



On the Fly

When golf course executives take time off, what do they do? Some take a busman's holiday and play golf at different courses. They may do it to see what the competition is doing, or just to break away from their own stomping ground for a while.

Others, however, prefer to wile away the hours another way — by fly fishing on the river.

"I've been fly fishing since I was about 14 or 15 years old," says Trevor Burlingame, superintendent at Chautauqua Golf Club, Chautauqua, N.Y. "My mom and dad gave me a fly rod for my birthday, and I just started doing it."

As a teen, Burlingame headed to a local golf course and trolled for pan fish and bass in the streams. Today, he prefers to fish for trout, once catching a 31-inch steelhead on a Lake Erie tributary.

Fly fishing is reeling in more and more superintendents, who are drawn by its adventure and solitude. *By Tim Killeen*

River life

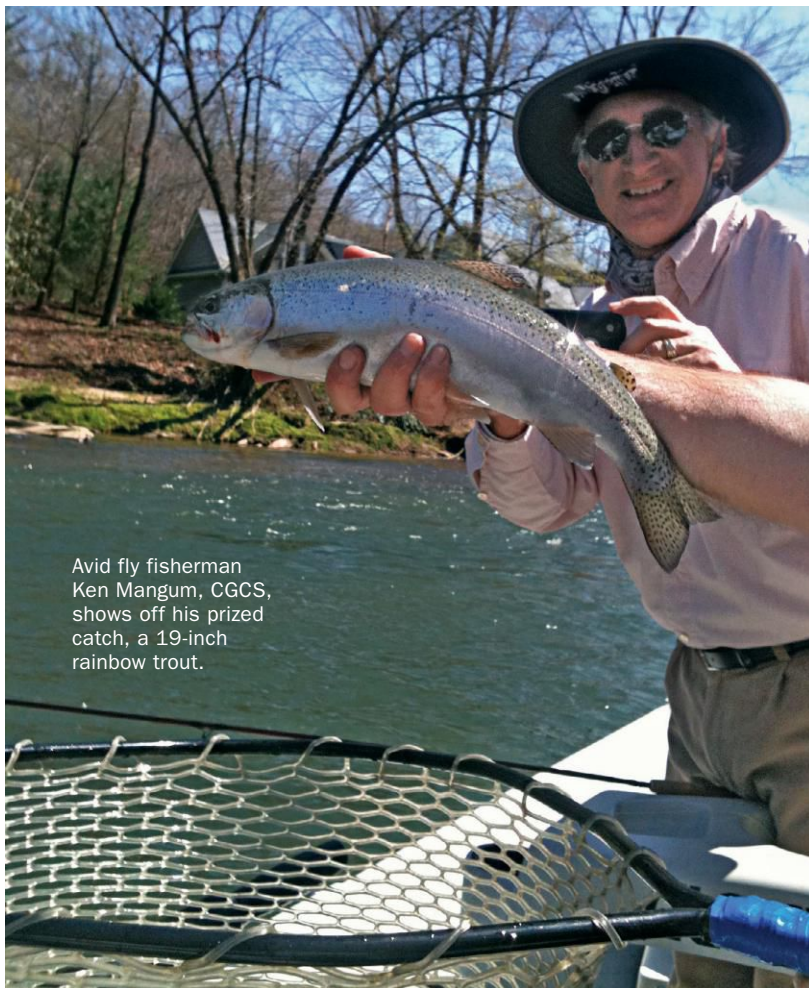
Burlingame is not alone in his love for the pastime. Fly fishing stories are being told at chapter events across the country. Some of these luckier fishermen, such as Joe Stribley, superintendent at Yellowstone Country Club, Billings, Mont., revel in the midst of some of the country's most renowned trout streams.

"I told my wife about 12 years ago that I'd like to give fly fishing a try," Stribley recalls. "The next thing I knew, she presented me with a complete outfit. Now what do I do, I thought."

Stribley is able to go trout fishing on eve-

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Avid fly fisherman Ken Mangum, CGCS, shows off his prized catch, a 19-inch rainbow trout.

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nings and weekends, spending most of his fishing time close to home. The Bighorn River is among his favorite spots, even in the winter. That's not to say he won't travel. His eldest son, Hayden, has worked as a guide in Alaska and now does his trout fishing in Chile. Stribley joins him there from time to time.

"Fly fishing can be very much like a short game in golf, requiring finesse and accuracy," Stribley says. "It's quite a challenge, and once the fish is caught, being able to release it back to

the water gives a real sense of accomplishment."

