

This article is long overdue to the club. A year and a half ago Dennis Jones gave the club an informative lesson of furled leaders including fabrication of one. Shortly after that meeting a few samples of these leaders were provided to club members for their evaluation and thoughts. Due to travel and coordination the evaluation was never written for the WMFFC.



Furled Leaders

By Jerry Myers

Most of us fly fish using knotless tapered leaders, large at the butt section and slowly tapering to the desired X rating, 4X, 5X, 6X, whatever is desired. Some of us on occasion use knotted taper leaders, leaders made up of multiple sections of various diameter filaments connect together with blood knots according to the designs in the Orvis charts. Very few of us fish with or have tried furled leaders.

Now what the heck is a furled leader? Most of the manufacturers and sales outlets avoid a direct answer to that question. Instead they go directly into their product's advantages, characteristics, and uniqueness. So when all else fails go to Wikipedia for a definition (isn't the internet wonderful?). Wikipedia says "Furled Leaders are a type of knotless tapered fly fishing leader. They are known for their high performance, low memory, and soft fly presentations. These attributes are due to the way these leaders are constructed which is similar to creating rope. The big difference is that furled leaders are created with a taper. This twisted style of construction and being made from many filaments leads to a flexible leader with low to no memory, properties similar to a section of rope."

The characteristics of the construction offers a number of advantages sought by the ever striving fly fisher to obtain presentation style so perfect that no fish could reject the fly pattern the fisher knows is the exact one the fish desires. Some of these advantages are great turn over to present the fly at the very end of the leader and tippet, gentle presentation on the surface of the water and they allow the use of very small tippet without break offs. The following are some of the reported advantages and disadvantages obtained from literature and interviews. The website of Cutthroat Leaders recommends the use of a floatant for both thread and mono/fluorocarbon leaders when dry fly fishing. Their preferred floatant material is Payette Paste by Loon. This paste by filling the voids in-between the wraps of the leader material provides the leader with exceptional buoyancy.

Advantages:

- Great turn over to present the fly at the very end of the leader and tippet
- Gentle presentation on the surface of the water
- Allows the use of very small tippet (without break offs)
- Memory free, no need to spend time "straightening" your leader
- Less telltale movement of water when the furled leader is lifted for a back cast
- Last much longer than knotless leaders, you can keep changing the tippet with no loss of leader
- Leader remains soft and supple in both hot and cold weather
- Much more resistant to wind movement on a breezy day
- Seldom if ever experience a wind knot

Disadvantages:

- Knots are extremely difficult to remove if the furled leaders do not have metal rings
- Scum covered waters and dirt will soil the thread leaders reducing their effectiveness until they have been well washed in hot soapy water
- Positive turnover increases the difficulty of making curve and other trick casts
- Back cast tangles in the brush can be the devil to untangle
- Snarls or tangles can form if the line is jerked hard to release it from a snag
- Costs more than standard tapered leaders, but is offset by the long life, and not as readily available in local shops

To evaluate the performance of furled leader four member of the White Mountain Fly Fishing Club (WMFFC) were provided a sample for their consideration. Each was supplied a Trout Furled Leader 6ft 5wt, catalog number G002-6ft-5wt sold by Feather Craft Fly Fishing. Typically the tippet end of this type of leader is available with two different terminations, one a loop of the twisted leader filament and the other a very small metal ring. The loop finish can be a problem to remove old tippet and replace with fresh material. For this evaluation metal rings were selected. Tippet can be attached to the ring with either a loop to loop connection or your favorite fly knot. Each member was also supplied a container of Payette Paste by Loon. Member of the WMFFC were asked to comment on a number of characteristics. These are their comments.

Turnover: A) Good; B) Turnover is quicker, like it better than knotless; C) I felt I had problems with the turnover on my 5wt and 8wt rod Knotless had smoother turnover; D) Excellent turnover with a tippet length of about 3 feet.

Leader presentation on water surface: A) Good; B) Hit the water faster, knotless hits the water softer; C) Not good; D) Slightly harder contact than knotless leaders

Water movement when lifted: A) No more than normal; B) Lifts a lot more water; C) Ripples; D) Slightly more in the area of the furled leader, the same as knotless in the area of the tippet

Wind Resistance: A) OK; B) About the same as knotless; C) Moderate to high; D) Better than knotless

Leader memory when first opened: A) None; B) Better than knotless; C) None; D) No memory

Wind knots: A) None; B) Knots are knots, can't blame the wind; C) None; D) None

General Comments:

A) This is the first time I tried a furled leader and I liked it. I only used it with dry flies. Don't believe I would use one with wet flies. But I will try to always use one when fishing dry flies, in fact I have used it each time I've gone fishing since the evaluation.

B) I still prefer knotless, only because I need to spend more time with furled leaders. You always get use to what you learn to fish with; also the cost is a problem.

C) I believe that I really prefer the knotless leaders.

D) The furled leaders are great for Lake dry fly fishing and uniform moving streams and rivers. I found when casting over flows of various speeds the added drag of the furled leader was a problem in the faster flows. For nymph fishing I thought they were great. When a fish hits the pattern being fished and during the fight it acts much like a Bimini Twist knot, providing some stretch to absorb these shocks. On a number of outings to the San Juan and Colorado River I used only 6X tippet on the same furled leader and did not lose a single fish to a break off.

From the general comments our small sampling indicates 50% in favor of using furled leaders and 50% that are not. Remember this is a grouping that prior to the evaluation had not experienced furled leader casting. The results do indicate if you have not given them a try you should and make your own decision. Each of us strives to improve our fishing techniques and catch rates. I would recommend making your own evaluation and see if it is a step to even greater personal enjoyment in our great sport of fly fishing. If you have any question please feel free to ask me. (GMyers12@msn.com)

Furled Leader sources: <http://www.cabelas.com>; <http://www.shop.cutthroatleader.com>; <http://www.shop.cutthroatleader.com>