



November 2004

The Conservationist

Potomac-Patuxent Chapter

www.pptu.org

Wednesday, November 17

The Raffle and the Crown Jewel

You get a twofer at this month's Chapter meeting. A daily double. A double header. A double whammy. And any other "double" colloquialism you might come up with. First up is our Fall Raffle Fund-raiser. We have several nice prizes at your disposal, plus the usuals from the monthly raffle. A new rod from the folks from Bean; a guided trip locally for smallies or trout; and the Grand Prize, a plush lodge trip to a big river some say is the best in the East. Ticket prices are pretty reasonable, too. Details follow on Page Six.

Then on to the heart of the Program. Our Crown Jewel and Teddy Roosevelt's Dream — Yellowstone National Park. Thousands of miles of pristine fish-filled water. Home to America's trout — the cutthroat! (I expect that claim will cause more than a few brookie lovers to jump up and out of their waders). Beautiful vistas, untouched land, grizzlies, elk, moose, and RVs that won't let you pass.

The Yellowstone, Soda Butte, Slough Creek, Lamar, Gibbon, and Firehole. But with a lifetime of waters available and a week's vacation to fish them, where o' where does a fisherman start?

Marcia Woolman knows. For those of you who have attended the last few Winter Fly Fishing Shows at College Park, chances are you'll know who I'm referring to. She puts on a dynamic, info-packed slide show on Yellowstone fly fishing that impresses new and old hands alike. She covers all the favored spots, plus those spots less fished, with a particular emphasis on the meadows of Slough Creek where huge, but wily, cutts ▶

hang and play. So come see her most excellent presentation and start dreaming about your first or next fishing trip to our Nation's Crown Jewel! ■



— Sebastian O'Kelly

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

In my last column I reminded readers of the impending election and urged their careful thought and participation while never giving much thought myself to the impending and unending repetitious coverage planned by our public communications outlets. Now, three weeks later after injuring some cervical discs and being essentially immobilized, I feel like a prisoner about to go berserk--literally. I tried withdrawing into my cable provider's History, Discovery, and sports channels since I was unable to sit without severe discomfort in front of a pc for more than one or two minutes.

The steroid treatment and the heavy duty pain medications provided only partial relief from the discomfort and it did virtually little to thwart off the continual political barrage. I grew despondent not being able to go outdoors or read some of the fishing highlights (er, tall tales) on our list server. I couldn't walk 15 feet and I never could get out of the range of "the latest campaign news." My dog grew weary of my irritable demeanor and her lost Frisbee time and my loving wife sought refuge ▶

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Meetings

Time and Day: 7:00 PM, Third Wednesday except December, June, July, and August

Place: Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center, 1000 Forest Glen Road, Silver Spring, Maryland

Directions: From Capitol Beltway: North on Georgia Avenue (Rte. 97). First right onto Forest Glen Road. Pass Holy Cross Hospital and go across Sligo Creek Parkway. The Center is on the right.

The Conservationist

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Contributions in the form of clip art, articles, conservation activities, trip reports, letters, fishing and conservation news, tying tips, book reviews, and essays about trout fishing should be sent to the Editor as plain text in the email body or Microsoft Word attachments. Authors should also include their phone number and a brief descriptions of the attachments. The deadline for submissions is the twelfth (12th) day of the month prior to the month of publication

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

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from my incessant complaining directed to he TV. My golf game has gone to hell, I'm sure. And while I'll be able to cast a line before I can hit a pitching wedge, I probably won't be able to go streamside for some time.

