

## Scandinavian or Skagit? What's right for you?

Once we decide to take the plunge into the world of shooting heads, things can start to get a bit murky. Should we go with Skagit or Scandinavia heads? Too often we find that someone else is making that decision for us and what works for them may not work for us. So here's a short checklist that you can use to decide which head system is right for you.

For a lot of fly fishers out there, how we fish is as important as catching fish. If we're in that category, then it's important to match the head system to how we like to fish. That can be summed up in one word, "finesse". Is it important to us or is it not? As an example, someone arriving from dry fly trout fishing is more likely to have an affinity for Scandi thanks to its greater finesse and elegance. If nymph fishing is your favourite fishing method, then chucking weight and fishing deep is part of your DNA. In that case Skagit will be a more natural fit. We know how we like to fish better than anyone else and if the method is a big part of our enjoyment, then consider from which side of the "finesse" fence we like to fish. Make that determination and we know which system to select.

If the method isn't the biggest part of our fun, then let's move on to the next item on the checklist: rods and flies. If the idea of casting large flies with light rods really appeals to us, then Skagit is the default choice. Skagit does a really good job of using light rods to move large, weighted, high drag flies like big bunny leeches. If this is how we would like to fish, we have our answer. Scandi heads will cast these big, high drag flies, but it takes bigger rods and heavier lines to do so.



If our fly selection features slicker, somewhat smaller flies that are easier to extract and cast, then Scandi enters the picture. Even lighter Scandi heads can handle pretty big flies provided they are slick enough to be extracted easily when cast on the end of a long leader. Most classic Spey flies and traditional steelhead wet flies can be cast with either a Scandi or a Skagit head.

If the rod and fly size hasn't helped us with our decision, then let's take a look at the water and the fish. We can usually fish deeper with a Skagit head and heavy sinktip compared to a polyleader equipped Scandi head. If our rivers run clear and feature aggressive fish, we can often get them to rise to a shallow presentation. We don't need to run our fly deep and those shallow takes can be awesome. A Scandi head and a few polyleaders are all we need.

However, if the river runs deep and on the murky side plus we need to get the fly in front of the fish to elicit a take, then the deeper running Skagit system will be needed for that job. Let the water conditions and the fish tell us what type of shooting head system we should be fishing.

If that still isn't enough to make up our minds, then let's take a closer look at our rivers. If they have higher gradient flows with pockets, buckets, fast seams and slots, then the ability of the Skagit system to get a fly down fast becomes the critical thing. However if our river is a lower gradient one with wide, even flowing runs, smooth flats and plenty of time to get the fly down, then a polyleaders equipped Scandi head will do that job quite well.

The bottom line: it's about having fun, so choose the system that will provide the most enjoyment for you, fish effectively and get you into fish on your terms.

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