

CALENDAR

Next 7 days

**Archery**  
**Saturday:** Central Arizona Bow-hunters will hold their monthly 3-D tournament at Central Arizona College. Registration begins at 7:30 a.m. Information: 1-(520)-836-3479.  
**Saturday-Sunday:** Apache Bow-hunters Archery Club will host the Western States 3-D championship triple crown second-leg shoot at McLachlan Range at 7096 S. Russell Road in Globe. Information: (928) 425-6174.



MARGIE ANDERSON/SPECIAL FOR THE REPUBLIC

**Fishing**  
**Saturday:** Seminars on knot tying, fly-fishing Arizona lakes, tying flies for Arizona trout lakes and fly-fishing Rocky Point in Mexico are scheduled at the Orvis store at 7012 E. Greenway Parkway in Scottsdale starting at 11 a.m. The final seminar begins at 3 p.m. There are more sessions Sunday. Information: (480) 905-1400.

Coming up

**General**  
**May 18-20:** A Becoming an Outdoors Woman program is scheduled at Friendly Pines Camp near Prescott. Women will learn skills in canoeing, rappelling, using a compass, fly-fishing, Dutch oven cooking, archery and many more. The event starts at noon on Friday and ends at noon on Sunday. Most equipment and materials are included in the \$235 registration fee. Information: (480) 644-0077.

**May 18-20:** The Arizona Elk Society is looking for volunteers to help with the Burro Creek Fence Removal Project around Big Lake. Five miles of fencing will be removed for the benefit of wildlife. Information: (602) 431-4131.

Results

The Phoenix team of Tree and Jeff Pfundheller weighed a six-bass limit totaling 13.84 pounds, including a 3.54-pounder, to win the AllStar Bass Couples Tournament held at Bartlett Lake on Saturday. Second place went to the father-daughter team of Angela and Mark DiBrito, also of Phoenix, for their limit weighing 13.19 pounds, including a 3.52-pounder. The Buckeye team of Viki and Rod Nelson took third place with their limit weighing 12.76 pounds. The next AllStar Bass Couples Tournament is scheduled for May 19 on Roosevelt Lake at the Badger Ramp at Windy Hill. Information: (480) 894-2775. ■ The Bowfishing Association of America contest held at Roosevelt Lake last week was won by the team of Dell Owens, Ben Owens and Dean Linne with a 20 carp total weighing 390 pounds.

LET US KNOW

Have an event to announce, a story idea, question for Game & Fish, or want to nominate a sportsman or sportswoman to be profiled? Include all pertinent information, along with your full name and phone number (with area code), and send it at least two weeks in advance to [azoutdoors@arizonarepublic.com](mailto:azoutdoors@arizonarepublic.com).



PHOTOS BY MARGIE ANDERSON/SPECIAL FOR THE REPUBLIC

Ben Koller of The Hook Up Outfitters calls this top-water fly a gurgler. The shape of the foam at the front makes it splash and spit in the water like a popper.

# Big bass on small fly

## Fly rod adds to fun of fighting stripers

By Margie Anderson  
 SPECIAL FOR THE REPUBLIC

If you've never experienced fighting a big striper on a fly rod, you don't know what you're missing. Stripers are scrappy anyway, and when one of those streamlined behemoths grabs a fly and makes a run for it, it gets your pulse racing.

Right now is prime time for stripers and other bass on flies. Ben Koller of The Hook Up Outfitters is an old hand at helping even a greenhorn land big bass on a fly rod. He knows just what the fish want and ties his own flies.

