



Fishing TU's Home Waters: Upper Connecticut River

BY ANGUS BOEZEMAN

The upper Connecticut River is one of the jewels of the Great North Woods. Starting at the Third Connecticut Lake in Pittsburg, N.H., near the Quebec-Canadian border, and emptying into the Long Island Sound in Old Saybrook, Conn., it is the longest river in New England. Trout and salmon fishing stretches from North Stratford, N.H., northward to Pittsburg, N.H.

Trout fishing on the Connecticut River begins in the area at the outlet of the Third Connecticut Lake where there are many native brook trout in the six to eight-inch range and little fishing pressure due to difficult access and wading. But most fly fishing occurs below the Second Connecticut Lake dam, which is mostly pocket water with a healthy population of brook trout and landlocked salmon. It is catch-and-release only from the dam to Magalloway Road Bridge. Downstream from Magalloway Road Bridge to the inlet of the First Connecticut Lake is a very popular spot for landlocked salmon, which are generally active from "ice-out" to the end of May, and again from September to the end of the season.

In the spring, the landlocked follow the smelt up the river and the fly patterns

of choice tend to be the traditional New England streamer patterns—Gray Ghost and Black Ghost, as well as other streamers. As the water temperature warms and the first insects appear, dry fly and nymph fishing will produce landlocked in the 15 to 18-inch range. In the fall, salmon will return back to the river to spawn. Like the magnificent colors of the fall foliage in the Great North Woods, this time of year the salmon are attracted to streamers of more vibrant colors of red, orange and yellow.

The section between the First Connecticut Lake and Lake Francis is the most popular spot on the upper Connecticut River. Known as the Trophy Stretch, it features three miles of pocket, riffle and pool water. Here it is possible to catch several species of trout—brook, rainbow and brown—as well as landlocked salmon, in a day. This section has special size regulations in place, including a two-fish limit; although most anglers practice catch-and-release. Even though this section is stocked, fish do migrate from Lake Francis in the spring and fall. Being a bottom-release tailwater fishery, the water flows and temperature stay generally constant all season, and with prolific

hatches throughout the summer months, many of the lake fish remain in the river for the season.

Common hatches on the river include blue-winged olives, hendricksons, light cahills, sulphurs and the occasional yellow drake. Caddis flies, along with large stoneflies and yellow and lime sallies, are also good hatches to imitate. Though New England does not get the well-known stonefly hatches of the West, if you drop a big black stonefly behind a boulder in pocket water you may be pleasantly surprised.

The upper Connecticut River also has some great fishing for anglers who do not fly fish. The stretch of water below Lake Francis to Washburn Family Forest has general regulation fishing rules in place that can be enjoyed by all. This section holds some very nice brown trout, including some that are record-size. Visit fishnh.com for more information.

From West Stewartstown to North Stratford, the Connecticut becomes more of a meandering river, with limited access because much of the surrounding land is private farmland. However, there are some access points for those who prefer to canoe or kayak. There are also some great guides who specialize in float trips along the lower stretches of the river. In the summer evenings these stretches make for excellent dry fly fishing.

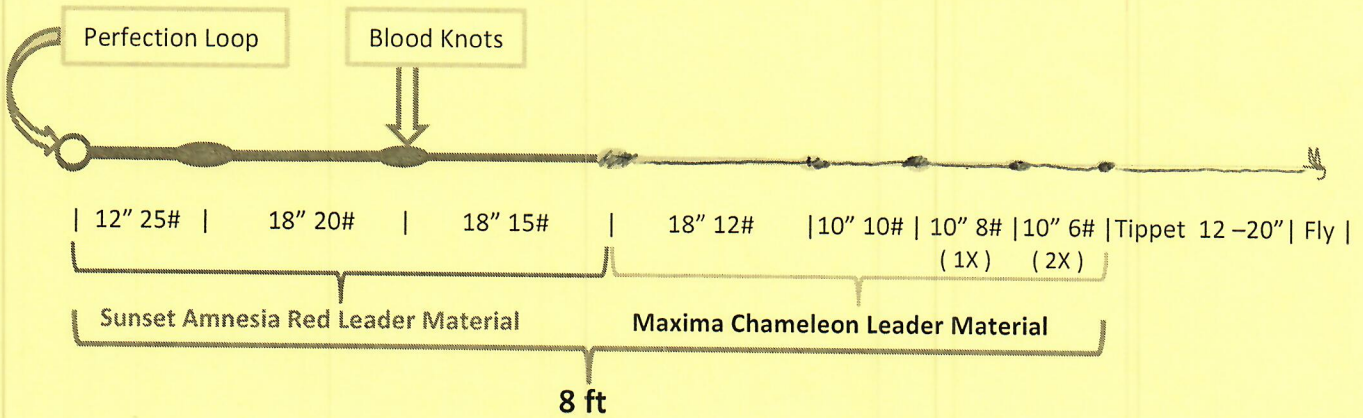
The final fly-fishing and single hook artificial lure only section of the Connecticut River starts at Lyman Falls Dam—the river's first designated catch-and-release only section—and continues down to the bridge in the town of North Stratford. This section offers anglers the opportunity to catch brook, rainbow and brown trout, along with some very nice holdover fish.