As I write, there are only three weeks left before the elections and the miserable Redskins stinking up the joint I'm searching for an escape. I've decided to sell my wonderful but unused woodworking shop, but I can't get to that now either. My camera sits there looking at me with a narrowing iris and stoic glare. I can't turn to food since, in my misery and with a weakened brain, I decided to lose some weight. So, I suffer the withdrawals coming from that. I thought I would go through my fly lines and give them a thorough cleaning, but I couldn't do that one handed with a toppled head. Now, Tom Brokaw has just come on the air with..."and now from the campaign trail in middle America"...arrgghhhh...■

— Lou Boezi

p.s. the author is assured of a recovery- sometime; his dog seems to be making friends again and his wife just took him out for a short lunch for the first time in almost a month. Hmmm, things may be looking up....wonder what there is to watch on the tele

****MEMBER'S ASSESSMENT **** **NOW PAYABLE**

The annual assessment (see back) is now payable. Check your label-if the "PP-" date is "0904" (or there is NO "PP-" and date), you can send your \$15 now. Some members paid twice this year, so they already show "PP-0905." Make checks payable to "POTOMAC-PATUXENT CHAPTER - TU" and mail to our chapter mail box. The assessment covers only the newsletter and related administrative expenses; all donations above expenses at raffles, etc., go to the resource and not to support our members with free newsletters, maps, etc. **Final mailing** for those having "PP-0904" on their label will be the November issue. **There will be NO separate mailings to remind members of this obligation. Please take note and action today! You will not want to miss our January issue and later issues with all their announcements.**

Bamboo Rods: Getting Started

My mind drifted back thirty years to a warm summer day. My Great Uncle had just finished giving me my first fly-casting lesson. As we talked he pulled out an old metal tube with a brass cap and from its confines came a rod sock. From the depths of the sock came a bamboo rod, it's coat of finish glinting in the afternoon sunlight. He carefully lined up the guides and put the rod together, attached a reel and strung a silk line through the diminutive guides. With a big smile he handed it to me.

I can still remember that feeling as the silk line swooshed through the guides for the first time. But here I stood, my hands trembling, not from the coldness of the March winds but from the realization of what I was doing as I carefully put the rod together.

After I strung the line through the guides, the act of tying on of the fly was excruciatingly slow. But after that was accomplished, I eased myself into the stream at the top of a run and made that first cast down and across. With each consecutive cast, I felt the rod come alive in my hands, bringing back that pleasant feeling of long ago. Then there it was – the jolt at the end of my line as the brown hit. He went deep shaking his head, the rod telegraphing his every move. As I released the fish, I took a moment to admire the bamboo rod that I held in my hands. There on the bottom was my name and beside it read – Maker - rod #1.

Since the day my Great Uncle allowed me to cast his cane rod, I have been infatuated by them. It got worse after casting originals by Dickerson, Young, Payne, and others. Knowing that I couldn't afford them I started to do some research into the rod makers and found that their exquisite tapers were available. I also discovered that of the different construction formulas, the six-sided bamboo construction would be the most cost effective while allowing the flexibility to recreate classic tapers but also allowing me to design my own. The greatest benefit I have found is that rod making combines my traditional and artistic sensibilities while working with my hands.

So how do you get started on building your first bamboo fly rod? The first order of business is to pick up a book on subject. This will help you ►

become familiar with the jargon and the tools to be used. There are several books available to take you step by step through the rod making process. Plan on committing 60 hours or more on your first rod. The learning curve is steep but the rewards are life long.

Materials and Tools You will Need

Here's where that book will come in handy. To get started you will need culms of bamboo, a bamboo froe, soft head carver's mallet for splitting and a mill file for the nodes. A wood or metal form is needed to put a 60-degree angle and taper to the bamboo strips. In addition, you'll need a center gauge to measure 60-degree angles and a dial indicator to adjust the forms. A micrometer is used to measure the actual planed strips and the final blank dimensions.

For the actual planing of bamboo, use a Stanley 9 ½ block plane with a Hock replacement blade, a honing guide and a 1000/6000 combination grit water stone to keep the blade sharpened at the correct angle. In lieu of the water stone, sandpaper works only too well! At some point your going to want to cut strips or a section to length, a Japanese dovetail saw or a fine tooth hacksaw will suffice.

A heat gun is needed to straighten the bamboo strips before they are planed. You can also power a heat-treating oven or you can chose to flame the culms of bamboo using a propane torch.

