Spiral Wrap DEMO DEVICE

Guides belong on the bottom of all fishing rods. But you won't convince most fishermen of that unless you can put the evidence squarely in front of them. Here's a great way to do just that!

by Tom Kirkman

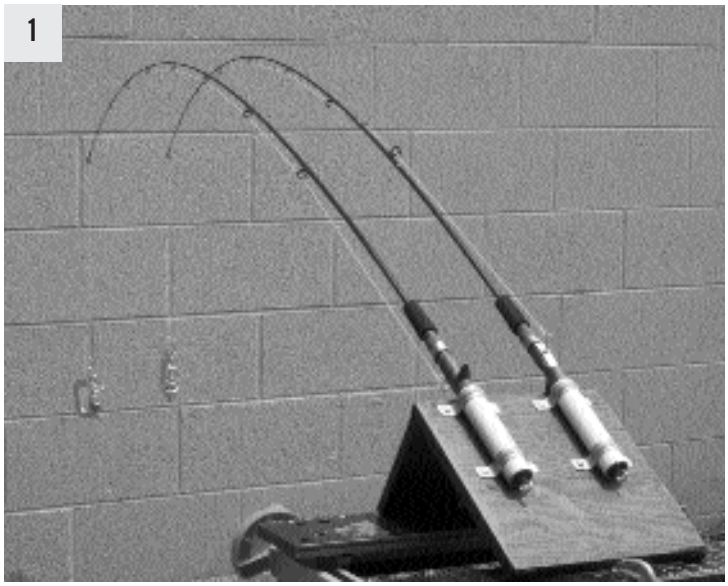
The best way to convince a fisherman that a spiral wrapped rod is a better all around rod than one wrapped in conventional fashion, is to get one in his hands and have him try it. But that requires a personal one-on-one encounter and therefore greatly limits your ability to show the benefits of the spiral wrapped rod to the masses. Not only that, but many fishermen won't even give you the opportunity to show and prove these benefits, preferring instead to just walk away laughing at your silly rod building "gimmick." Wouldn't it be nice if you could show and convince them about the benefits of the spiral wrapped rod without even having to initiate a conversation? Well, you can. All that's needed is a spiral wrap demo device.

Conventional Versus Spiral

Amid all the arguments, one thing is clear, a spiral wrapped rod puts less stress and strain on the rod and the fisherman using the rod. The larger the quarry, the more apparent this becomes. But the purpose of this article is not to convince readers of the spiral wrap's inherent advantages, but rather to expose those of you who already build and sell spiral wrapped rods to a sales tool that can greatly aid in gaining you new customers.

It should be obvious that the easiest way to convince a fisherman of the spiral rod's advantages is just to put two identical rods together, but wrap one conventional and one in spiral fashion. Then you have him or her cast the rod and most importantly, lift a heavy weight from the floor. This will mimic the

load of a fish and quickly educate them on why spiral rods are easier to fight fish with. But, in order to do this, you have to be present and have to participate in the comparison. Such a thing may be easy to do in your shop or any one-on-one situation, but what about in your booth in the middle of a sportsman's show, or during your talk at the local bass club? Most potential customers for the spiral rod will probably just walk on by as you're busy with a handful of other customers. What's needed is an interactive tool that can educate and sell even when you're busy with other matters. Something to pull people in without your having to wrangle them from out in the aisle.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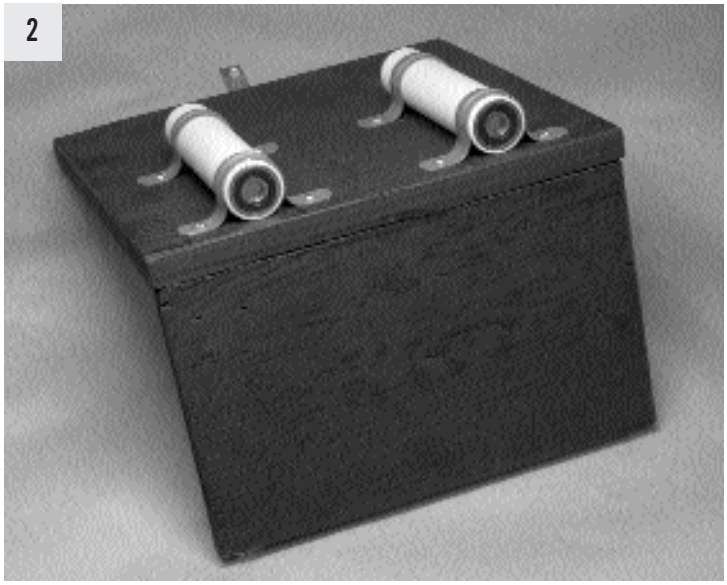
A Sales Tool

