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Fly of the Month · May 2021



Big Fish Eat Big Flies, and if you would like frequent photo ops with monster trout you will need to learn to fish with streamers! In part 1 of our streamer series, we discussed how to rig streamers, the best rods for casting these big flies, lines and leaders, and the knots that will help give your streamers the most lifelike movement through the water. Now, it's time to take that knowledge to the water and discuss how to effectively fish these large fly patterns.



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FLY OF THE MONTH • ZONKER • SIZES 2-8

Hands down, the Zonker is one the Ascent team's favorite flies in the shop and one of our most effective patterns on the water! This streamer pattern is arguably one of the most active and realistic with its flowing, serpentine movement as it is retrieved through the water. The Zonker is a MUST HAVE streamer pattern for any serious fly fisher.

Dry/Wet: Wet | **Fly Category:** Generalist Pattern

Family: Sculpin, Trout, Suckers, Shad, Minnows,

Shiner, Whitefish, Flesh-Fly, Leech | **Species:** N/A | **Life Stage:** Juvenile



Fly Fishing with Streamers – Part 2: On the Water

By: Peter Stitcher - Ascent Fly Fishing

Target Waters

As a rule, when fishing in rivers, 90% of trout will be found holding in approximately 10% of the water. These sweet spots of cover and food concentrations include the seams and feeding lanes, behind current bending structures (boulders, logs, and bridge pilings to name a few), and the slow churning eddies and drop-offs along the margins of the river. These are the trout rich waters that we drift with our dry fly and nymph rigs and these are also the places you will want to target with your streamers.

Rod Position

Regardless of if you are delivering your streamer with an overhand, side arm, or roll cast, quickly transitioning to the correct rod position for the retrieve is going to help you hook and land more fish. After the fly hits the water, **your rod tip should be lowered close to the surface of the water, pointed at and following the drift of your fly, and the hand holding the rod should be comfortably extended away from your waste in front of you.** As soon as the fly lands on the water and your arm extends and drops the rod tip, your off hand should begin stripping in any line slack, allowing you to quickly transition into your retrieve.

Retrieval

To achieve the greatest success, the angler will want to imitate the behavior and movements of these prey species as they retrieve their streamer through the water because streamer patterns are tied to imitate large prey species such as baitfish, young trout, suckers, crayfish, and leeches. The same physics and rules of the

river that cause large fish to face up in the current, apply to juvenile minnows and young fish as well, so streamers will be most effective when the head (or hook eye) is oriented and retrieved upstream. This natural upstream orientation can be achieved by casting downstream and retrieving the streamer upstream, or by casting across the stream followed immediately by an upstream mend of fly line that will turn the head of the streamer into the current before you start your retrieve.



(Heisenberg – Rainbow Trout)

The retrieve should start as soon as the streamer hits the water, and it is not uncommon for large trout to rocket out of the depths of an undercut bank or pool to drill a freshly delivered streamer! Just as we matched the orientation of the natural prey species, we also need to imitate their movement. Young trout, minnows, and crayfish move in quick dart-like pulses with intermittent pauses, and the angler should mimic that movement with short, upstream movements of the rod tip, sharp strips of the line with the off hand, and periodic pauses in motion. **More often than not, it will be on the pause that a pursuing trout will go in for the kill!**

Hook Set

By keeping the rod arm extended and the rod tip close to the water, the angler will be perfectly lined up for a *Strip Set* when they feel a fish strike. Unlike with a *Trout Set* where the rod tip is quickly lifted to set the hook, with a *Strip Set* the rod hand remains extended and low while the off hand holding the fly line is firmly grasped and quickly pulled back into the hip. This vastly decreases the energy sapping friction created with a *Trout Set* as the length of the line is lifted up and through the water, where as all of the energy of the *Strip Set* is delivered down the length of the line, driving the hook quickly and deeply into the mouth of the fish.

Armed with this insider information on streamers, it is time to *Go Big or Go Home!* The next time you are on the water, tie on a streamer and hang on tight because *Big Fish Eat Big Flies!*