Cotton binding thread is used to bind the bamboo strips together for heat-treating and after gluing. Binding is done by hand with the 12/64th glase cotton thread run through a book provides for greater tension on the wraps. Waterproof glue is used and some glues are more applicable to rod making than others. I recommend glue that allows a longer work time for your first rod. Sandpaper on a small sanding block is used to sand off excess glue and thread. Next, the blank is sealed against moisture re-entry by using spar varnish. You can wipe it on, use a brush or build a dip tube. After the blank has been sealed you can wrap the guides and install the hardware.

Components can be installed by hand using sand paper and epoxy, though a reamer file may be useful to widen the bore opening on the pre-formed cork grip. Silk guide wraps are applied using a rod wrapper or by running the thread through a book. A couple of final coats of spar by brush or in the dip tube will seal the thread and give it that finished look. After the finish is cured it's time to take it fishing!

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This is a revised reprint of a CONSERVATIONIST article from some years ago. In the October column, I covered basic entomology: what is an insect and how to separate them from the other small critters we see. This month I want to get into how to identify the major groups of insects that we see trout taking. We will not be covering any of the crustaceans that many trout feed upon (crayfish and cress bugs, for example).

There are four major groups of aquatic insects that are important to trout: mayflies, stoneflies, caddis, and the midges and their relatives. In a future issue, I intend to briefly discuss the other groups of insects that trout regularly feed upon, such as various groups of terrestrials and the dragonflies. Each of these four basic groups composes an order in the class Insecta. Orders are groups of animals that have a common ancestry and large similarities in their overall structure and methods of reproduction and development. The mayflies are the most frequently mentioned in fishing for trout, but they are not always the dominant food for many trout. In all stages, they usually have relatively long, fragile tails, always three in the nymphs and at least two, sometimes three, in the flying stages. Anything with slim tails about as long as or longer than the body and crawling around a rock in a stream or flying past an angler is a mayfly. Antennae are not clearly visible at any stage of the mayfly. The nymphs crawl around rocks and submerged vegetation, burrow in the silt, and some can swim fairly well. They have no functional mouthparts in the flying stages and may live anywhere from an hour to 24 hours (rarely 48) before mating and laying their eggs. They are truly ephemeral, as the name of their order implies: Ephemera. This group has a very unusual development: two flying stages. The first is the "dun" stage (properly called subimago), which cannot mate and lay eggs in almost all cases (as with all things biological, there are exceptions to almost all rules). The dun rides along the surface of the water with both pairs of **wings held in an upright position above the body** and folded flat against each other. The wings may have markings but are semi-opaque and some general coloration such as gray or ►

cream. The duns fly awkwardly to a nearby tree or weed patch to rest for a day; they do not linger over the water. During this period, they molt a second time into the "spinner" (or imago) stage that can mate and lay eggs. Spinners have crystalline clear wings, with or without markings. The spinners usually congregate or "dance" over the water, mate, lay eggs and die, landing on the water with their wings spread-eagled.

The caddis (order Trichoptera) can be both the easiest to identify and sometimes the most difficult. They are very active as flying adults, as they skim and flutter around the water and nearby vegetation. The two pairs of wings are held in a **tent-like position over the body** when at rest. They have long antennae, no tails, and may resemble small moths to many anglers. The larvae come in several types. Some are free living and simply crawl around the rocks and other debris on the stream bottom. Others may weave a small web of silk and lay under it. Still others are even more industrious: they construct small tubes of tiny debris fragments and drag them slowly across the bottom. These caddis cases can often be seen in large numbers on rocks. As the larvae grow, the cases are enlarged. Larvae are grub-like in that they have three pairs of legs and no wing cases, antennae or tails. The caddis larvae pupate and become inactive as they metamorphose into the adults. Emergence can take place on the bottom, shoreline or at the surface. The adults may survive for many days, although they do not feed on anything. On some trout streams, this is the most abundant group over the course of the year that trout take as food. A fly fisher without several different caddis patterns is unlikely to have a successful week fishing most streams in the warmer months.