First and foremost, the Spiral Device is not a sales "gimmick" of any sort. It is a bona fide tool that reasonably mimics the load of a fish on the end of a line, and it does so whether you're actively involved or not. In fact, the beauty of the spiral device tool is that because it's working, even when you're not, fishermen are apt to be drawn in closer to view it, touch it and try it for themselves. Most quickly gain an understanding of the spiral wrap advantages just by playing with the device for a minute or so.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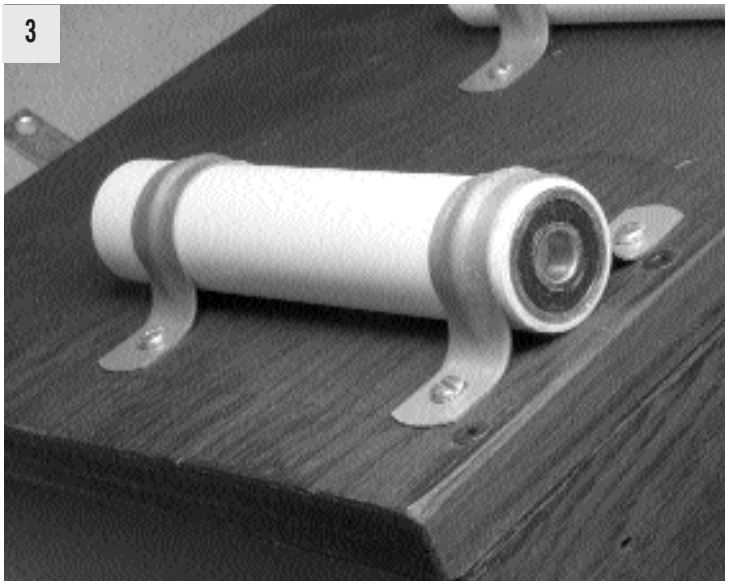
The Device

The idea is to provide a means for suspending two identical rods, one wrapped conventionally and one in spiral fashion, and loading them so that the forces at work can act out and have their way with both rods. In so doing, each rod behaves just as it tries to do when under an actual fish fighting load (1).

Under almost any decent load, even that under a pound, the conventionally wrapped rod will spin upside down and will require considerable effort to right. On the other hand, the spiral wrapped rod will remain upright and, in fact, any attempt to upset it will be foiled by the natural consequence of it working with the load, rather than against it.

The greater the load, the more pronounced the effect will be. For the greatest effect, you may wish to build your device so that it will suspend heavy rods capable of being loaded by several pounds of weight. And believe me, that kind of load placed on both rod types while in the device is a true eye-opener for most fishermen!

