

THE TURNING FLY

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Salmon fly fishing in its most basic form is really very simple, all it consists of is a down and across cast followed by a step or two downstream before the next cast is made. Throughout any season this approach will indubitably account for most of the salmon caught in any Scottish salmon river I could bring to name. For the majority of the time the aforementioned approach will, provided we are fishing an aptly coloured and correctly sized fly for the conditions and present it through the lies as slowly as possible will be all that is required to catch *Salmo Salar* on the fly. It must be understood though that although the downstream cast at an angle of approx 45 degrees across a pool and stream and consequent swing of the fly across their width will not always work. There are fish, places and times when a fly presented out of the norm will be the only way of tempting a fish.

Some fish, regardless of their newness into a lie, or into the river will refuse to rise to a standard down and across presented fly, or any other style for that matter. Why I have no real idea, but I am fairly certain that the majority of salmon on their return to the river tend to ignore everything shown to them. If I could answer this question, then I would probably know the reason why some salmon will take flies and all sorts of other assorted lures into their mouths when they do not actively feed on their return to freshwater. In addition to what I mentioned earlier I am personally inclined to think that not all "taking" salmon can be tempted to take a fly. Some fish will only succumb to a spinner or a bait, regardless of how well we put a fly across their noses. Salmon which have the frame of mind to take a fly will only be triggered into taking hold of it if it is presented with the suiting stimuli. As such I am sure the necessary triggering aspect will almost certainly vary from fish to fish. The necessary stimuli may on some occasions be quite specific, and this is why I think that there are days when the water conditions look perfect, but the fish are totally unwilling to co-operate. Likewise I am sure some fish require a number of triggering factors before they move to a fly. Having said this though I tend on the whole to think that most salmon which are potentially movable to a fly may be attracted by a group of triggering stimuli's which, even if only one is correct for these fish will bring about a response. Although salmon are gregarious creatures they are not mechanomorphic, i.e. they are not machines. As a result they will, even taking fish respond differently to the same internal and external stimuli and as such there is certainly potential for individuality. Some salmon will looking for some specific stimulus in the way the fly behaves. Of course it could be argued that the pattern or colour of the fly may well be the deciding factor. This I am quite sure is true, for who is to say otherwise that a glint of colour, a wink of jungle cock eye, or all-around colour combination and image of the fly has not enticed a fish to

take it. Another aspect which must be considered, especially in relation to water temperatures and the differential between the air and water is the speed of the fly through the lies. Having said all the previous the one aspect of a fly's triggering appeal to the majority of fly taking salmon I believe is its overall movement through the water.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, the action of the fly through the water in many instances needs to be no more than a slow steady paced, leisurely affair when moving from one side of a pool to the other, i.e. down and across. At other times the sudden increase of speed in a "pulled" fly through the fishes zone of vision will some times bring about a response from a fish which has ignored a conventional presentation. In fact this technique of suddenly bringing a fly to life at the end of its swing, i.e. when it has come to the dangle will frequently entice a following fish to dart forward and take a firm hold. Some anglers when they "pull" the fly like to give it a series of short sharp jerks, by taking hold of the fly line between the reel and the bottom ring on the rod and pulling in 12 to 18 inch lengths of line, three or four times in quick succession. This technique does of course work, but in my experience one long quick draw seems to work much better. When the fly is nearing the dangle take hold of the fly line with your left hand (if you are right handed) as far above the handle of the rod as you possibly can, then with one long, quick, backwards sweep of your arm pull the fly line back behind your back as far as you can reach. If you think a fish is interested and keeping station behind your fly try repeating the process, very often a fish which has followed a fly round in the current and refused the fly on the first pull will take hold solidly on the second.

Another technique which is worth practising, especially during the summer, when fish have been held up in the slower holding pools, or hard fished pools on association or club stretches is the "turning fly". Although I have mentioned that the turning fly is especially a good method to try during the summer months, it can be used to good effect through the season provided the air temperature is at least 5 degrees Fahrenheit higher than the water. It can also be very effective when used during those periods of time when fish are running hard. A good place to try at such times is the tail of pools instead of the middle slower holding sections. This technique of turning the fly when used on the Tay is known as the "Tay Tummy", while on the Stinchar it is locally called the "Stinchar Stomach". Although the "turning fly" is a technique which is practised on many rivers it has for whatever the reason to become known universally as the "Beaully Belly". Unlike most forms of fly presentation where a down and across is initially employed the "Beaully Belly" starts by casting our line, usually a floater (but it depends on the water conditions) straight across the current. Initially our fly will sitting at right angles to the current, but this will only be brief, because as soon as the current starts to belly the line the fly will be turned so that it is pulled

head first downstream and at a slight angle back towards the bank we have cast from. As the belly in the line passes its maximum the fly will be kicked round in the current, so that for a small period of time it will once again be fishing at right angles to the current. As the belly in the line starts to decay the fly will now be kicked round so that it starts to face the flow. Fish needless to say can take our fly anywhere during its travel, but the most likely time I have observed for a take to occur is on the two occasions when the fly "kicks" round and changes direction. Long tailed flies such as pot bellied pigs are especially good for this type of presentation. In a slow current we may have to make a downstream mend. Sometimes a small mend will do, but if the current is very slow a large downstream mend must be made. This action allows what little current there is to start and work a belly into the line much sooner than if the line was merely cast straight across and left to its own devices. Contra to the previous, if the central current down the middle of the pool happens to be strong we may have to put an upstream mend into the line in order to stop our fly from skating round on the surface. An alternative method to using an upstream mend is to use either a heavier fly, or change over from a floating to a sinking line. If we wish to present our fly to fish lying in water 5 ft or deeper a suitable density sinking line must be used. In some circumstances, if the flow is particularly strong and the fish are lying deep we may even have to initially cast our line slightly upstream in order to allow our fly and line to sink before the current takes hold of it. Although the method is primarily used to fish the water, with a little practise, by varying the length of line we cast we can also utilise the method and use it to fish individual lies. The choice of rod, single, or double handed depends mainly on the stature of the pool being fished and where in relation to the fish are lying. Additionally the water conditions will also dictate the rod we must use, i.e. small fly in low water a single hander, and a larger fly in high water a double hander. Regardless of which is used the technique is still the same. As for flies I find it best to use ones which have a long flowing wing, or tail, i.e. Ally's Shrimp for example tied on low water doubles or trebles. Additionally flies tied on plastic, aluminium, or copper tubes with long flowing wings tied Collie Dog fashion or pot bellied pig style flies can also be very effective. The long tails in my opinion help to eventuate the change of direction of the fly, which I believe provokes the fish to take. The reason why I think this technique is so successful is that the fish sees the fly coming towards it and then as a precautionary measure this life form changes direction and heads away from the fish. An exhibited escaping action to most predators usually invokes a predatory response.

When conditions are far from ideal, or the fish in the pool have become stuffy it often pays to try a different approach. The Beauty Belly, Stinchar Stomach, Tay Tummy, or whatever you want to call it is one approach which can often turn the prospect of a blank day into a successful one.