



October 2002

The Conservationist

Potomac-Patuxent Chapter

www.pptu.org

Wednesday, October 16

It's not just dirt

Dr. Ray Morgan

Univ. of Maryland Center for Environmental Science
Head, Appalachian Laboratory, Frostburg, MD

IF YOU'VE FISHED THE GUNPOWDER DURING THE PAST COUPLE OF MONTHS, you're well aware of that brown stuff in the water that makes it visually impenetrable for miles below Pretty Boy Dam. Is this just a temporary nuisance that impedes your fishing, or is it something more sinister? If you've fished the upper Patuxent over a

period of years, you're aware of the deposits that have obliterated many of the formerly deep holes that held trout. In both streams, the visual effects of sediment are obvious. Not so obvious are the effects of that sediment on all the organisms that live (or try to live) in the stream. The impact on aquatic biota, and consequently our fisheries, is the most important story hidden in the sediment.

Sediment's degradation of aquatic resources is not limited to our trout streams. Sediment is a major cause of degradation of the entire Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. The problems it poses affect all of us in many guises.

The speaker at our October 16 meeting, Dr. Ray Morgan, has devoted his career to understanding the ecology of streams in the Appalachian region. His research has focused on pollution ecology and fisheries genetics, with special emphasis on environmental impacts of acidic deposition and acid mine drainage and genetics of Appalachian stream fishes.

In his talk, Dr. Morgan will describe the effects of sediment on stream systems, including how sediment may affect salmonid populations, and the magnitude of the problem within the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Dr. Morgan's delivery of such a serious message is accompanied by an evident sense of humor that makes his presentations both enlightening and entertaining.

If you have any concerns about the future of our local fisheries, you owe it to yourself to better understand this major threat to their sustenance. Come out and learn about it. You'll be pleased that you did.

The meeting will begin at 7:00 PM with a short business meeting followed by a raffle of various fishing related items.

Annual assessment payable now

The annual assessment is now payable. Check your label—if the "PP-" date is "0902" (or there is no "PP-" and date), you can send your \$15 now, and you will not have to worry about paying at the September meeting. Some members paid twice this year, so they already show "PP-0903" as being paid for the coming year. Make checks payable to "POTOMAC-PATUXENT CHAPTER - TU" and mail to our chapter mail box. (See last page.)

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, etc.

Final mailing for those having "PP-0902" on their label will be the November issue. **We do NOT send separate mailings to remind members of this obligation. Please take action today! You will not want to miss our January and later issues and their announcements. Thank you.**

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 articles, letters, fishing news, tying tips, book reviews, and even poetry about trout fishing should be sent to the Editor as plain MS-DOS (ASCII) text or Microsoft Word attachments to e-mail messages containing brief descriptions of the attachments. Attachments received without a description will be deleted without opening.

The deadline for submissions is the twelfth (12th) day of the month prior to the month of publication

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For contributions to *The Conservationist* only

President's Column

Sometimes we pleasantly discover an example that disproves the old saying, "You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear". My most recent discovery came during a visit to the Maryland DNR trout rearing operation at the Metikki Mine in Garrett County. Metikki Mine is the largest operating coal mine in Maryland.

I was in the company of PPTU members Jim Greene and Paul Prevost. We were there at the invitation of Mike Dean, the DNR Fisheries Biologist who manages three trout-rearing operations in western Maryland, including the one at Metikki.

What we observed amazed us. When Mike greeted us, we were standing in a grassy meadow facing a placid, clear pond about an acre in surface area, and dimpled by rising trout.

Mike said that 500 feet straight down from where we were standing was a 200-acre underground lake occupying old mine tunnels. The water in the pond came from that underground lake. The process of getting water from lake to pond, and purifying it to support the growth of some 7,000 trout, was what we had come to see.

Next, Mike introduced us to the trout. Most of them were in rearing pens that Mike's small crew had constructed. The pens were upstream of the pond and lined with nets that segregated trout by age. Unlike trout raised in concrete raceways, fins on these trout were not eroded from contact with a hard, abrasive surface. These trout had the coloration, conditioning and vitality of stream-bred wild trout. Unlike wild trout, they are fed pellets, but that was the only obvious difference.

Water flowing through the pens had an almost ideal pH, negligible heavy-mineral content and the clarity of a pristine mountain stream. The apparent source of this pure water was a large pipe, out of which flowed 8,000 gallons per hour. Between the pipe and the pens was a pool where aerators added oxygen to the water.

The actual source of the water was the underground lake. Mike then showed us what takes place from the time the mine "water" reaches the surface until it enters the trout-rearing pens.

"Water" directly from the mine looks like liquid coal, and it's laden with acid and heavy minerals. First it goes into a multi-thousand gallon leaching tank where the coal and heavy metals are settled out. Then it goes to another huge tank that further

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President's Column

(Continued from page 2)

purifies and filters it, and runs it through limestone fines that increase the pH to a level the trout will tolerate.