From the pools of the Trophy Stretch to jumping landlocked salmon, the upper Connecticut River offers exciting and diverse fishing options for all anglers, and ongoing restoration projects will make it even better.

Angus Boezeman is a longtime TU member and upper Connecticut River guide.

How to Make Tapered Leaders - Angus' formula

Angus' formula 60% – Butt, 20% – Mid-section, 20% - Tippet Section



- Cut sections 3" longer to allow for knots
- Stepping from 25lb to 20lb Blood Knot, 3 turns on each end, cut tag ends flush (very close OK)
- Stepping from 20lb to 15lb Blood Knot, 4 turns on each end, cut tag ends flush (very close OK)
- Typically 4 – 5 wraps is enough on lighter lines
- When done, wrap from tippet end to butt. Wind butt 5 times around coil

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VsFFKuXINQw>

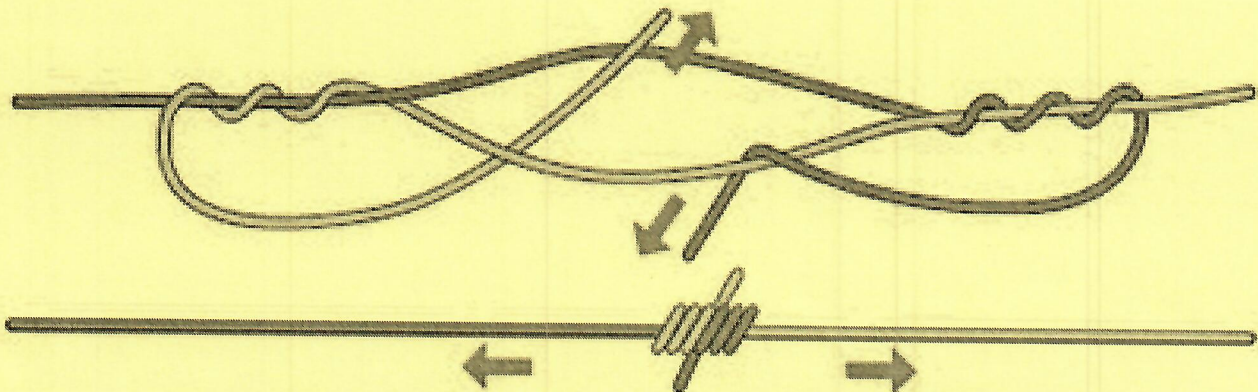
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmEBAXzYMD0>

Blood Knot

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q06QKib1AEQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qa7beYxATi8> (tricky version)

Blood Knot <http://troutster.com/how-to-tie-a-blood-knot/>



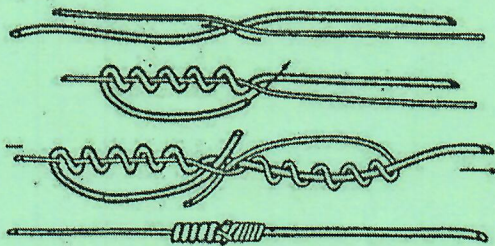


Essential Knots for Fly Fishers

The Noname Knot -ask any guide, anywhere, and they will admit that a significant percentage of their responsibility to clients involves knot tying. The most trustworthy knots neither slip nor cut into themselves and will tighten (usually assisted by some saliva), to maximum strength. Two very experienced flyfishers independently introduced me to the Noname Knot, back in the mid-70's, and I have used it ever since to land fish from coast to coast, and from the Everglades to the Arctic. I tested it against Berkeley's Trilene knot on their test gauge at the Suffern Outdoor Show in NY in 1989, and it won hands down. I was taught the Big Hook Noname version of the same knot (ask for a demo) by a fellow angler, while waiting in rotation to fish the Dixon or Dickson Pool on the Penobscot river in Maine for Atlantic salmon in 1982. He had learned it from his Dad. A couple decades later, the Noname knot appeared in American Angler magazine (see Larry Laragay's illustration), under the name 16-20, but it remains unfamiliar and underused by fly fishers world-wide. Personally, I don't trust any other knot to attach my fly to a leader, a leader to a loop, or a dropper to a fly. Please note: Larry's illustration suggests 2 1/2 wraps around the standing leader, I was taught and almost always use four.