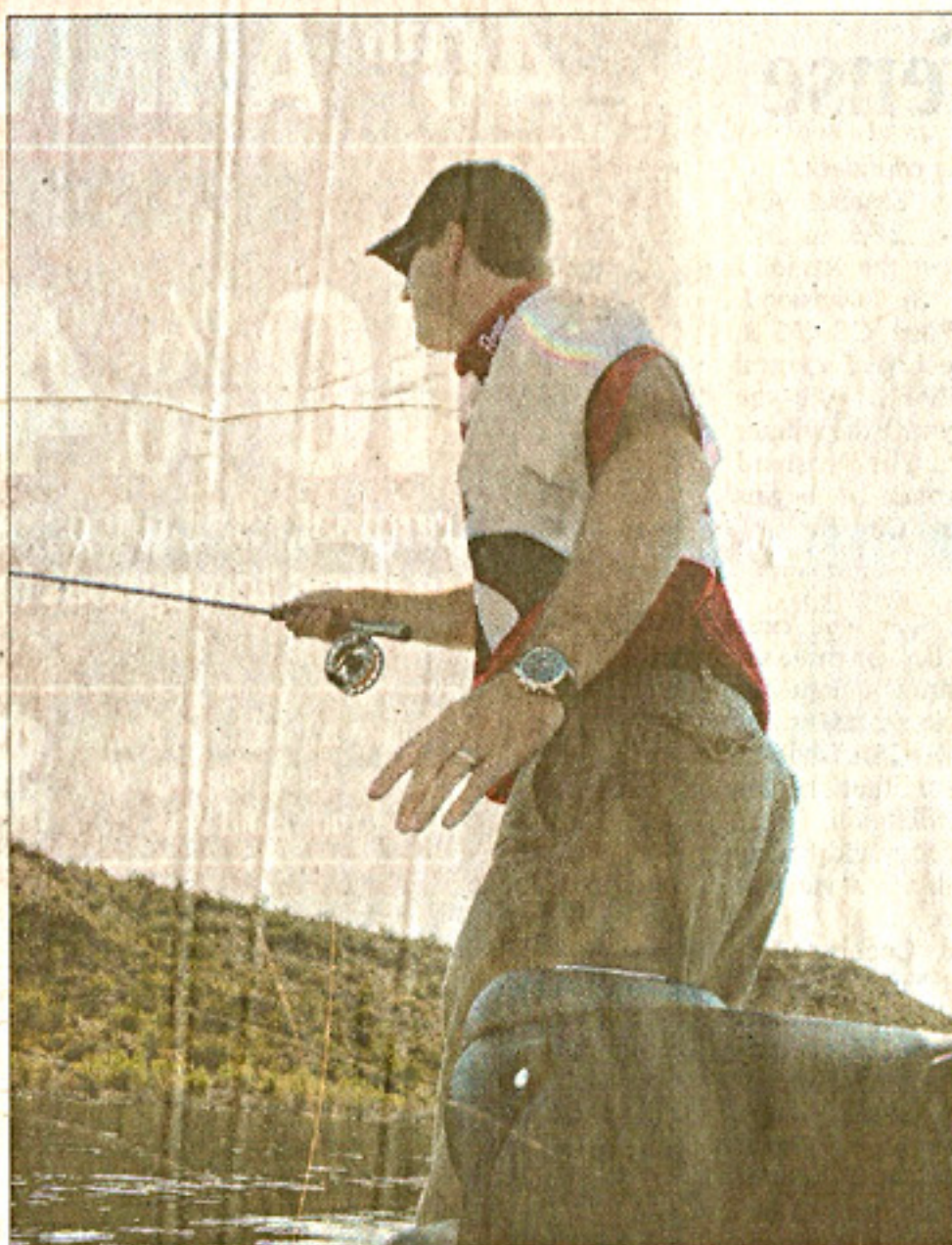
"Stripers are basically ocean fish," Koller said, "so they're designed by nature to be roamers. That can make them hard to pattern."

The only places that will hold big numbers of stripers are places with lots of baitfish. However, when the water temperatures reach the 70s (where they are now), the shad begin to spawn and that brings the stripers up into shallow water.

In the back of Humbug Creek at Lake Pleasant the fish are boiling all over the place early in the morning. This same scene occurs all over the lake in the backs of coves. "One of the benefits of using a fly rod is that when the fish are busting everywhere you can pick up your lure and put it down in a different spot quickly with a fly rod," Koller said.

Sometimes even a voracious feeder like a striper needs a little enticement. Koller said that when he is guiding fly fishermen, he often throws out a Zara Spook with no hooks. Walking the dog with this big top-water lure will usually get the stripers to come around and pay attention.

When stripers start biting the action is fast and furious, but it can end all too soon. Keeping your eyes peeled will often let you see where the fish have moved off to, and many times they are close enough to get to



Ben Koller uses a fly rod to fish for bass at Lake Pleasant. Koller says a fly rod allows anglers to pick up their lure and put it down in a different spot quickly.

quickly. When a school of stripers is on the feed, everyone in the boat can get hooked up at the same time, and the fish you pull in will look like clones because stripers school by size.

Take a fly rod out to Pleasant right now and you never know what you'll end up with. White bass, stripers, largemouth and even carp will take a fly. Once the water starts to heat up the bass will move out to the thermocline (30 feet), Koller said, but you'll still be able to tease them up early and late.

What you need

- 8- or 9-weight fly rod.
- Forward weight floating line for poppers.
- 200-grain sinking line for streamers.
- Mono leader (16- to 20-pound test).
- Flies: big gurglers (top-water poppers), also an assortment of different sizes of streamers in patterns to match the fry, bluegills, shad, etc. Use smaller streamers when the fish are keying on fry, bigger ones when they are after shad.

Tips for deeper fish

- When you're throwing a streamer you need to remember that a fly, unlike a crankbait or spinnerbait, has no built-in action. No bill makes the streamer dive, no wire makes it thrum. Ben Koller said it's crucial to tie on with a loop knot to allow the fly as much movement as possible.
- Largemouth bass and stripers prefer a faster retrieve in warmer water. For largemouth, Koller gives the line five or six quick strips with a pause. If it's stripers he's targeting, he eliminates the pauses and just strips line as fast as he can. The 200-grain sinking line he uses sinks at 5 inches per second, so he can count his flies down with a fair amount of precision.
- Since the stripers took hold at Lake Pleasant, Koller said the largemouth have changed their behavior. Instead of pulling out into deep channels in summer, he finds that they often just pull out to slightly deeper brush and wait for the stripers to herd the shad into the trees. He finds them in 15 feet of water or less.
- Don't give up right away if you don't see a lot of surface activity around. Koller said that once a striper reaches about 6 or 7 pounds, it leads a solitary life. These rogue loner fish can hit any time and any place, so keep a good grip on your rod at all times.

Fly rods

Traditionally, fly rods have been 9 feet long. This can make them a bit ungainly in a boat, but fly-rod manufacturers are beginning to realize bass fishing enthusiasts are a huge market. Because tournament rules usually forbid a rod longer than 8 feet, many manufacturers are making shorter, 8-foot fly rods specifically geared toward bass fishermen. Ben Koller said that he's not sure if a major bass tournament will be won on a fly rod, but he's come close and gotten some decent checks in the FLW and Stren Series tournaments using a fly rod at least part of the time.