

## Slinky Drifting the Niagara

Drift fishing on the Niagara River with typical three-way rigs usually means a lot of snags and lost terminal tackle. Using slinkies helps to prevent snags, and keeps you in the water longer, allowing you to hook up with more fish and re-tie a lot less! It will also mean a LOT less lead at the bottom of the Niagara River!!! Actually, quite often the same slinky will be on the line at the end of a day of steelheading... even fishing in the infamous boulder-dwelling tackle-eating Devil's Hole and Pebbly Beach drifts!!! I believe that all charter Captains and fishing guides should be using these slinkies rather than pencil-style lead, as they will help to free up a lot of your time on the water re-tying clients lines less, incurring less expense with terminal tackle, and as a bonus, you will not be contributing to a lead cesspool at the bottom of the Niagara River.

PLEASE NOTE: you will need a slightly heavier slinky than the lead you now use, as the slinky is a bit bulkier than lead, and will take a bit longer to sink. Also, the slinky has a much softer feel to it while drifting. I believe the softer slithering of the slinky as opposed to the sharp, loud tapping of lead will help not to spook weary clear-water steelies as well.

Here are a few tips for making up your own slinkies, as they usually cannot be found in the tackle shops.

First you will need to make a few purchases:

- \* Slinky Drifter cord in 3/16- and 1/4-inch sizes (the smaller 3/16" cord is used for the shallower and slower drifts and is optional). You will be able to find the Slinky Drifter cord at select tackle shops.
- \* BK4 buckshot for the 1/4" cord, which can be purchased at a gun shop, and small splitshot ("BB" size) for the 3/16" cord.
- \* Size 12 snap swivels.
- \* Quality 3/16" and 1/4" heat shrink tubing.

Other items needed:

- \* Candle or lighter
- \* Needle nose pliers
- \* Pencil
- \* 10" piece of steel wire (approx. .045 gauge) or something similar
- \* scissors

Now for building the little buggers!

1). Cut the slinky cord to the adequate length (a little longer than you think, as the nylon shrinks quickly when heated), and heat up one end a little with a candle or lighter and pinch the end with a pair of pliers to seal off one end.

2). Place pencil point in other end of slinky cord and heat up the frayed end around the pencil briefly, so you make a funnel to add the shot. This is done to prevent more fraying of the cord while adding shot.

3). Place the desired amount of shot into the cord (I find 20 BK4 shot is a good amount for the 1/4" cord, and 30 BB splitshot is good for the 3/16" cord). You will have to slide the shot down to the closed end of cord one by one.

4). Heat up the end well and seal. You will need to heat this end a little bit more to get a good amount of 'plastic' in the seal, so that you will have enough material to work with for the next steps. Trim the excess plastic from this end with a pair of scissors neatly to make a clean slinky, and to fit the heat shrink tubing and snap swivel.

5). Heat up one end of a 10" piece of wire until the end is red hot, and pierce it through the middle of the end of cord you just sealed and trimmed.

6). Clip a snap swivel through the hole you just created at the end of the slinky.

7). Cut heat shrink tubing to size (3/16" heat shrink tubing for 3/16" Slinky Drifter cord, and 1/4" tubing for 1/4" cord), and place over the snap swivel and slinky cord end, being careful to leave the "eye" of the snap swivel exposed, and heat up the heat shrink tubing. The snap swivel idea is to have an "eye" that swivels to tie your line to for a three-way rig, or place your line through to use as a "slip slinky". The heat shrink tubing will prevent the snap swivel from opening, and make a smooth clean slinky that can slither through rocky substrate quite easily.

That's it! You are ready for some snagless drifting on the Niagara! You can use this same method for making smaller slinkies for drifting on smaller streams and rivers as well, or Lindy-style rigging for walleye or bass.

Good drift fishing!

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