fact, the club will be sponsoring three wade fishing trips in the coming months: to Kiptopeke State Park on the Eastern shore, June 18; the Outer Banks, July 23; Chic's Beach on a date TBD in September; and of course the Harker's Island trip in November presents a number of wading opportunities. Look for the sign up sheets at the monthly meetings.

But you don't have to wait for these trips to Go Fishing! Just grab your rod and head out to the beach. It's almost that simple!

The first question to answer is what to bring? In the spring and fall, I would suggest you use waders and in the summer you can just wear a pair of fast drying pants. Why not swimming shorts? This area is famous for jellyfish and they give a nasty sting if they find your skin, long pants help to prevent that. And as far as waders go, you don't need a \$300 set of Orvis top of the line stuff. A set of \$30 waders from Wall Mart will do just as well. In the summer time you will need a pair of shoes to protect your feet from broken glass and oyster shells, but again, you don't need anything fancy, just something that will get the job of protecting your feet done. Don't forget a good pair of sunglasses and cap so you can see where you are going and into the water for the good holding areas.

You will need a stripping basket to hold your line. The club can furnish you instructions on how to make an inexpensive one. Just ask one of the club members. As for line size and rods, I would recommend the rod you currently have. But if you are looking to purchase a rod, I would suggest a 6 weight to 8 weight outfit. Your reel doesn't need to be anything fancy. It just needs to hold about 100 yards of backing and an intermediate or floating weight forward line to match your rod.

You will be fishing in fairly shallow water so I would recommend your line selection be a floating or intermediate weight forward line. I really like the multi-tip lines. They consist of a running line with floating, intermediate and deep sinking tips you can connect with a series of loops. That way you don't need to purchase separate spools or lines, but still have the flexibility to fish from top to bottom in the shallow water you will be fishing. A leader of 3' to 9' should be adequate depending on whether you are using a sinking or floating line. Of course you would use the shorter leader for the sinking line so your fly is actually close to where your line is taking it! A longer leader might be necessary for a top water or softer presentation.

As far as fly selection, I would recommend some deceivers, clousers, and top water gurglers in various colors and sizes 4 to 2/0. In addition, I would add some bendbacks into that group also. If you want to learn how to tie the bendback, be sure to attend this month's fly tying session prior to the regular meeting because Master Tyers Larry Clemens and Jeff DuBinok will be demonstrating the proper tying of this fly. I might add, this is a great fly to use in light clutter, exactly the type of water you will be fishing in the marshes.

You will want to have some place to store your flies so a fly vest or shirt with big pockets would be helpful. Of course you will need a clipper and pliers and all the other stuff you usually take with you. Oh, and don't forget a saltwater fishing license!

Now that you are equipped, where do you go? I would suggest the first place to explore would be the Lynnhaven Inlet by the Lesner Bridge. There are a number of fishing opportunities in this area. I would recommend parking in the marina parking lot. There is a nominal parking charge. The first area to try is to wade along Chic's Beach casting to likely looking spots along the beach. The rip immediately past the bridge on the bay side will look inviting, but it is a very dangerous place to wade and fish. I would continue past this area and walk further along the beach toward the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. There are a number of cusps along the beach that have proven to be productive in the past.

What is a cusp you might ask. As the waves crash the shore, sometimes they form currents that flow parallel to the beach and they conflict with the incoming waves. When this occurs, a sorting of the sediments carried by these currents forms into a pattern of cusps and bowls along the beach. Cusps are small ridges of coarse sediment that rim bowls composed of fine sediment. These formations often continue into the water. When they do, they act as miniature bars and troughs that lie across the longshore current. Baitfish will try to escape the current by collecting on the downcurrent sides of submerged cusps, making for good feeding stops for cruising gamefish. This what you want to look for.

Many who fish the beaches think they need to throw their fly a long distance into the bay. That could not be further from what is really needed. Often you will be able to catch fish just a few yards off shore. You haven't really experienced ocean wade fishing until you have found yourself surrounded by feeding fish in the surf!

Continuing down Chic's Beach you will come to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. This is an excellent place to fish in the evening during the fall, but you will be fighting the crowds. It is also a good place to fish at first light and most of the crowd is still sleeping in then, so that is when I would recommend you fish it.

Another excellent place to fish is the Lynnhaven Inlet, but go the opposite direction of Chic's Beach. You need to get into the marshes to fish because it is against the law to fly-fish along the beach behind the marina. We can thank some idiot who hooked someone on the back cast who was walking by for this ordinance! And that is unfortunate because that was one of my personal favorite places to fish!! The next time you drive over the Lesner Bridge, look in the opposite direction from the bay and you will see a huge marsh. Most of this is good fishing. The problem is getting to it. There are some areas that can be waded immediately to the marsh side of the boat channel leaving the marina.

There is a park called Kellam Park that is located to the marsh side of the marina and it offers some parking on the road. Be sure your vehicle is completely off the road. It is easier for you to look at a city map than for me to describe how to get there.

But this is the starting point and you can walk across a field to get to the marsh. Most of these marshes are good places to fish when the tide is running out. The creeks and cuts in the marsh turn into miniature rivers and should be fished as such during the falling tide. The fish are in these cuts waiting for food to be washed out of the marsh grass and that's what you want your fly to look like, a helpless creature at the mercy of the tide being washed away.

One note of caution, these cuts have a mixture of soft and hard bottoms so take care when you wade them. You don't want to sink in the mud up to your knees or deeper!

Probably a good idea is to scout any area you want to wade at low tide to see the cusps, troughs, cuts and channels. Also look for any exposed oyster beds and hard bottoms. Then

imagine how you would fish them when the tide is up. One thing during your scouting trip, if you see a lot of water in the cuts and creeks at low tide that means they are a little deeper and you are probably looking at where most of the fish are holding at that time. It would probably be worth a cast!

Well, there you have it. A couple of places to fish and the equipment you need to fish them. Don't forget to post your results on the web site so other club members can get the benefit of your experience. Good luck and tight lines.