

# Valley Angler

## If You Can't Go Fishing At Least Be Ready To

by Bill Thompson

There is two inches of snow on the ground and ten more inches are expected by tomorrow morning. How's that for a belated April Fools joke? If you have lived in New Hampshire long enough then you have learned to take it in stride. If you haven't then you should probably be making plans to move to Florida.

There are those who are not deterred by a little snow and will make the effort to fish regardless of the weather. If you are not part of that crowd you might as well make good use of your down time and go through your gear and do a little preventive maintenance. It is a good bet that you have squandered away the winter and have failed to do so.

When was the last time you took a real good look at your reel? I am willing to "bet dollars to doughnuts" that it was last fall when you tossed it in your gear bag. Being in the fly shop business I get to see a lot of neglected equipment. The customer is always amazed that his reel has failed him and I am always amazed that the poor thing has lasted as long as it has. I have seen reels caked with salt and frozen solid because the owner has never washed it. Never, never put a reel away without giving it a through washing especially if it has been used in salt water. This would seem to be common sense, but there are those who fail to do so.

A good starting point would be to strip the line and backing off the reel. Take a good look at the backing to make sure that it has not developed mold or dry rot. If it is still in good shape check the connecting knots. Be sure that the connection is still strong and retie if there is any doubt. Now check the line for wear. If there are visible cracks it is probably time for a new line. If everything looks good give the line a thorough cleaning. This may be all that is required as many lines today have impregnated chemical substances that make the line slick. If the line does not have this type of coating it may be wise to use a commercial cleaner that will restore the lines slickness. You will be amazed at how much better the line floats and will shoot through the guides.

Memo to spin fishermen; replace last years line. It has been setting there all year and now has more memory than a hundred year old elephant.

Next clean the reel. After a good cleaning be sure to re-lube the reel. A lot of today's fly reels have sealed drag units and many manufacturers claim that their reel is maintenance free. However, it never hurts to apply some reel lube to the shaft.

Your rod should be given a good going over as well. Check for worn guides. The old timers used to say, "thread a silk stocking through the guides to check for burrs". They didn't say where they got their silk stockings from. If there is a burr in one of the guides

be sure to replace it. If you don't feel comfortable doing your own re-wrap some shops will do it for you or in some cases you can return it to the manufacture.

Last, but not least give the waders a through going over. Needless to say there is nothing worse than wading into your favorite stream on a cool spring morning and finding out that your waders leak. A good method of checking for leaks is to take them into a dark closet and shine a flashlight into them. If light shines through you can assume that you have a leak. The other more cumbersome method is to take them into the bath tub with you. If your wife doesn't think your crazy already she will now. Fill them up with water and watch for running water.

If you discover a leak head for your local fly shop and purchase a tube of Aquaseal. This stuff will fix just about anything short of a large tear. Some wader companies offer repair services and it may be wise to take advantage of their offer.

While your at it check the felt soles on your wading boots. If the soles are worn or falling off it may be time to invest in a new pair. It is possible to replace worn soles and many shops stock replacement kits. However, be forewarned it is a job and a half to replace soles. There was a time when every town had a cobbler, but times have changed and they are hard to find. Should you be lucky enough to know of the location of one they may be willing to take on the job.

I am well aware that this is a poor substitute for fishing, but if you take care of these details now when you do go fishing you will be better prepared and a lot more comfortable.

Just another reminder about the Saco Valley Anglers Auction, April 21<sup>st</sup>. Be sure to reserve your tickets early.

See you on the river.