When Burlingame casts his flies and releases his catches these days, it's far from Stribley's turf, often in Pennsylvania or on the Great Lakes tributaries. "It takes my mind off my job," he says. "There's a lot of solitude out there. It's just you and the trees and the stream. It forces you to be at peace for a while."

Going out alone has its advantages, but for Stribley, fishing with good friends can make a trip more fun. Stribley never really had a bad experience fly fishing, even considering a horseback trip in which he rode out with an ear impaled with a trout fly. The doctor looked at it and said it was no big deal, he sees a lot of that. Most importantly, to any fly fisher that is, he was able to salvage the fly, a nice size 10 "Jack Cabe." No harm done.

Ken Mangum, CGCS, Director of Golf Courses and Grounds at the Atlanta Athletic Club, had a boss about 7 years ago who insisted he join him on a trip to a private fly fishing club. That was enough to get Mangum started. "Fly fishing is one of my favorite things to talk about," he says.

Now Mangum manages to take a few days for a trip each year and fly fish with friends, many of whom are in the golf industry as well. His buddies Gary Grigg, Darren Davis, Lon Fleming and Eric Shoemaker all feel the same way about it.

Good vibes

Mangum says he's lucky to be close to some productive water, such as the Chattahoochee River, only about 5 minutes from his office. "I've taken some very nice fish out of there," he says.

Mangum observes that many people in the golf business fly fish. A number of tour pros even fly fish on the course ponds when they get a chance.

Mangum's favorite places are the Big Horn

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River in Montana, Henry's Fork in Idaho and the Green River in Wyoming. It was in Idaho that he caught a 19-inch rainbow trout on a grasshopper fly. Still on his bucket list are British Columbia, Patagonia and Colorado.

Cal Roth, senior vice president of agronomy for the PGA Tour, says he would speak to anyone about fly fishing at any time.

Roth began fly fishing when he was 14 years old, fishing for bass and bluegill on farm ponds in rural Illinois. After a move to Colorado, he began fishing for trout, and when he moved to Florida in 1989, he bought a flats boat and fished the backwater of the Intracoastal Waterway with his son, Blaise.

Those trips were among his most special, Roth says. Now he fishes the backwater from a kayak and enjoys the solitude it brings.

When Roth looks back on his fly fishing days, there's really nothing that stands out all that much. But after a pause, he says, "Then again, there was this 15-pound bonefish that took over an hour to land."

When asked if he had any bad experiences while fly fishing, he answers a quick and definite "No, not one."

Roth says he has been lucky enough to have fished on many streams and rivers — and he's enjoyed them all. But there is one that stands out as his favorite — the Conejos River in southern Colorado.

Roth eventually joined the Rocky Mountain Angling Club, and now, after 20 years of fishing there, Roth views it as his home away from home.

Eric Draper, parks and rec superintendent for the city of Osawatomie (Kansas), started fly fishing when he was a freshman in high school. "We took a trip to Colorado and I saw a fly fisherman in the stream. I told my father I

GO FISHING

Learning how to fly fish is a lot like learning to play golf. It may seem a bit cumbersome at first, but after a bit of practice, things always seem to come together nicely.

To get started:

1

Visit a local fly shop. Any one can hook you up with the right equipment and lessons. The Orvis website has a wealth of information. Check www.orvis.com/learn.

2

Be prepared to spend some time practicing. Even if it's just in your back yard, you don't need water to practice casting. Just like golf, the more you practice, the better you get.

3

Be prepared to deal with setbacks. At least initially, the casting motion can end in a tangle or two, often when you least expect it. Rest assured, everyone, no matter how experienced they are, encounters these. But the more you practice the fewer problems will occur.

4

Find a good book and read up on it.

5


Enjoy the experience. You'll be closer to nature than you ever thought you could be.



wanted to do it," he recalls.

When Draper got home, he learned one of his friends owned a fly rod. That friend taught him how to fly fish on a three-day trip to a Missouri state park.

Draper has fished often in Missouri waters since then, snapping up brown and rainbow trout before releasing them — including a five-pounder.

In the end, Draper says, "there's no more thrilling experience than catching a fish on the fly. Once you catch your first one, you'll never want to put your fly rod down." 

Tim Killeen, a freelance writer in Aurora, Ohio, is the author of "The Executive's Guide to Fly Fishing" and is a golf course ranger at Windmill Lakes Golf Club in Ravenna, Ohio.

Senior editor Beth Geraci contributed to this story.



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— TREVOR BURLINGAME, superintendent, Chautauqua Golf Club