The particular device outlined and photographed here was designed and built for much lighter duty rods - fast taper, light to medium power bass rods.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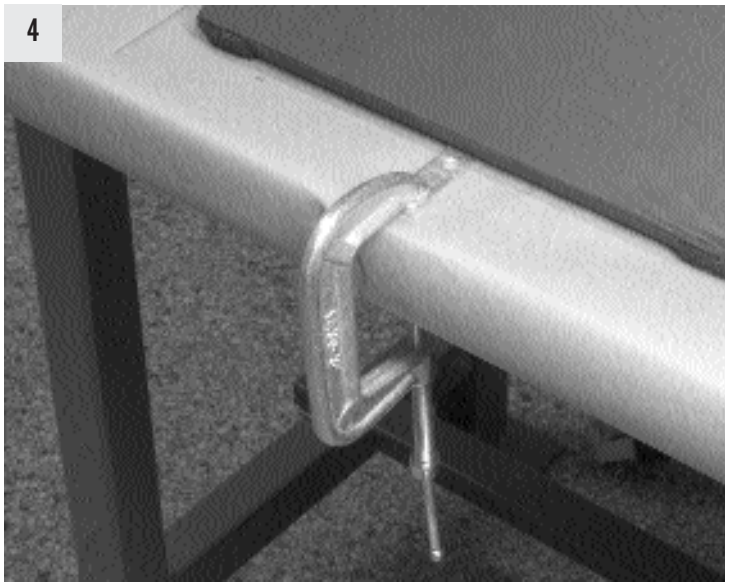
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Make no mistake, the effect is still strong enough to perplex and intrigue most fishermen who stop to play with it, but it's not at all a bad idea to build your device to use with the type rods which you are trying to sell. Don't build a device for bass rods if your market is stand-up tuna rods. Likewise, if you intend to sell light bass rods, don't build your device around downrigger rods.

How to Make It

The heart of any such device is the mechanism which allows the rods to spin freely and follow any introduced load. Friction between the rods and the device must be reduced to a negligible amount. For this reason, free spinning ball bearings are a great choice. I chose to mount mine into pieces of PVC pipe (2). The ball bearings were selected to fit the chosen pipe and the rod blank butts that would be inserted into them. In many cases, you won't be able to come up with suitable bearings that will allow you to do this without shimming one or the other, or both. That's fine. Any rod builder who can shim or bush a reel seat can certainly figure out how to shim and mount bearings into a piece of pipe and the blank butt into the inside bore of the bearing.

The bearings and the PVC pipe in this instance, were spaced to support the blank butt at a point near the very end and again just behind the reel seat. This approximates the same general support area the angler would provide were he using the rod in an actual fishing situation. After the bearings were cleaned and mating surfaces prepped, the bearings were epoxied (RodBond) into the PVC pipe, one at each end. Two light metal clamps or stirrups were then used to mount the bearing assemblies to a wooden support (3).

The support is a very simple affair consisting of two boards sized to angle the rod tips upward at about a 35 to 40 degree angle. When building your own unit, consider the length and type rods you'll be displaying. You may wish to make your forward support longer or shorter in order to aim the rods higher or lower. But generally, something that puts the rods at roughly a 40 degree angle seems to work pretty well. (I suggest making the top part of the assembly first, inserting the rods you intend to use and loading them as you plan to do, and then determining just how tall your forward support needs to be in order to put everything at the level and height you require.)

Even with the single pound of weight used on my rods in this device, the entire unit will tip up and fall over if it is not securely fastened to the table or stand on which it will be displayed. I mounted a short piece of flat steel to the underside of the top support board and bent it to provide a short flat area for me to clamp

to the table edge (4). This also prevents the device from getting knocked around when people really begin to flip and spin the rods. Obviously, if you intend to use heavier boat or stand-up type rods, you'll definitely want to provide some means of clamping the device to the table.

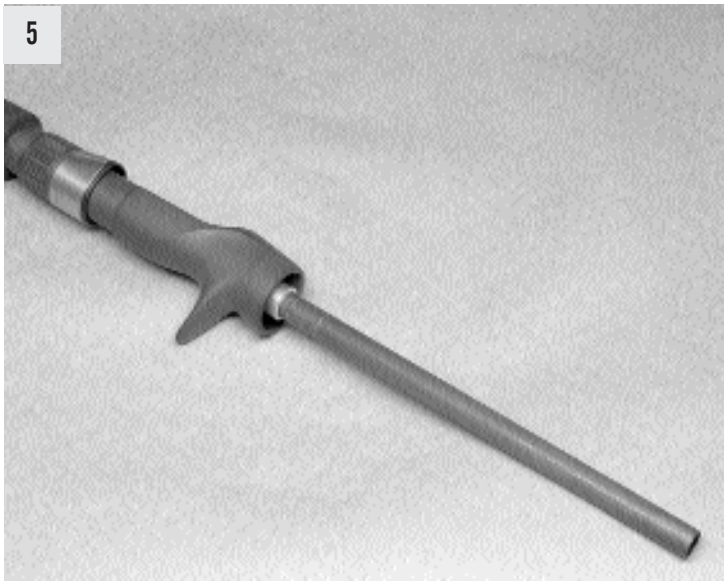
The blanks are built into rods in routine fashion with the exception of leaving off the butt grips (5). The naked blank butts are inserted into the bearing assembly and pegged at the rear to keep interested parties from pulling the rods out of the device (6). You can make these pegs from various materials.. The photo shows a simple eye bolt or screw eye wrapped with tape for a snug fit into the end of the rod butt. You could also make your pegs out of fly rod bass bug popper corks or a plug of EVA material and just run a screw eye into either type. They need not fit overly tight - just snug enough to keep people from easily pulling the rods out of the bearing supports.

