How I Do It – Fishing Still Waters with an Indicator - Version 2

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The overall guiding principle for me is KISS. Keep It Simple, Stupid!

Here is a rundown of how I do it.

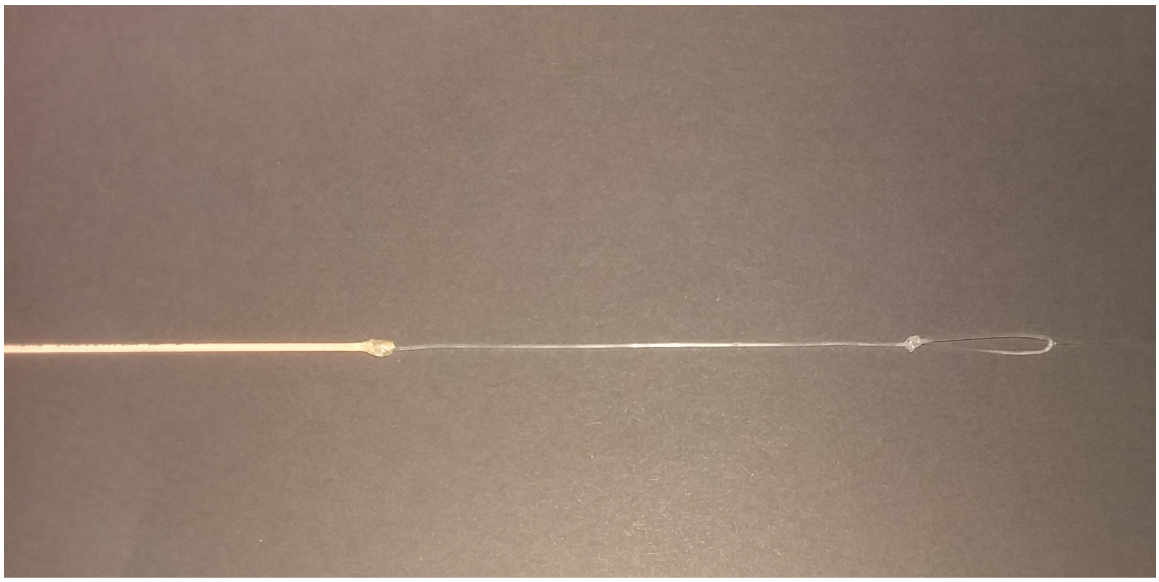
Equipment

Rod – I use a Cabelas CZN 10 ft, 5 wt rod. Unfortunately, this rod is no longer available. Echo has several that will do the job, and they are reasonably priced. Get a rod 10 ft. in length with a fairly stiff action, and it will be easy to throw good-sized indicators with long leaders and heavy flies.

Reel – Pretty much any reel that will wind up the line will do.

Line – I use a Rio 5 wt. line designed for casting indicators. Their latest version is the Rio Elite "Xtreme Indicator" line. The line is specifically designed for fishing from a boat with indicators. Combined with a 10' fairly stiff rod, you can throw pretty much any combination of indicator and fly that you can come up with.

Leader – As part of my effort to keep things simple, I use a straight length of fluorocarbon tippet. No tapered leader and no swivel. If the fly line has a loop on the end, I loop on a 12-foot piece of 6 lb. test fluorocarbon tippet material. If the fly line does not have a loop on the end, I take an old tapered leader with a loop on the butt end and cut off about 10 inches. I then attach the cut end to the fly line using a nail knot.



Fly line with looped butt end attached.

Seaguar Red Label fluorocarbon is a real bargain at about $15 for 200 yards. If you are going to fish small flies you should shorten up the 6 lb tippet by two feet and put a two foot section of 4 lb. test on to tie the flies to.

Tippet to Fly Connection- For a long time I have tied on most flies except very small ones with a fixed loop. The loop allows the fly to move freely in the water which is attractive to the fish. See instruction below for non-slip loop knot tying instructions. A loop can cause small flies to be cocked over so I tie them on with an improved clinch knot.

Here is a memory trick that will help you remember how to tie the fixed loop. Every time you do something you have to go back through the overhand knot. So, put the tag end through the eye of the hook. You have done something so you must put the tag end through the overhand knot. Make your four to six wraps. You have done something so you need to put the tag end back through the overhand knot.

