

# OVERLAND CASTING

*To catch more bank-feeding trout, put your fly line on the ground.*

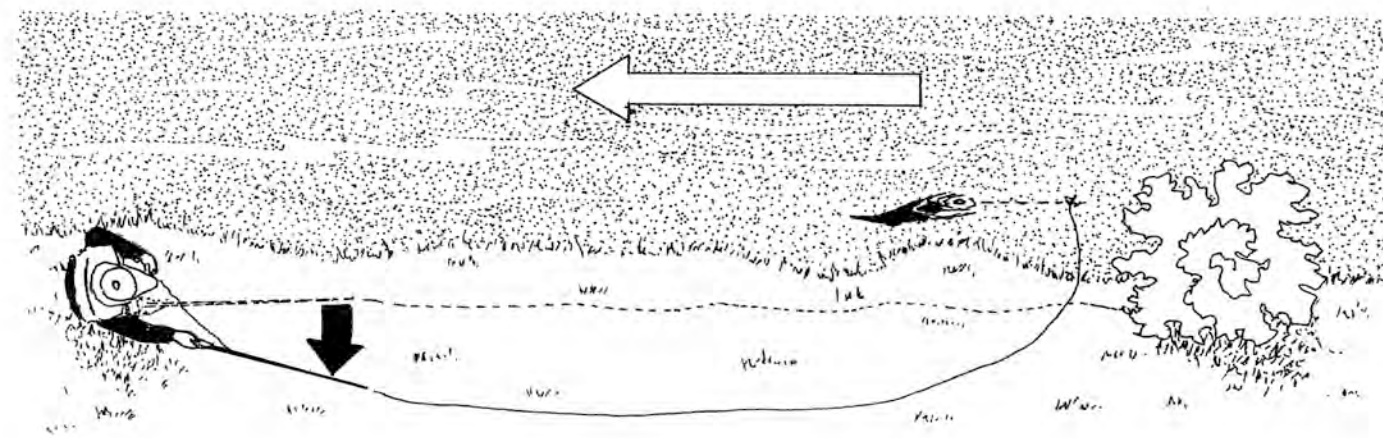
ROBERT DREW

**M**OST FLY-LINE MANUFACTURERS and casting instructors teach us that it's best for the life and care of a fly line to avoid allowing excessive contact of our lines with the ground. This is sound advice; abrasive sand, grit, gravel, or rocks can reduce the life and casting qualities of lines. But I'd like to offer another bit of advice: If you want to catch more bank-feeding or bank-hugging trout, put your fly line on the ground—not the water.

There are at least two situations where "overland" casting can dramatically increase your hookups with bank-feeding trout. The first is on lakes and ponds in shallow-water areas where the bottom slopes gradually away to deeper water. These shoreline areas are rich in both aquatic plant and insect life, and for that reason, you'll find trout there, too.

When you start to fish a lake or pond that has a few trout rising 30 or 40 feet offshore, the temptation is to quickly wade out and begin casting. Most anglers do it, and I often do it, too. But in doing so, we often flush some of the nicest fish in the lake from their feeding stations near the shore. A far better way is to follow the rule that says, "Fish the near water first."

With that rule in mind, contain your urge to wade out. Stay back 20 to 25 feet from the waterline, and make your first cast from there (providing the lake-side area isn't crowded with brush or trees). Place your fly so that it lands only a foot or two out from the bank and let your fly line and most of the leader settle on the ground. Unless you're offering terrestrials, drop the fly very lightly to the water. A hard, slapping cast will scatter trout in shallows faster than you



*Use an overland variation of the reach cast (above) to present your fly to spooky stream trout that hold bankside in long smooth flows below obstructions. Approach on land from downstream and make a couple of false casts over the bank. Let your final forward cast straighten out, and just when it straightens, reach with your casting arm and turn your rod tip landward and abruptly stop the cast. Your fly line and most of the leader will land on the bank, while the fly and tippet will land on the water. Casting from 20 to 25 feet back from the bank (left) allows you to present your fly to trout feeding in shallow water along the bank.*

can say "spook," so use a soft touch and aim your cast high, allowing the fly to float down to the water. Probe the shoreline water first, moving parallel along the bank, before advancing a few steps at a time to fish water farther out.

Often, because of shoreline grasses or reeds, this will be blind fishing. It really isn't necessary to see the water you're casting to. If a fish is holding there, you'll hear the slurp of the take, and by watching the leader where it lies on the bank, you'll see it twitch when the fish takes.

If no fish are holding bankside, you've lost nothing. Trout regularly feed near shore, often in just inches of water, and it may surprise you how frequently you can get takes with this technique. Just lift your rod when there's movement of the leader, and you should find lively weight at the end of your line.

I also use an overland cast when I'm fishing for stream trout that hold bankside in long smooth flows just downstream of a brushpile, bush, or tree.

Fooling trout in such places can be demanding. Because of the smooth water and the wary trout found in such places, an upstream cast is often out of the question: The fly line landing on the water, or its shadow, almost always puts the fish down. A downstream cast is impossible because of the upstream obstruction. And in the smooth water wading to a good position is often a poor choice. For these reasons many anglers pass by such places, and for the same reasons it's prime habitat—sure to hold husky trout.

In a case like this, approach from downstream and make a couple of false casts right along and just over the bank (on the land side). Let your final forward cast straighten out, and just when it straightens, reach with your casting arm and turn your rod tip landward

and abruptly stop the cast slightly short. Done properly, the cast will place all of your fly line and most of the leader on the bank, while the fly and several feet of tippet and leader will "hinge" the opposite way, a left-curve cast landing on the water with some slack. That's all there is to it.

With this advanced cast (which is really just a variation of the reach cast) you'll manage only a few feet of drag-free float, but often that's all it takes. The cast takes a little practice to learn (an hour or so spent on the lawn before trying it onstream is time well spent), but once you've mastered it, you'll take trout from places others avoid.

## Overland Casting Problems

THE BIGGEST PROBLEM with any presentation cast that puts the line in contact with the ground is what to do when you get a strike. To avoid getting tangled in grass, reeds, or twigs—when a fish grabs your fly—lift your rod high, setting the hook and lifting the line off the ground at the same time. Once the threat of tangles is past, you can relax and enjoy playing and releasing your colorful catch, as you would using standard casting methods.

Though you may not use the two overland casts I've described on every trip you take, they can become useful tools in your fly-fishing bag of tricks. They've allowed me to make hookups—often with large trout—in places many fishermen unknowingly walk through or pass by for less maddening casting situations. My overland casts sometimes account for a few more trout, and a few trout is often the difference between a good day on the water and a bad day.



ROBERT DREW lives in Ventura, California.



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