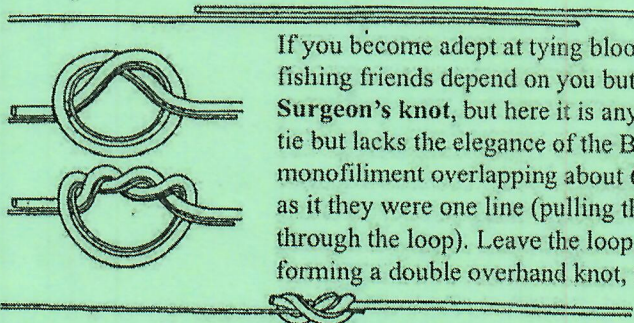
Alan

Occasionally a nasty snag will catch your line and create the need to re-attach a leader, to your fly line without a loop. Use the **Nail-less Nail knot** to perform this function on the water. Hold the tip of the line over the leader butt and form a loop. Slip the leader end through the loop and around the line 5-6 times. Pull on the leader end tightening the wraps, forming the the knot. Trim ends.

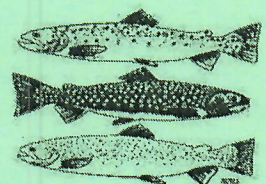
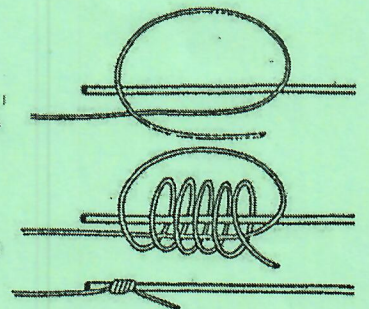
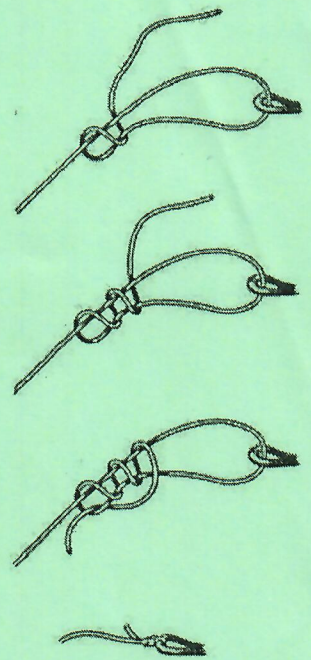
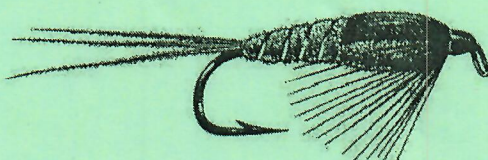


Blood knot

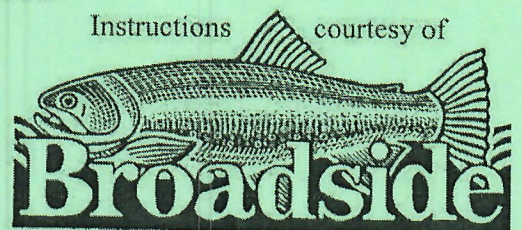
The recommended knot for building a leader or adding a tippet to a leader is the **Blood knot**. Overlap the ends of the two pieces of monofilament (about 4 inches), and pinch them together with your thumb and forefinger forming an x. Using your free hand, wrapping away from the x, make 5 turns around the line then return the end of the line you are wrapping back to the far side of the x. Now switch hands and make 5 wraps in the opposite direction, away from the x with the remaining end of leader material. Bring that end back to the x and insert it in the opposite direction into the loop that has formed at the x. Moisten with saliva and holding the 2 running lines and the 2 ends, pull steadily snugging up the knot and trim.



If you become adept at tying blood knots, not only will all your fishing friends depend on you but you won't ever need the **Surgeon's knot**, but here it is anyway. In a pinch, it is way easier to tie but lacks the elegance of the Blood knot. Lay two lengths of monofilament overlapping about 6 inches, and tie an overhand knot as if they were one line (pulling the entire length of the tippet through the loop). Leave the loop open wide, and repeat the process forming a double overhand knot, then moisten, tighten and trim.



Instructions courtesy of



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