

Advanced Spin Fishing



A how-to guide to Advanced Spin Fishing.

Introduction

The most common form of spin fishing – or threadlining – is casting metal spoon wobblers, mepps and veltic lures, or Rapala-style imitations. It's something many of us grew up with. These traditional techniques work, and that's why they have endured through the ages. But threadline fishing can be so much more.

Relatively 'new' styles of lures such as soft baits, now specifically designed for freshwater species, are very effective and have opened up a world of opportunities. What about using artificial flies on spin-fishing tackle? When done properly, this can outperform traditional fly angling – imagine being able to punch flies into strong winds with ease, cast more often and cover more water, and reach fish in the trickiest lies without drag.

Here we aim to teach you the basics of these non-traditional methods, and introduce you to the most versatile means there is of targeting trout in New Zealand. Welcome to Advanced Spin Fishing.

Gear & Equipment

The techniques outlined here can be used with any dedicated freshwater spin fishing rod-reel set up. Make sure the rod is no shorter than 6ft. A longer rod – 7ft – can be advantageous for fishing larger rivers as they enable you to cast further. A good compromise is a 6'6" rod. They should be rated around 6 to 10lb.

Two-piece spinning rods are most common, and generally least expensive, however, four-piece rods are much handier for packing into the backcountry or stowing in the car or boat. Go for the best quality reel you can afford. Quality reels have the best drag mechanisms and this pays dividends when fighting large trout, possibly the fish of a lifetime.

Gone are the days of tying your lure direct to a fully loaded reel holding 10lb monofilament line. Today, braid is where it is at; control, casting and 'feel' is vastly improved as there is no stretch. Braid of between 4-6lb is ample – remember that it always over tests (i.e. breaks

at double or more what the manufacture states). Bright colour braid can be handy for keeping in touch with you lures/flyes and with a sufficiently long leader (3m) won't spook trout even in crystal-clear water. You'll need to learn the Albright knot for attaching braid to nylon mainline (search it on YouTube).

Soft Bait

A supple braid is better than nylon main line; jig heads should be 1/12oz or 1/16oz (this may vary depending on the size and depth of the water, with larger deeper rivers needing heavy heads).

Experiment with colours. Even outlandish looking soft baits will catch finicky trout. If the fish are shy, go natural to imitate smelt or bullies. Larger soft baits with a well-defined belly are good smelt imitations. Paddle tail baits are great for giving the lure movement and vibration that can provoke an aggressive strike.

Soft baits can be fished upstream or downstream, the latter technique being best for blind fishing larger, deeper water. When working the soft bait downstream, cast directly across and as you slowly retrieve, twitch the rod tip up and then allow the bait to drop again. This gives the lure a realistic darting action.

If you're fishing up river, cast at a 45-degree angle upstream. The retrieve should be marginally faster than the current, letting the bait swing downstream and behind. Keep the line tight and maintain contact with the lure as takes can be very gentle, especially with larger trout.

Threadline & Flies

Using flies on threadline gear with a bubble has been around for a while but is overlooked these days. It's a shame because the technique is really effective, and can even out fish traditional fly angling techniques. Trout that are in lies which can't be reached with a drag-free drift using fly angling gear can often be tempted with the threadline and bubble method because braid and nylon has a much smaller diameter than fly lines so drag is significantly reduced.

What's more, you can cover much more water with longer casts, and more drifts, than traditional fly fishing because there is no need for false casting. Top it off with the fact that you can cast in wind that would have a fly fisher with their head in their hands and you have an incredibly versatile and effective fish-catching method that works equally as well in backcountry or lowland surrounds.



Reels should be good quality; nymphs with a bit of weight to get them deeper are better.

Nymph Rigs for Threadlining

The weight of the bubble float is used to deploy the flies – you can add more water to the float to make it heavier and cast further but it must remain visible on the surface, not sunk. The float also acts like a strike indicator used in traditional nymph fishing. As soon as the bubble dips, stops, hesitates lift the rod to set the hook as a fish is likely to have taken a nymph.

Attach the bubble float to the end of your main running line (braid) and tie leader off the other side. Leader length varies depending on the depth you want the nymphs to drift through. At the end of the trace tie on two or three nymphs. The first nymph should be well weighted, and from the shank of this affix more natural looking imitations. The heavy nymph gets the lighter naturals deeper in the water column. Split shot can be added for more weight.

Cast upstream and allow the bubble to dead-drift back at the same speed as the current. Wind in slack line so you stay in contact with the bubble, but don't drag it back.

Threadlining set up with nymphs - note the position of the bubble float and the split shot.



Trout aren't evenly distributed in a river - they prefer to hold in specific places.



Where to Cast

Knowing where to place your flies or soft baits is a skill that, when acquired, greatly increases success. There are places in a river or lake where trout are more likely to be found, with various environmental and behavioural aspects affecting these distribution patterns.

If you'd like to learn more about this so you spend more time casting to trout hotspots, rather than into barren water, ask for a copy of our Reading Water brochure.

Dry-Fly Threadlining

This is a different technique, not often seen in New Zealand, but it can be deadly. There are key differences from the nymph set-up. For dry flies the terminal rig has the bubble float at one end, and two or three dry flies tied off in a 'ledger' style (see illustration). If you are unsure how to tie a ledger rig, there are some easy to follow videos illustrating this on YouTube. The dry flies set up in this manner creates a dangling effect off the main tippet which the angler can control by lifting or lowering the rod tip. You can achieve a realistic dapping motion of an insect hovering over the water and this makes for exciting takes, particularly if there are an abundance of medium-sized rainbows!

The method is also exceptional when caddis and sedge flies are hatching en masse. Cast across and allow the flies to swing as they move downstream; at the same time control the height of the imitations with the rod tip to create a skating effect that mirrors the action of the naturals. Large terrestrial patterns can also be used effectively by casting upstream to sighted trout or through likely lies and allowed to drift back in the current without drag. Think cicada season or when hoppers are about. Stay in touch with the flies by winding in any slack line at the same speed as the current, not faster, so you can strike when a trout takes. High-visibility braid as the main running line can help.



Threading set up with dry flies - note the position of the bubble float at the end of the line.

Check your Regs

If you are using flies on threadline gear, technically you are still spin fishing according to the regulations. This means you cannot use this method on 'fly only' water. Also, the number of flies that can legally be used may vary between regions and rivers.

Don't worry though, because there are plenty of places you can fish. Check out the 'fishing regulations' on fishandgame.org.nz or call us if you have queries before hitting the water.