One small item that will make a huge difference in the smoothness of your device, regards where your reel seat hits the bearing face. I found that on mine the rear of the seat rode the face of the outer bearing race (7). This meant that the seat and bearing race surface had to slip on each other. This caused extra friction which I didn't want. So, I cut a small spacer from aluminum tubing and slid it over the end of the rod butt and pushed it up behind the reel seat. The spacer protrudes just beyond the edge of the reel seat and rides on the face of the inner bearing race which turns with the rod (8). The result was a much, much smoother and easier turning device. Don't overlook this in order to get the most friction-free device.

The fit of the blanks into the bearings should be an easy slip fit. Neither tight nor sloppy loose. The entire bearing assembly and the rod should function as one unit and turn or rotate together - and it should rotate very easily.

You can mount reels in the seats and run the line through the guides and load the rods, but many fishermen will then suspect that the *only* reason the conventional rod is upset is due to the off-center weight of the reel. They're wrong, but in order to completely mitigate that argument without having to be present, I just skipped the reels altogether. Instead, I opted for a piece of flat steel sporting a short eyebolt for attaching the line (9). Flat aluminum stock would work just as well, perhaps even better. You can embed the eyebolt by means of two flat nuts, one below and one above the steel flat. Use a locking compound on the nuts to ensure they never come loose. You may find it necessary to slightly bend the steel flats in order to get them to mount into the reel seats.

