

Valley Angler

Two Handed Rods

by Bill Thompson

For the past few weeks I have been experimenting with a two handed fly rod. Many fishermen refer to these rods as Spey rods. They would be wrong, as the correct terminology is “two handed” as any true Spey caster would no doubt tell you. These rods have their origin in Scotland and of course the word “Spey” comes from the river Spey, which as you might guess, is in Scotland. Two handed rods have always been very popular in Europe especially with salmon anglers. It is only recently that two handed rods have become popular in the USA.

Two handed rods are considerably longer than the typical single handed fly rod. The average two handed rod is between 12 and 15 feet long. One would think that these rods would be quite heavy and unwieldy; however after a little getting used to they are not that difficult to handle. In fact the proponents of Spey casting claim that it is far easier on the body than casting a single handed rod. This in itself is reason enough to take up the two handed rod. The biggest reason is how easy it is to archive extremely long casts without having to make a back cast.

The reason that American anglers became interested in these rods originated on the west coast where steelhead fishermen realized that they could cover large western rivers with considerable ease. It wasn't long before these west coast fishermen were putting their own stamp on these European rods and developing casts unique to their rivers.

Two handed rods are slowly beginning to find favor here on the east coast. Salt water anglers were probably the first to find them useful. It is possible to make an overhand cast with these rods and surf fishermen soon realized that you could make long casts in heavy surf. I have yet to see anyone practicing this yet on any of the beaches where I fish for stripers, but I can see the potential.

My own reason for taking up the art is for fishing the Androscoggin River and even the Saco. The two handed rod that I selected is a 12 foot 6 inch for a six weight line which should lend itself well to both of these rivers. These rods are now available down to a 5 weight line. There are so many places on both of these rivers that are hard to reach do to the lack of room. By being able to make a Spey cast these out of reach fish should now be in range.

Teaching yourself to cast is a little like deciding to be your own lawyer; and you know what they say about those who do that. It would be best to find a qualified teacher, however there are a few instructional videos on the market and there is a great deal of information on the internet. I have been studying a video all winter long and after a few sessions of practice on the river this spring I have become fairly proficient with the double Spey cast. The next step is to master the single Spey and the snap “T”. Deciding on what Spey cast to use is determined by which side of the river you are on, or which way the river is flowing, and which way the wind is blowing. By the way Spey casting can be done with a single handed rod as well. It is well worth the effort for fly fishermen to learn a couple basic Spey casts; you will be surprised to see how efficient these

casts can be.

I will keep you posted on my progress. In the mean time if you come across someone on the Saco with a very long rod and several yards of fly line wrapped around his body it will probably be me. If you would take a moment and help me unravel myself it would be greatly appreciated.

See you on the river.