Non-Slip Loop Knot:

I use the Non-Slip Loop Knot exclusively for my tippet to fly connections. The Non-Slip Loop Knot is strong and durable. It does not close tight on the strike, as is the case with a Duncan Loop. Loop knots allow maximum fly movement helping to add the illusion of life to your presentation. I also believe loop knots allow maximum fly movement on the cast helping long tailed marabou flies avoid fouling around the hook. Try to make the finished loop about twice the diameter as the hook eye. If your initial loops are large do not worry, your presentation will not be negatively affected.

1. Make a simple over hand knot, leaving about three- inches towards the tag end.

2. Pass the tag end through the eye of the hook and then into the loop and out again. Note that the tag and standing end and also the loop pass through the over hand knot in the same over and under direction.

3. Make four-to-six wraps with the tag end around the standing line. Then put the standing end through the over hand knot as illustrated.

4. Lubricate, then pull the standing end and the fly to tighten. As the knot tightens snug up the tag end. ▨

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More recently I have been using a Rio Twist Clip Size 1 to attach balanced flies down to about size 12. They give the fly freedom of motion and it is easy to change flies without having to cut the old fly off and tie a new fixed loop. I use the fixed loop for larger chironomids and blood worms because I think the clip distorts the appearance of the fly.

If I am fishing chironomids and balanced flies I will rig up two rods so I don't have to be changing back and forth with flies.

Indicator – There are many choices out there. I started out with a Corky threaded on the leader with a toothpick pushed in on the fly side of the indicator so it tightens as you cast. You need to be able to easily move the indicator up or down on the leader to set the fly at a particular level in the water. Eventually I ended up with the Thill Ice N Fly IND 1 1/8". It is made of balsa wood and is more aerodynamic making it easier to cast. Unfortunately Thill no longer makes this indicator. The new Oros indicator is a great idea and they are available online and at the local fly shops. They recently added chartreuse indicators. I suggest the medium size.

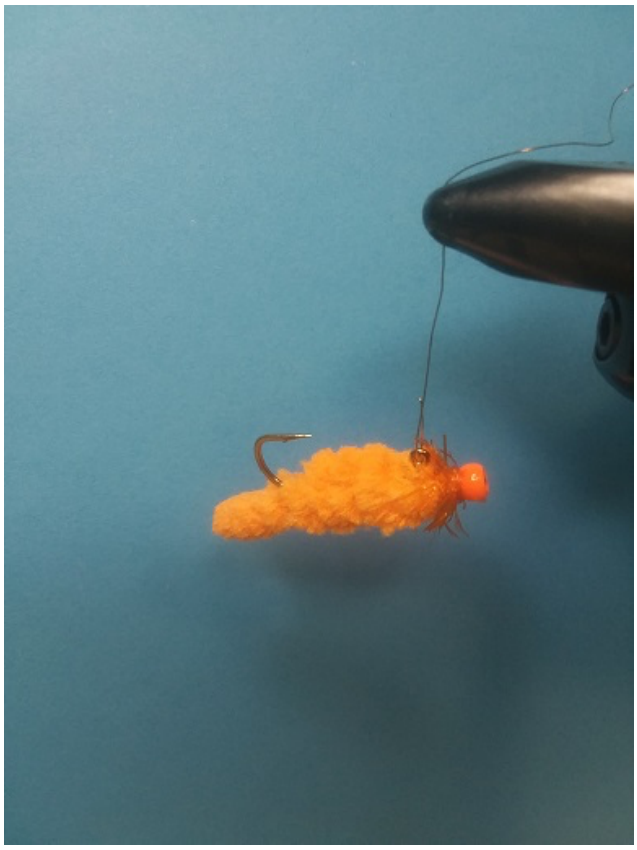
There are ways to fish deeper water using an indicator. I have fished successfully in depths up to about 25 '. This involves using releasable indicators and special casting techniques. I fish this way only as a last resort because it is not simple.

Flies –Again, with the goal of simplicity, I fish with only one fly at a time. As far as I am concerned life is too short to deal with the level of frustration that comes with two flies. I fish with chironomids, Bionic Worms and various balanced flies. There are now quite a few places where you can buy balanced flies.

New Flies

New to the scene are blobs, mop flies and leather leaches. I have had good success with all three. The fish have a tendency to swallow regular blobs so I tie mine in a balanced form that has eliminated the swallowing problem.