Fastening the line to the exact center of each seat means that no upsetting forces are present where the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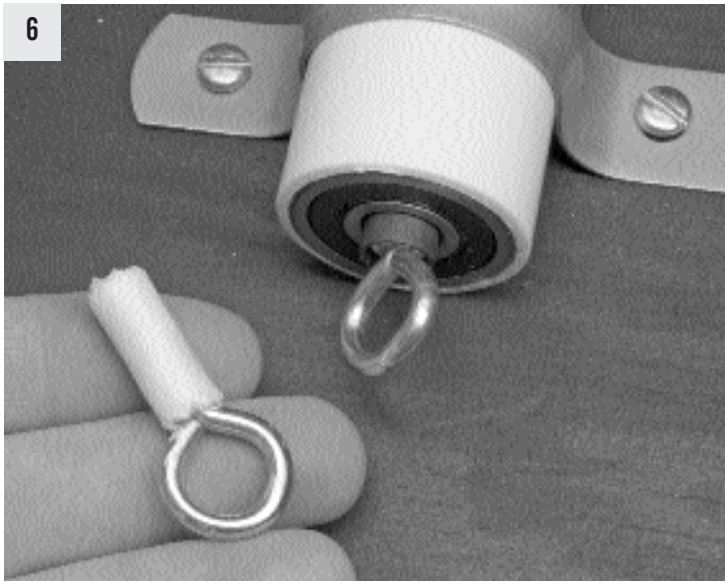
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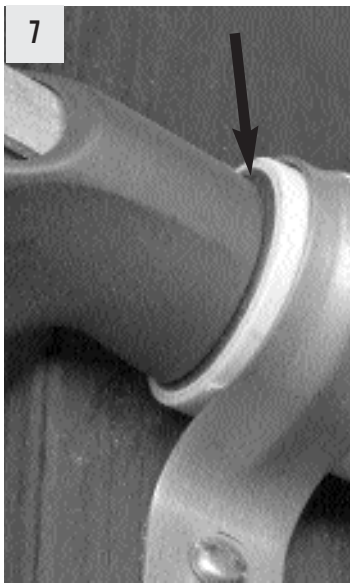
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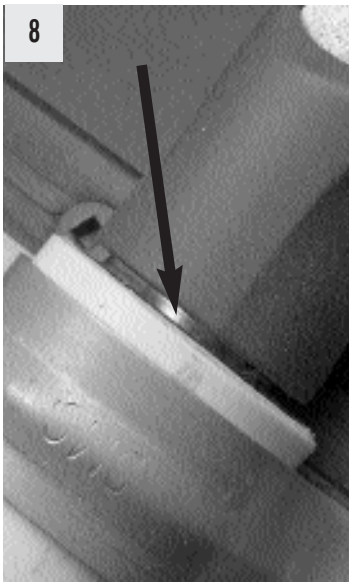
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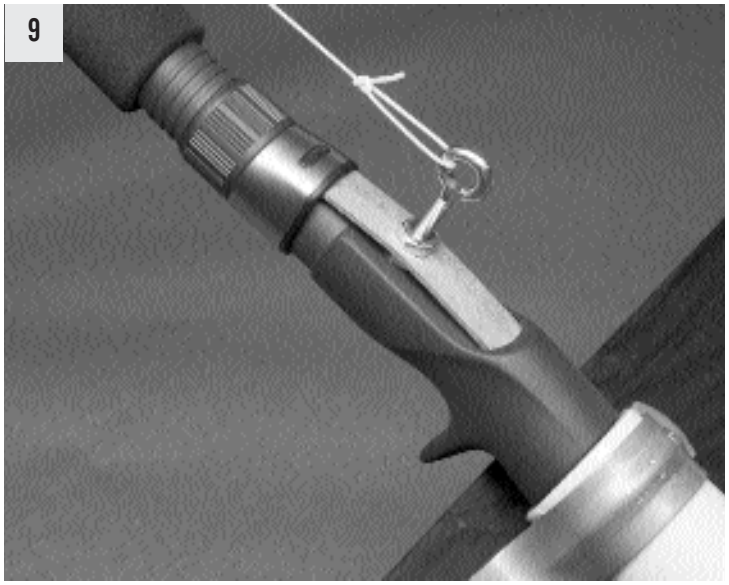
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line joins the reel seat. When one rod flips and one doesn't, there is no argument about anything other than guide placement being responsible.

One very impressive display on any spiral wrapped rod is to actually mount a reel and let its weight turn the rod upside down. When loaded, the rod will right itself, eventually bringing the reel back to the top as enough load is applied. If you don't think this won't turn some heads, you really need to try it in front of some fishermen!

How to Use

There's not much to do, really. You just need to string up a line, something bright and thick like an old fly line, and suspend an appropriate load from the end. How much load/weight? I would suggest an amount that puts a decent bend in the rods. You want some bend into the "meat" of the rods but there is no reason to overload them to the point of breakage. Most rod builders will instinctively know when they've got the correct amount of load/weight on the rod. At least get some flex into the mid area of the rods, but don't worry about having the rods bent all the way down to the reel seats - that isn't necessary.

What to use for the weight or load? Doesn't really matter. At last year's National Rod Builders Show I just took a couple of C-clamps and slid heavy nuts onto the threaded shaft of each until I had a load that put both rods into a pretty good bend. Another way, perhaps an even better way, is to employ a long eye bolt with a nut on the end and stack large fender washers on the bolt until you have the amount of weight you need (10). Obviously, you want the same amount of weight on both rods, so count the number of washers on each to ensure each weighs the same.

I would also advise you to actually weigh the amount of load you're putting on the rods. I say this because somebody is going to ask you how much weight it really takes to get the effect that you're demonstrating. Many fishermen have the idea that on smaller fish you'd never really have any problem with rod twist. The fact is, even a single pound will create more than enough effect to be demonstrated and felt. More than one fisherman has been brought up short when I informed him that the weight he was struggling with on my demo device was just a pound.

