



# FISHOLOGY

story by Clarke C. Jones  
photos by Dwight Dyke

**E**arly one morning, my father and I took our first and, sadly, one of our few fishing adventures together. We headed down the old dirt road built by the Civilian Conservation Corps, which led us to a narrower dirt road lined with trees. As we rounded a bend, a large, shimmering pond greeted us on our right. My father backed the car into a little cut in the woods, and we walked like Andy and Opie down a little path, carrying cane poles and corks and new, store-bought blood worms.

My father put the sectionalized cane poles together, first rubbing the

male end on his cheek so his skin oil would act as a release agent when taking the sections apart at the end of the day. We sat on the warped, gray-ing dock that extended out into the pond, took off our shoes, and let our feet soak in the water's warmth. Deftly, he put the worms on the hooks, set the corks, told me to put the line cork and bait in the water with as little commotion as possible, and then... we were fishing!

I was five years old, and remember having lots of questions: Can fish smell? Do fish sleep? Where did the worm go? Do fish talk?



*"Hey, is that what fish eat?"*



My father, after answering enough questions, told me if you want to catch fish, you have to be very, very quiet. He then proceeded to lie back on the dock to see if he might catch forty winks while I caught dinner.

He looked so peaceful with his eyes closed, the sun heating his face, and the warm pond water lapping around his ankles that I hated to ask him one more question—but I did. When I asked my dad if a snake could bite underwater, I didn't think it physically possible that a person, in one rapid motion, could go from lying on their back to standing on their feet. My father can!

I caught four fish that day, but I was the one that was really hooked. Unfortunately, we rarely made many more forays together to that pond, but I still have the memory. Even more unfortunate, however, would be a child who *never* had the unforgettable experience of a fishing trip with his father. In a world of computer games and organized sports, the simple pleasures of taking your child fishing seem to have waned in some



From learning how to tie a fly to proper casting techniques, concentration is key to success.

# for Kids

## A freak snowstorm triggers a long-standing fly-fishing tradition.

parts of our state, and in the face of creeping urbanization the question often becomes, "Where can we go fishing?" The Department's Web site can answer the "where" question. An organization with a most bizarre name, which dedicates itself to teaching young boys and girls not only fishing, but land stewardship and wildlife conservation, can help with the "how to" part.

In April of 1939, a small group of men who had met while fishing the







BOJC member Jeff Wrobel explains casting techniques to young anglers and parents.

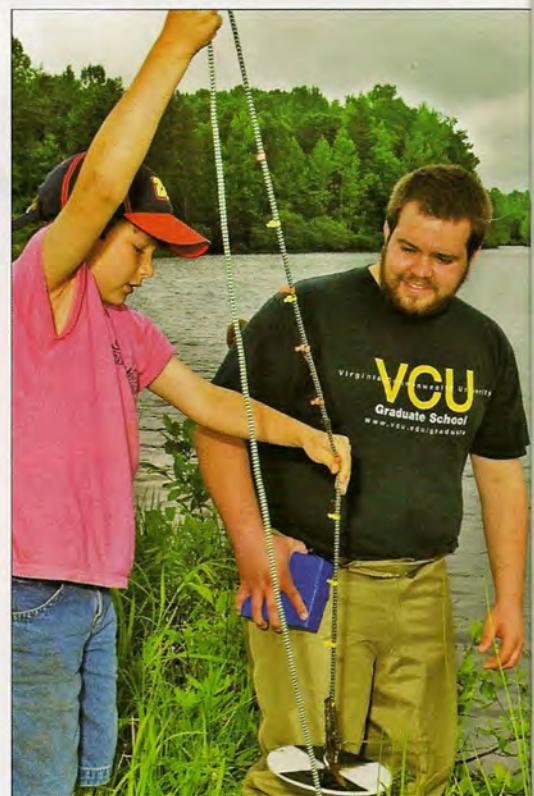
year before decided to meet again annually. Most were devout fly-fishermen, who found themselves stranded in their cabin by a freak snowstorm while on the 1940 fishing trip. They began to discuss the future of the sport they loved, and recognized the need to pass their knowledge and love for it to a younger generation, in hopes of instilling their passion for conservation and sportsmanship. They came up with a creed, guidelines, and a formula they hoped would endure long after they were gone which would introduce young people to the outdoors and create a lasting legacy of a love of fishing.

Being fly-fishermen, they chose to name their organization after a feather from a fowl found in India, which was often used as part of a fly lure for trout or salmon fishing. They called themselves the *Brotherhood of the Jungle Cocks*. An unusual name, admittedly, but the Brotherhood was and still is today very serious when it

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comes to teaching today's youth all the facets of fishing, including stewardship of the planet. Conservation, they felt, is a large part of what makes a fisherman a sportsman.