Balanced Blob



Balanced Mop Fly

Balanced Leather Leach

Favorite Flies

Here my two favorite balanced flies.

#1 Olive Filobugger

#2 Peacock Glimmer

Rod Case – I use a case that allows a 10' rod to be uncoupled at the mid-point and folded over and inserted in the case with the reel on it and the line still strung up. To put the rod in the case, release the indicator and slide it down to the fly. Reel the indicator and fly up to the tip of the rod. Uncouple at the mid-point, fold over and insert into the case. Simple!

Fish Finder – A fish finder is invaluable. It will give you the water depth, temperature, what kind of bottom you are over and whether there are any fish below or out in front of you. The earlier Buddy II's or later Humminbird Series are really the only ones suitable for fly fishing. You want either the Humminbird 140 or 120 models. Both have bottom and side sensors. The 120 has a much longer battery life. Unfortunately, the Humminbird finders are no longer manufactured so the only source is a used one bought on the internet.

Technique

Anchoring – I fish out of a boat and typically anchor up on both ends. If there are two of us in the boat I anchor sideways to the wind which makes casting much easier. A strong wind may require that you anchor the boat in line with the wind. If you are in a float tube or pontoon boat you may be able to fish without an anchor by slowing your drift with your fins but I would advise putting down an anchor.

Water Depth

I fish depths from 2' to about 15'. Most commonly, I look for water that is about 10' deep.

Set depth of fly – A good place to start is with the fly about one foot off the bottom. I use a sinker attached to an alligator clip to check depth. Clamp the alligator clip onto the fly and lower it to the bottom. Position the indicator so that it is pulled down about one foot under the surface of the water. When the weight is removed the fly will then be about one foot above the bottom. If there are weeds on the bottom you will have to adjust the indicator so the fly is above the weeds. If you are using a small fly you may want to put a split shot on the tippet to get the fly down to fishing depth more quickly.

Casting – To keep it simple and avoid big tangled messes, I do not false cast like you would if you were casting a dry fly. Pick the line off of the water and make your back cast. On your forward cast throw an open loop so that the indicator, tippet and fly are kept stretched out. An open loop is accomplished by moving the rod tip in an arc rather than in a straight line. Watch to see that you get distinct splashes from the indicator and fly and that they are the proper distance apart. If it appears there is something not right strip in and check it out. If you want more distance strip out some more line and then repeat the back and forward casts. If you try to throw a tight loop and false cast I guarantee you will spend more time untangling messes than you do fishing. A little short

haul on the line on the back and forward cast will increase line speed helping to keep everything stretched out and will give you more distance.

Where to cast – If there is a small chop on the water and you are fishing with a Bionic Worm or balanced flies try casting out to the side and letting the wind work the fly. A belly will form in your line but don't worry about it. In most cases you still will be able to hook fish due to the resistance of the line to being pulled sideways through the water. If a wind drift doesn't work throw straight downwind and bring the fly back to you very slowly allowing the chop to work the fly up and down. In most cases it is best to fish a chironomid straight downwind and move it very slowly or not at all. I try to cover as much water as possible. If there are two people in the boat you have about 180 degrees available to you. By yourself you can do 360 degrees. The more water you cover the better chance you will catch fish.

Retrieve – Put the tip of your rod in the water. This reduces the amount of slack in the line and stiffens up your rod when you strike. If there is a chop on the water let it work the indicator putting movement on the fly and retrieve very slowly. If the water is still then retrieve with short pulls on the line that cause the indicator to dip slightly in the water.

Strike – If the indicator hesitates or goes down do a strip/strike. A strip/strike is accomplished by stripping your line and lifting the rod tip at the same time. This puts the most motion on the fly giving you the best chance of hooking the fish.

Netting and release of the fish – I am a strong advocate of using a net even if you use a releaser to unhook the fish. A net allows you to capture the fish and get it under control sooner. Leave the fish in the water and use a releaser to take the hook out. The Inland Empire Fly Fishing Club offers the Runje Releaser through local Spokane, WA fly fishing shops. When you release the fish it isn't as tired giving it a better chance of surviving.

Summary-This is how I do it. My goal is to keep things as simple as possible and yet be successful in catching fish.