In a booth at a sportsman's or fishing show, put the device in a prominent place near the aisle so that passersby will feel invited to stop and play with the rods. Even better, put a placard or sign on the front of the device saying something like, "Try Me!" You may even wish to print up a short explanation on the

demonstration that is large enough for people to easily read as they stroll by.

The real strength of the spiral device is in the fact that it's interactive - it's there working 100% of the time, pulling people in and inviting them to turn and spin the rods and feel what's going on there. It's there working while you're taking a break. It's there working while you're busy with other people. It's there working while you take a restroom or snack break. Unlike you, it doesn't need a break and doesn't have to go out and snare potential customers. Instead, it's on all the time and fishermen are drawn to it. Once they get involved with it, those who are truly intrigued will seek you out to ask the inevitable questions.

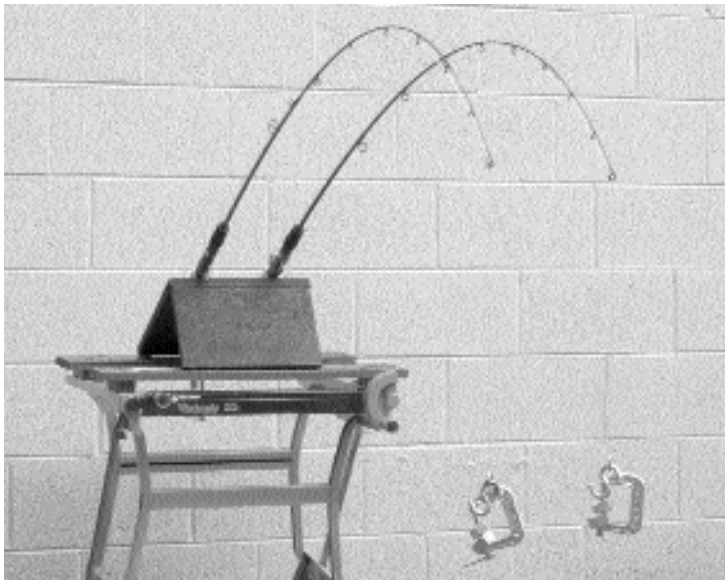
At fishing clubs where you may be invited to talk or demonstrate, have the device on the table next to you. Have it loaded and working? Yes, even while you're in the middle of your presentation. The guys will be curious, they'll be watching it and waiting for you to explain what in the heck is going on. At the end of your presentation, invite them to come up and fool around with it a bit.

If you have a rod building shop or tackle store where you entertain customers, you'll almost surely want to keep the device there in the open, where the customers can handle it, complete with both rods installed and under load.

Special Considerations

Once in a while somebody will have enough fishing rod knowledge to challenge you on rod "spine." For this reason, I build my demo rods so that the effective spine is on top, in the exact position where proponents will tell you it has to be in order to keep the rod from twisting or spining when under load. Of course, they're wrong and the rod will still spin upside down when loaded, but it's important to show them that only the spiral wrap, not spine orientation, can create an inherently stable rod. Once you eliminate the off-center weight of a reel and put the effective spine on top, you have removed every supposed reason for that rod flipping or spinning upside down. And with that, you automatically negate the usual ill-founded arguments as well.

If you sell spiral wrapped rods, you would be well served to construct your own spiral wrap device. Whether in your shop, at the local fishing club or next year's sportsman show, it will repay you many times over. Regardless of where you use, show or display it, it'll draw a crowd, I guarantee it. Why not build one and let it start working for you today! ✍



Further Information on spiral wrap systems and techniques can be found in the following back issues of RodMaker Magazine;

Spiral Wrap For Casting Rods
by Ralph O'Quinn - Volume 3 - #5

The Revolver Rod
by Rich Forhan - Volume 4 - #2

Spiral Wrap Transition Methods
by Tom Kirkman - Volume 6 - #5

The Simple Spiral (Bumper Wrap)
by Bill Colby - Volume 8 - #2