Today's kids may think that, with all the global warming headlines,



VCU graduate student Matt Beckwith shows a youngster how to use a Secchi disk to measure water clarity.





*A smile often speaks as loudly as words when it comes to a prized catch.*

stewardship and protection of natural resources are rather recent concerns. But true sportsmen and women have always policed and protected the environment with whatever means they had necessary whenever they saw their sport threatened.

## Teaching Young Anglers

The Virginia Chapter of the Brotherhood (or, BOJC) meets every May at Camp Brady Saunders in Goochland County. The entire day is organized for children and parents to keep kids attentive and occupied. It ends with a ceremonial campfire and raffle.

Billy Pearsall of Richmond, who has been president of the Virginia Chapter since 1994, explained why he has remained active in this worthwhile organization. "I enjoy teaching, especially children. Fly-fishing is my passion, so teaching [children] is a perfect avenue for me."

According to Pearsall, the Brotherhood's name, "...has raised a few eyebrows, but [people's] interest is evident." Evidently so; the organization has grown from its parent chapter in Maryland to five other states, including Virginia, underscoring its serious intentions. One only needs to read the organization's creed to realize the devotion its members have to both youth and the environment.

"Fishology" could be the proper term, or the central theme, describing the organization's annual meeting. Child and parent learn about different baits, how to tie a fly, proper casting techniques, fishing safety, and fish habitat.

One of the highlights of the day for adults and children alike is the program by Dr. Edward Crawford of Virginia Commonwealth University and his graduate students. Dr. Crawford has the unique ability to hold everyone's attention when talking about aquatic habitats, and the relationship between terrestrial and aquatic environments. As Dr. Crawford

put it, "I think the hands-on activities, in a field setting, really help kids and adults alike gain a better understanding of the concepts we are trying to convey. I hope the knowledge gained from the program experience leads to a better understanding of aquatic environments. That will hopefully lead to an appreciation for and foster a sense of stewardship toward these ecosystems."

Perhaps it is more of the *intangible* lessons that parents and children take with them, which make a day with the Brotherhood so memorable. The sport of fishing teaches the advantage of being knowledgeable about what you are trying to achieve, and how preparation often is key to success. It teaches that perseverance and patience are tools which will assist you in life.

As Ed Deiss, a father who has attended these outings for the past four years, stated, "I won't soon forget the first year my son and I went and what I witnessed. All day he was trying to catch a fish and not having much suc-



*Morgan Rawls (R), also a VCU graduate student, teaches a young attendee how to use an Aqua Scope to view life underwater.*



cess. I saw in him something I had not seen before in that he spent *hours* trying to catch a fish ... baiting and re-baiting hooks and casting and casting and casting ... and he finally caught one. I had not seen the patience and perseverance in him until that day, and it is one of the reasons I keep coming back."

The chance for father, son, or daughter to spend time building life's memories together is truly quality time. Again, Ed Deiss: "We keep coming back because I want to have this impressionable memory with my kids, and fishing affords time free from distractions, to talk, share, learn, and just be together. I learned from my father that it sure is hard to have *quality* time, if you don't have *quantity* time."

It is never too early to learn how to fish and make this event a family affair. The Leathers family has been coming here for about six years. Candy Leathers, mother of son Kyle, 12, and daughter Amber, 8, offered this testimonial: "There are a number of excellent presentations, including fly-tying for the beginner and advanced. The highlight for our family is the catered dinner and raffle prize drawing at the end of the day. The kids are so excited during the raffle as they go up to the prize table and pick out a nice prize. Kyle likes the fishing. Amber says she likes having fun with her dad. It has become a tradition to come to the BOJC event."

If part of being a parent is teaching your children the attitudes and skills which will guide them through life and prepare them for both the disappointments and triumphs which lie ahead, teaching them the intricacies of fishing is a good way to start. And if creating lasting memories for your children is part of the legacy you hope to leave behind, participating in a program with the BOJC is a good place to start.

Ed Deiss put it best when asked what he and his children have been able to learn from attending this program, "I reference this day when it comes to Will and Rachel supporting each other. Reminding them of this day has made me appreciate the time



Members of the Brotherhood teach the art of tying flies to a captive audience, who put their new skills to good use (below).



we had together, how proud I was of them, the memorable conversations without any deadlines or other agendas, and how much we look forward to doing it all over again next year. The Saturday before Mother's Day in 2009, I know exactly where we will be." □

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Editor's Note:

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