Stoneflies (order Plecoptera) are usually long, slender bodied flying insects that **fold their two pairs of wings flat across their bodies** like a blanket when at rest. They can vary in size from 0.25" in length to over 2 inches in the famous salmon flies of the west and show two thick tail projections. Most large larvae are very active predators of other insects in the water, while others feed on plant material, such as algae. As their name implies, you usually will not find them in muddy streams with few or no rocks. Locally, the tiny little black stones are active all winter long. The stonefly nymphs may, at first glance, appear very

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PATUXENT REPORT

On Saturday, November 13, a fall cleanup of the stream will be held with a free lunch afterwards. This is again being organized by the Maryland Parks and the Izaak Walton League Wildlife Achievement Chapter east of Damascus. Meet at 8:30-9 on Mullinix Mill Road with gloves and a heavy rake, if you have one. Trash bags will be supplied. Also bring your hip waders if you want to work on the river itself near the bridges: amazing how much litter gets tossed from bridges every week! This is a great family event for all ages.

The only real problem with fishing this stream at this time of the year is that much of the upper Patuxent Special Trout Area is a public hunting zone. Call the Park office at (301) 924-2127 or stop by their Clopper Road office in Gaithersburg (Seneca Creek State Park is responsible for Patuxent State Park) to obtain maps of hunting zones within Patuxent. Some of the local sport shops may also have this information. The firearm season for deer is about to start, but other firearm hunting (e.g., squirrels, woodcock), as well as archery and black powder seasons for deer will be running from now through early February. Suggest weekdays or Sundays OR a bright-colored hat on Saturdays, in particular. (Sunday hunting is not allowed on public lands.) The most hunted area is between Hipsley Mill and Howard Chapel Roads.

There should still be a fair number of holdover browns and rainbows in the larger pools as winter sets into this area. I have in the past seen some of the largest browns of the year at this time. It takes some patience and stealth to find and catch them. Wild browns have been found throughout this special trout management area, particularly above the Rt. 94 bridge. Some 500 rainbows of excellent size were stocked at the Rt 94 and Hipsley Mill bridges in early-October. They should be providing some good sport from now through the winter. ■

—Jay Sheppard

****REMINDER****

The next issue of the *Conservationist* will be in early January. There is no December issue or any monthly meeting. Have a safe and Happy Holiday!

Bamboo: Getting Started

(Continued from page 3)

For the beginner, ready-made components are available, including rod blanks that can be purchased through catalogs. But you can also choose to make your own blanks, which is what I did. You may also wish to make your own ferrules, reel seats and grips but you will need to invest in a lathe.

When I started I took the more expensive route and purchased the majority of my tools for about what it would have cost me to build a rod on someone else's blank. A more enterprising individual can make those items by hand with a minimum monetary investment but labor intensified. For example, I chose to use my heat gun to power an oven made out of stovepipe for under \$15. Being a builder prior, I already had a rod wrapper and dryer to facilitate the finish work. As noted, I spent over 60 hours on my first rod, stopping to make some equipment or modifying others. Now, I can turn out a one-tip rod in under 40 hours. Bamboo cost \$40 a culm, enough for two, possibly three rods depending on the weight and taper. Add in the cost of nickel silver ferrules, reel seat, cork grip, snakes, winding check, stripper and tip top, a one-tip rod cost me approximately \$150 in materials. Any one with the time and patience can produce a reasonable fishing rod for their first attempt. In fact there is a growing number of hobbyist rod makers spending countless hours in our basements or garages working on becoming the next Garrison or Gillum. ■

—Timothy E. Pembroke



Dave Whitlock @ www.davewhitlock.com

ADDRESS CHANGED?

If you have moved or see any error in your mailing labels (*Trout* or *Conservationist*), please notify **both** the National TU office and this chapter with **separate** notices. Our mailing list is maintained apart from the National list; we do eventually get the notice of address change from National TU, but it is often a few months before it affects your newsletter and other mailings. Please help us help you. Thank you.

