

## CATCH AND RELEASE

Reprinted from the [Kaweah Flyfishers](#) Newsletter

I'm certain some of you have had your wives ask why do we go through all this trouble to buy all this expensive fly fishing gear and license, drive to faraway places or whatever to catch that fish of a lifetime only to put it back in the water? Well, I read in fly fishing magazines their answer is for the preservation of our fisheries. Our grandkids would like to have a fishery like we are enjoying now, and this is one way to ensure they have that opportunity. Even my wife complains we don't eat as much trout as we used to, and there's two reasons for that: One, I have a devil of a time catching any of them, and, second, we eat only what I do catch once in a while. I don't feel quite that guilty by taking home a couple of planted fish, but I do feel guilty when I go to release one and he slips out of my hands and floats belly-up to the bottom before I have a chance to revive it. That happened once at Lewiston Lake but the fish actually flipped over about 20 feet down and swam off - what a relief.

I read the following article in the Kaweah Flyfishers monthly newsletter and I thought since trout season is getting into full swing a little reminder on releasing fish might be in order. What puzzles me is when I'm watching a so-called fly fishing expert on TV hold up his catch out of the net, quite a few of them put their fingers into their gill area. I understand the bacteria on our hands can cause severe problems to the fish when touching that very sensitive area. Here's what the article had to say.

"How a fish is handled when the hook is removed can greatly affect its survival. If the fish is handled carefully and gently, it will have an excellent chance of survival." I also read where one expert recommended turning the fish on its back as it tends to calm the fish (I haven't done this yet, however). Retrieve your catch quickly and release it immediately.

- Keep the fish in the water as much as possible. Take your picture and put it back in less than a minute as they begin to suffocate once out of water.
- Remove the hook carefully. Barbless hooks are the best strategy here. A major factor in the survival of a released fish is where it has been hooked. Hooks in the mouth or the front part of the tongue do very little damage. Grasp the shank of the hook either with your fingers or a pair of needle-nose pliers.
- Leave deeply set hooks in the fish. If the fish has swallowed the hook deeply into its throat, do not attempt to remove it. These fish have a better chance of survival if the line is cut and the hook left in to rust.
- Avoid squeezing the fish. Hold the fish gently behind the gill area, not in the gills. The gills are fragile and easily damaged resulting in excessive bleeding so keep your fingers out of the gills.
- Help revive the fish by holding it in a normal swimming position and gently move it back and forth to force more oxygen over the gills to help revive the fish. If the current is too swift, move to slower-moving water for your recovery area.