

Scott Sanchez's Secrets for Easy-to-Tie Parachutes—page 50

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Identify This Fly!  
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## Happy Endings

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than not, the stripers and albies are looking for smaller food items—sand eels or anchovies—but blues want to eat big.

Instead of the wire bite tippet that many anglers recommend for toothy fish, I prefer a 30-pound-test fluorocarbon leader. I catch many more big blues without a wire leader. They have good eyesight—hell, they're archetypal predators—and my experience has shown that they can detect a wire-held presentation of a fly. Yes, a 30-pound leader is thick, but the fluorocarbon is not as evident to fish as 30-pound wire is. Keep your rod tip angled high, and you'll stand a better chance of keeping your leader away from a blue's nubby but sharp teeth and therefore won't break off. If you drop your rod and put any slack in your leader though, a blue will chomp right through it.

## Rip-Roaring Fun

Baitfish such as bunker (menhaden), bay anchovies, and sand eels—the last of which can be quite large in the fall, having fed and grown offshore all year—have the poor luck of being caught in the swirl and churn of rips, and as they're pushed around and played around in the current, they attract all manner of predators, not the least of which are bluefish.

Capt. Ron Murphy, a well known Cape Cod guide, has a method for dealing with rip-holding bluefish. He positions his boat just outside the rip and has his anglers cast a lead-core shooting head—to get the fly down in the current—into the rip and then let the fly sweep through as deep as possible to attract fish.

The fly he's designed for this duty is a squid-baitfish hybrid he calls a Parachute Squid because it opens up and undulates when caught in the current of a rip. It's a killer pattern. A group of four anglers (two friends, my father, and I) caught at least a dozen blues and as many stripers on this pattern in the day we spent with Captain Murphy; the largest bluefish that day was about 14 pounds. I took a couple fillets home and had them for dinner the next night—on the grill, with Cajun spices.

### Flashy Profile Fly

Hook: Mustad 34007 size 3/0

Thread: Clear monofilament

Body: White Fuzzy Fiber with strands of pearl Krytal Flash and Flashabou

Gills: Red Polar Fiber

Eyes: Large pearl dome eyes

Head: Coat the head area of the fly with epoxy. Place the eyes in the moist epoxy.



DAVID KLAUSMEYER

Bluefish will usually strike any large baitfish pattern, but they can be mighty choosy at times, too. Note the wire tippet attached to the fly; the author prefers 30-pound fluorocarbon because it offers a more lifelike presentation.



JIM LEVISON

In rough seas, when it's hard to get footing for a proper fly cast or when casting a lead-core shooting head is dangerous, Ron tells his clients to simply feed out all the fly line and to move the fly by stripping in the line and letting it fall back—a strip-and-release motion. I witnessed the effectiveness of Ron's technique in the rips off Great Point on Nantucket; it worked as well as any cast-and-strip method I've seen. Flip out the fly, catch big blues—cool.

## Calm Conditions

In the fall, not every day offers a Nor'easter: You'll have a few challenges with calm days, too, when bluefish start playing hard to get.

"On calm days you'll see blues finning in the surface of the water, moving very slowly, cutting the surface with their dorsal fins, pushing a minor wake," says Capt. Amanda Switzer. "These fish are very spooky, and you must be able to throw a long cast and rip the fly fast enough to get the fish fired up enough to come over and get it. Sometimes only poppers work in these conditions. Try throwing a very small popper, and work it with long, quick strips."

Another method Switzer and many other guides use is the bait-and-switch or teaser tactic. "We lure in the big fish by throwing a hookless surface popper or a Slug-Go and teasing a fish to twenty feet or so from the boat," she says. A wooden pencil popper with the hooks removed works better than a plastic lure; also, Slug-Gos get chewed up quick by blues, she says, so she only uses those to get the fish really worked up.

Joe Healy is a former editor of *Saltwater Fly Fishing and Fly Tyer*. He is now the editor of *Vermont Magazine*.

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