TACKLE AND TACTIC TIPS

A year ago I made some suggestions regarding fly rod selection. I hope a number of you got a rod from Santa Claus and have had a year to play with it! Recently I was talking with a trout fisher in a local shop. He had come into the shop to buy up a bunch of large woolly bugger-type flies. He was almost breathless with the word that he had found a large number of Gunpowder trout wanting that pattern, but he had only landed a couple of them. He reported he had a couple of "nice" trout on the end of the line for a few moments before breaking them off. I thought for a moment and then asked him what size tippet he was using. The reply was 6X! Yes, 6X undoubtedly allowed the woolly buggers to undulate very seductively in the currents, but he was only feeding the flies to the trout. Casting these large flies (#6 or #8) with 6X tippet was like tossing the flies off the bridge without anything tied to them.

Simply put, the shock of even an 11" brown in heavy current or while stripping in the fly will give the fly to the trout. For years fly fishers followed the "rule of threes" when selecting tippet size. Divide the fly size by three and use that tippet size (e.g., #18 fly = 6X tippet). Leader and tippet materials are a lot stronger than the ones we had even 20 years ago. I may drop the tippet down one size smaller for dead drifted flies. However, when I am actively retrieving the fly where there is no slack between my rod tip and the fly, I really need to more closely follow the rule of three. I would have had at least 4X tippet for those woolly buggers and considered 3X, if I thought there were any lunker trout over a pound or two waiting back in the shadows.

Tippet length is also important. If you are after a lot of S-curves and a long dead drift, then the longer the tippet, the more S-curves and a longer the drift. Think of casting ten or twenty feet of fine tippet! It is not going to go anywhere beyond the tip of the leader or fly line, unless the wind carries it further. Take the same size tippet and shorten it to just a foot or less and it will turn over almost every time, wind permitting. I typically use about 35-45" of tippet for dead drifting dries in a ►

stream with lots of variable current; I have occasionally been forced to use 60" of 7X on some really fussy Savage River or Gunpowder Falls trout. At the other extreme, when tossing weighted Patuxent Specials in the #10 size, I shorten the tippet to about 18" and use 4X or even 3X. I use something in-between those lengths for small wet flies and medium-sized nymphs.

As we have all heard many times, there are five key factors to catching trout: presentation, presentation, presentation, presentation, and, lastly, fly selection. In order to obtain the best presentation, tippet selection is a major factor. Clearly, too, the cast is very important. Too close and the trout might be spooked; too far and the fly may show micro-drag before it reaches the trout. Ah, the variables of trying to catch a trout! It sure is what keeps me going back again and again. See you in January! ■

— Jay Sheppard



Fall PPTU Fundraiser

1st prize - An expense paid stay for two anglers at the West Branch Angler & Sportsman's Resort located on the West Branch of the Delaware River and two days of drift boat fishing with a guide -- approximately a \$1900.00 value.

2nd prize - Will be a one day guided wade fishing trip for trout or smallmouth bass to local waters with local guide Stacey Crossland-Smith.

3rd prize -- Will be a sweet, 7'- 5wt. fly fishing outfit from L. L. Bean. -- including rod, reel and line.

Ticket prices will be \$15.00 apiece or three tickets for \$35. We will be selling tickets at all meetings until the raffle takes place, on November 17, 2004, and you do not have to be present to win. Most Board members (see page 2) will have tickets to sell anytime. Time to ante up folks; we need your help! Support our chapter of Trout Unlimited ■

Tying A Simple Emerger

Now that fall is here, I find myself thinking about how to occupy my time this winter. That always means I begin to think about which flies I will need to stock up on for next spring and reminds me to be on the lookout for the right materials at the right prices.

The first fly that came to mind this year was one I use every spring when my wife, Pam, and I visit the Delaware River system for its renowned Hendrickson hatch. The fly I tie, based on a pattern that many of the guides on that system swear by during the Hendrickson hatch, is an emerger pattern which uses snowshoe rabbit foot fur for a wing and not CDC. Snowshoe rabbit foot fur is naturally buoyant, impervious to fish slime, durable, and comes in any color you need for emerger wings.

The snowshoe emerger may be tied to emulate almost any emerging mayfly just by changing the color of the materials used and the size of the hook you tie it on. I believe this pattern is one of those which are so effective because it may represent many things to the fish even though we believe it to most effectively represent the species and stage of insect we tied it to represent. It would be nice to know what the fish think when they see our flies sometimes, but I do know I have caught trout on this pattern during every stage of a hatch.

