

## Handcrafted Bamboo Fly rods and Custom Machined Classic Fly Reels

Greg McGowan is a bamboo fly rod maker and custom fly reel machinist from Bellefontaine Ohio. He has been handcrafting bamboo fly rods for the past six years and two years ago began building classic style fly reels to specifically match the bamboo rods he was making. He found that most modern fly reels today are designed to be as light as possible to match the very light graphite and boron composite rods being manufactured today. Bamboo rods really need a slightly heavier reel to offset the heavier bamboo rod and therefore provide the fly-fisher a balanced system.

Greg grew up in central Illinois and began fly fishing and fly tying at age 12 under the mentorship of Malcom Channer, a local fly fishing legend in that area. His love of the outdoors led him to Southern Illinois University where he earned a BS in Forestry. He fished throughout Southern Illinois and when drafted in 1970 joined the USAF where he became a helicopter pilot in a Special Operations Squadron in SEA. After his service in the Air Force he joined FlightSafety International, a world-wide flight training provider. Greg retired from FlightSafety in 2013 and settled in Bellefontaine. Today he fishes the Mad River, The Au Sable and Manistee rivers in Michigan and is a member of the Briarwood sporting club in Bellefontaine as well as a life member of TU.

Greg's bamboo fly rods are made from Tonkin Cane (*Arundinaria Amabilis*) the bamboo of choice because of the climate and growing conditions in the small are of China where the cane is grown and harvested in the same way that it has been for decades. Each rod begins with the selection of the culm of cane that will be split into the many individual pieces which will be milled, planed, heat treated, glued and fashioned into the sections that will make up each rod. His bamboo fly rods are typically made as two piece rods with two tips (3-piece rods can be custom ordered). Each rod is ferruled with the finest Nickel-Silver ferrules available and he uses only Nickel-Silver fittings for his reel seat hardware. Typically he will use either Walnut or Mesquite reel seat inserts which have been chemically stabilized. All of his rods use Snake brand guides, regarded as the best available. He also uses genuine agate Stripping guides in a color to complement the rods silk wrappings. All rods are finished with two to three coats of Spar Varnish and are hand rubbed to a semi-gloss finish. Each rod comes with rod-sack and an engraved-aluminum rod tube fitted to the length of the rod. His rod tapers are modified from the classic tapers of Dickerson for his linear tapers and Paul Young for some of his parabolic tapers. Most of Greg's bamboo fly rods take between 45 and 60 hours to make.

Every piece of Greg's classic style fly reels are manufactured by him with the exception of the stainless steel machine screws. His reel frames are typically machined from Brass or Bronze, with the spools made from a single billet of 6061-T6 aircraft grade aluminum. Spools are anodized by Greg in-house. Each reel is individually fitted and the stainless steel spring pawl and ratchet drag fitted and adjusted. Each reel takes approximately 40 hours to machine, build and fit.

Mad River Outfitters is pleased to offer Greg's bamboo fly rods and classic reels as a custom package in order to insure the angler a balanced outfit that will provide the owner a link to the true roots of fly fishing in America as well as an heirloom to be passed on to the next generation of the owners family.