

# FLY ROD CARE AFTER A DAY ON THE WATER

Article by Michael Abramowitz

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*Preface: The following article was originally published in the February 2010 issue of the **Mid Atlantic Fly Fishing Guide**. You can find more information about the Mid Atlantic Fly Fishing Guide on their [Facebook](#) page.*

A fly rod is one of the major investments we have made for the sport whether we have purchased it, or spent many hours building the rod. This applies to bamboo or graphite rods.

The majority of rods are broken near a vehicle. This may be a vehicle door, step ping on a rod, or smashing in on a tree. To prevent damage at the beginning of the day, I get my waders, boots and vest on. Then assemble the rod. I do the reverse when returning to the vehicle by first putting the rod in its sock and case, then getting out of my waders. One hears stories of rods left on the car roof then driving away. If you have to put the rod down, place the rod under the windshield wiper or against the windshield on the driver's side. You will see the rod if attempting to driving away. Magnetic rod holders are available to hold the rod against the vehicle.

Rod tips are also broken retrieving a snagged fly. If you have to retrieve that special fly that is snagged in a tree or on a rock, pull the line in a straight direction of the snag. You can retrieve the fly or break the tippet. Flies are cheaper than shipping the rod to be repaired under the warranty by the rod manufacturer.

I have seen anglers put the reel and cork handle in the water. The cork handles will absorb water. Even if one wipes off excess water, the cork is not dry. The epoxy that holds the reel seat will come loose with time. The cork rings will delaminate.

If you have to tie on a fly or add more tippet to your leader, do not place the rod where it can get the cork wet. Many fly fishing vests have a flap on the top left shoulder area and a loop of cord on the bottom right side. This flap and loop is to hold the rod while you are working on the leader or changing flies. Once you have caught the fish, be familiar on how to land the fish so you do not break the rod tip.

After fishing in salt or brackish water the rod, reel and line should be rinsed in fresh water as soon as possible to remove the corrosive salt. A mild soap can be used to wash the rod. Make sure the rod sock is dry and clean. Once in a while, wash the rod sock. Use a dry cloth to dry the entire rod.

Leave the rod out of the case to dry when in a safe place. Water may penetrate the varnish through small scratches on bamboo rods and penetrate the bamboo. Periodic inspection and re-varnishing the rod will prolong the life of the rod. Cotton swabs can be used to clean and check line guides. The ferrules should also be inspected. Waxing the male ferrule section with paraffin wax is controversial for it may collect more dirt. A finger rubbed against the side of your nose may be all that is needed to grease the ferrule.

The reel seat threads can be cleaned under a brisk stream of tap water or with a soft brush like an old tooth brush. With time, the cork handle will get discolored. A soft tooth brush and grit free cleaner can be used to clean the cork. Some recommend using very fine 200 grit sandpaper to clean the cork handle. This may be ok, but if done too often the cork at the end and top end of the handle will become thin and fragile. The cork may only be less than an eighth of an inch thick when the rod is new. Discolored and worn cork just reveals long time use and unless the cork is visibly damaged it perfectly good to use. However, damage should be repaired. Damage to the cork can be repaired as follows. Try to find a wine bottle cork with the color that matches the cork handle. Rub the wine cork over sandpaper to obtain a cork dust. Mix the dust with a waterproof wood glue then fill in the holes.

Do not hook flies to the rod by placing the sharp point into the cork handle. Doing this will make holes in the cork. If you have a hook keeper on the rod place the fly in it and keep the line tight. You can also wind the leader around the reel then hook the fly in the line guide. New rod handles can be sealed with cork sealer obtained from rod building suppliers.

Hopefully these tips will help you take better care your favorite rods.

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