Hendrickson Snowshoe Emerger



Hook: TMC 2487 - #12, #14

Thread: 6/0 gray

Wing: medium dun snowshoe rabbit foot hair

Abdomen: * light version – turkey biot - Hendrickson pink, or * dark version – turkey biot - rusty brown

Thorax: gray beaver or rabbit dubbed

Trailing shuck: mallard flank dyed lemon wood duck

Beard/legs: mallard flank dyed lemon wood duck

Tying instructions for the Hendrickson Snowshoe Emerger:

Mount the light wire TMC 2487 hook in your vice and wrap the thread back to slightly past the barb of the hook. Tie in seven or eight mallard flank fibers for the trailing shuck, making the shuck not quite as long as the body. Tie in a turkey biot with the notch facing forward so the body appears to be ribbed when the biot is wrapped. Dub about half of the thorax with gray rabbit or beaver. Tie in a wing of snowshoe rabbit foot fur at the point where you stopped dubbing. Secure it well, and trim it to reach a point no farther back than over the barb of the hook. Tie in a few mallard flank barbs for the legs. Dub some more rabbit or beaver fur to finish the thorax and head, then whip finish and you are done. Coat the turkey biot with a drop or two of head cement for shine and durability. When it comes to flies, skinny bodies are better than chunky ones. When fishing this fly, only grease the wing as it works best when the body hangs below the surface film.

When you start tying this winter, remember this simple pattern and tie a few to try. You will enjoy it, I'm sure. After all, we don't have to travel far to find Hendricksons, and you just might be the lucky winner of the fall fundraiser Grand Prize and win a trip to my favorite place to fish, the West Branch of the Delaware River. ■

—Jim Greco

THE FLY FISHING SHOW



Mark Your Calendar

Join Us at the Fly Fishing Show! In just two months, the 13th annual Fly Fishing Show will take place on **January 15th and 16th 2005 at the Reckord Armory, University of Maryland, College Park, MD.**

Daily admission is just \$14 (children under 12 admitted for \$2) or \$24 for both days. As we get closer to the show we will provide more information on this year's speakers and special events. Remember to mark you calendar and as in years past "Fly Fishing is not Part of the Show, it is the Show." For more information log on to: www.flyfishingshow.com.

—Jack Dawson

HATCH TALK # 2 (CONT'D)

(Continued from Page 4)

similar to mayfly nymphs, but the former are stouter and only have two tails, while the former always have three. The later usually show only one wing case, while the nymphs of the former show two distinct wing cases.

The last major insect order important to trout fishers is the true flies or Diptera. This is a very large group, only some of which are important to anglers. Diptera have a complete metamorphosis and only **one pair of visible wings** (all other flying insects ►

Membership

THE POTOMAC-PATUXENT CHAPTER of Trout Unlimited has two membership categories: **Regular or Family** (\$15/year assessment) or **Student** (free). The Chapter operates on a September-to-September basis. The assessment is totally separate from Trout Unlimited dues. Send correspondence, change of address, or assessment payable to POTOMAC-PATUXENT TROUT UNLIMITED, PO Box 2865, Wheaton, MD 20915.

Chapter and national TU expiration dates are indicated in the mailing label as PP-0903 or NTU-0903.

have two or none) usually held flat over the body. Most larvae are maggot-like. House flies, deer flies, and mosquitoes are common members of this order. There are two families and some near relatives that are very important to trout fishers. One family is the crane flies (Tipulidae), the other family is the midges (Chironomidae). Both look superficially like mosquitoes with long, thin legs and slim bodies, but they cannot bite. Crane flies are most often a tannish brown or similar color and fly somewhat erratically with their legs dangling below and behind them. They can be confused with mayflies, as the trailing legs look like the tails of the mayflies; crane flies are from about 0.35" up to 1.5" in body length. Midges are very abundant at all times of the year and range from very minute to about 0.3" in body length; most adults come in various shades of gray, literally from black to white. Some of the worm-like midge larvae are red and called red worms. ■



— Jay Sheppard.



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