should be marked in thousandths of an inch. It is the only method that makes sense. Suppose inches were named by some terms such as 1X, 2X, and so forth, but when you bought a foot of material made by one manufacturer it measured more or less than an actual foot? Since 1930 I've been advocating actual measurements in place of the other system, and while the old way is still in use many firms now include the actual calibrations as well.

A tolerance must be allowed in calibrations for both materials, as the synthetics do not run any truer in calibration than does best grade drawn silkworm gut. This should not exceed more than .000½ (one half of one one thousandth of an inch) either plus or minus. Thus in the smallest sizes you may find 4X and 5X, or 5X and 6X running to the exactly same calibration.

There are at least five different grades of silkworm gut, and a number of basic manufacturers. Undrawn gut is the strongest but it is difficult to get long strands of even calibration. "Selecta" is the best grade, and much more expensive than the others. Drawn gut is natural gut that has been pulled through a perfectly round hole in a diamond. Its sizes range from .016 through .005, and of course the strands are round and uniform in calibration, thus making the manufacture of leaders with it comparatively simple. In sizes smaller than .009 or perhaps .008 it is rare to find perfect undrawn strands, and as a rule the drawn sizes .009 through .005 are used for leader making even though the balance of the leader is of undrawn strands.

Silkworm gut, incidentally, is not the intestine of the worm; it is the viscous material from which the creature spins its silk, taken from the silk gland just before the worm is ready to spin. Drawn out, while still soft, to the desired thinness, it hardens soon after exposure to the air and takes on the familiar form in which it is used for making leaders.

A good floating preparation for your fly is quite important. Something that cleans as well as waterproofs is an advantage. As far as I am concerned, two ounces of paraffin dissolved in one pint of non-leaded gasoline makes a good concoction for the purpose.[1] It not only waterproofs the fly by depositing a film of wax on it, but also acts as an efficient cleanser. This last property is especially acceptable after a trout has taken a fly deep and when you take it

[1] Ethyl gas is no good for this. It must be non-treated gasoline.





out of the mouth it is bloody and matted. Simply dropping the fly in the bottle and giving it a few shakes with your thumb over the top will make it sprightly and fresh. Of course the fly is left on the leader. This is the best way to use this dope. To put it on with a brush is not so good—you might just as well use any other mixture. For this reason a large-necked bottle is necessary. These are easily obtained from any druggist. After the fly has been dipped, it should then be whipped in the air a few times. This gets rid of the excess gasoline and starts evaporation of the balance. Then you should dap it on the water of the stream. This congeals the diluted wax film. By the time you make the cast, the liquid oil has disappeared and you have a treated fly that does not leave a film on the water. Carbon tetrachloride, ether, or benzine may be used in place of gasoline.

There are two objections to using this preparation. One is serious. In dipping the fly the oil gets on the leader and sometimes makes it brittle. However, I have never had much trouble in this respect myself, although some others have. The other is that when the temperature gets below 60° the wax congeals. To prevent this I carry it in such a way that the bottle may be slipped under the jacket at times when it is necessary. The warmth from the body then keeps it in good condition.

To make this preparation, shave the wax and put it in the bottle with the gasoline. If you feel like fussing, keep shaking the bottle to dissolve the wax; otherwise place it in the sun and let the heat do it. Don't put it on a stove.

There are, of course, many excellent fly-floating preparations on the market, and if you do not feel like making your own, you may find one that suits your particular needs among them. However, I would advise against too oily mixtures and ones that do not evaporate or harden readily. This type is not particularly satisfactory and of course does not clean your fly. Some anglers prefer using a paste grease, rubbing it on with the fingers. This is excellent on a new fly, if done carefully so that the hackles are not matted. However, when using it on a fly that has caught a fish, it is first necessary to wash and dry the fly. This not being necessary with the gas-wax combination, you can readily see where the latter can save you much time when experiencing a short but spirited rise of trout. Under such circumstances the time spent in drying out a fly may well

reduce your chances from fifty to a hundred per cent or even more. By actual tests we have shown that under such circumstances an angler using the gas-wax preparation has been able to make as many as five perfect floats of the fly to one made by the fellow using paste grease. When the fish are taking fast, anything that will enable you to get your fly in floating condition most quickly is the best preparation to use. When fish are coming slowly, then it doesn't matter much if you must dress a fly occasionally to make it float; in fact doing so gives you something to occupy your time.

Since World War II the silicone floating preparations have come into rather wide favor, and they are fine except that they are also expensive. One of the newest I've tried comes nearest to being like the compound for which I have given the formula in that it dries off a bit faster than the others. One objection I have to the silicones is that it takes longer to prepare a fly with them, for they should be allowed to dry as much as an hour to be effective; and while they are supposed to last the life of the fly, you won't find this of much aid when the fish are taking fast. Unless you clean and dry the fly thoroughly, which takes time, it will not float. On the other hand, as stated, the old gasoline-and-wax formula which I started publicizing about 1929 is excellent when you want a fly cleaned, dried, and redressed in a matter of moments. Good rises are often of short duration, and to change a fly or wait too long between fish before the next cast can prove most aggravating and distressing. Ether works best in this case because it evaporates very fast. You may need a doctor's prescription to get it, but keep in mind that the most volatile liquid that will dissolve paraffin wax will definitely do the best work. A New England firm, Decto Products, had a fly dressing that met these qualifications but they have discontinued the making of sporting products as of 1951, and perhaps forever. I am mentioning it here in the hope that they will bring it back on the market some day, because it was good stuff and not costly. (This firm never advertised or produced a fancy package, which is probably the reason why their products in the fishing line had to be discontinued. And yet of all the fly-floaters and line-dressings I've ever used, theirs were tops, and discriminating anglers who used them from coast to coast so considered them.)

On the other hand some conditions call for a wait between casts. For instance, if you rise some good fish and miss them you may ruin

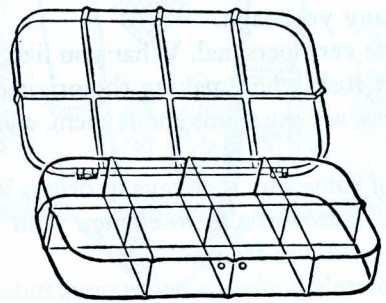




your chances if you cast back to them too quickly. In such a case, the longer it takes to get a drowned fly back into good floating condition the better.

The dry-fly box has long been a problem. The aluminum individual spring-cover types have never been entirely satisfactory. The average compartment is too small for many flies, the metal dents quite easily, and the springs that work the covers get out of order easily. The less mechanism on articles of this type, the better I like them.

In comparatively recent years, plastic boxes have made their appearance in ever-increasing styles, shapes, and qualities. The small ones, of one compartment only, are often quite useful. If you use



TYPICAL COMPARTMENT DRY-FLY BOX

only a few patterns or sizes, you may work out a quite satisfactory method of finding the fly you want when you want it, with six or seven of these scattered in various pockets. This applies to either round or oblong boxes. Representative sizes would be three inches by two inches by three-quarter inch deep; or two and three-quarter inches in diameter by three-quarter inch deep. You may like others of slightly different specifications. Some are made in transparent green and red. These different colors may be utilized to hold flies of different sizes.

Round boxes made of celluoid, without hinged covers, and of the size given, were the first to make their appearance; and they were launched by Gene Connett, a name I'm sure is well known to the readers of *Trout*. These were naturally followed by compartment boxes made of improved materials. They are very sturdy, and yet very light in weight.