The Metikki Mine Co. invested multi-millions of dollars in the water treatment equipment, and the mine pays the operating costs of the equipment. The transformation from liquid coal to trout-friendly water, both in scale and in content, is truly astonishing.

The cooperative functions of water treatment by the Metikki Mine Co. and trout rearing by the Maryland DNR are a prime example of how industry and government can indeed make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. If you would like to see what we saw at Metikki, let me know. Perhaps we can organize a group visit during a fishing outing.

Dave Piske

PPTU Chapter and Board Meeting Dates

THE FOLLOWING ARE THE DATES of the PPTU Chapter and Board of Directors meetings for the 2002-2003 year. The eight chapter meetings are on the third Wednesday of each month except December, June, July, and August. The ten board meetings are normally held on the first Monday of the month except when a Federal holiday falls on that Monday. All meetings are held in the Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center at 7:00 PM.

Please mark these dates on your calendars:

Chapter Meetings	Board Meetings
September 18	August 26
October 16	October 7
November 20	November 4
January 15	December 2
February 19	January 6
March 19	February 3
April 16	March 3
May 21	April 7
	May 5
	June 2

The Board of Directors meetings are open to all members of PPTU.

Future Speakers and Programs

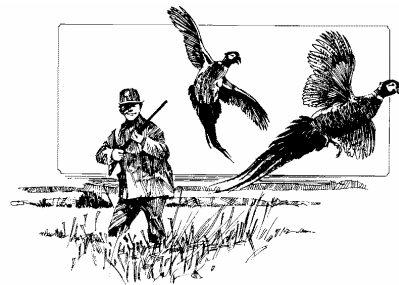
If you know of a speaker you would like to be considered for a program or if there is a subject of special interest, please contact Jon Barnes at jonarch@aol.com or (410) 965-4946.

Patuxent Report

The summer flows have been abysmal. If we do not get some serious rainfall and deep snows this coming fall and winter, we will really be hurting for water next summer. Consequently, I may suggest to the DNR that they not purchase any brown trout for the Patuxent next February if we do not see a reasonable chance of fair flows next summer. I see no real point in expending many volunteer hours to float stock many miles of the stream if the browns will not have a chance at real survival.

Water temperatures have not been the main problem on the river. In really low flows the stream does not inject sufficient oxygen into the water as it flows over most of the riffles. During the daylight, algae and other aquatic plants give off oxygen as part of photosynthesis. After dark, the very slow moving water becomes devoid of sufficient oxygen for trout as the algae and other animals consume what oxygen remains. The only pools that might harbor a holdover or wild trout are those below a good riffle that drops water a few inches or more over a ledge, log or larger rocks. The wild browns in the stream seem to be mostly located in these slightly higher gradient areas where oxygen is more likely to be found after dark.

The only good news is that the Howard Chapel bridge is finally open to traffic. It was closed for almost a full 12 months.



ANNUAL WARNING: Hunting goes through mid-winter in many section of Patuxent River State Park, so be careful and stay alert. The firearm season for deer is still a way off, but squirrel hunting starts the first Saturday of October, and dove and archery season for deer will both be continuing as this is mailed. Suggest fishing on weekdays or Sundays; otherwise, wear a bright-colored hat on Saturdays, in particular. Sunday hunting is banned in Maryland, but I have heard many firearms back in those woods on Sundays.

Jay Sheppard



Tackle and Tactic Tips

This summer there was much discussion on the PPTU list serve during those really hot days of July and August when many wanted to fish but could only do so in our minds. I have tried to bring a few of those discussion points into this issue for everyone to read and ponder. If you have other questions that you would like answered here, please let me know.

One question was if trout detect drag more easily on a fly dead drifted below the surface or on the surface? I suggested that the nymphs are moving in the THIRD dimension....depth. So a falling nymph may not look too natural to some trout under certain presentations.

Once it reaches its approximate operating depth, it then faces the differing velocities of the stream that vary with depth! Current on the very bottom might be near zero, while just a foot off the bottom, it can be raging! Meanwhile, the surface is moving more or less than the intermediate depth; usually more, but the fastest currents are not always on the surface.

Since we are always connected to our nymph with a tippet (the only way I know to get it back after casting it!), the fisher is very likely going to have drag as the fly drops deeper into the water. The connection between the surface and the nymph will ultimately pull the latter at the speed of the former. "Drag" is defined as a fly moving at a variance to the velocity and direction of the water in which it is riding.

However, we may get a reprieve on drag in really fast pocket water (such as on Big Hunting Creek or the Savage). The fish may have only a moment to see and respond to any object passing them. So the reflex response to attack may take over, and you have a fish on!

On the other hand try running any nymph deep into a slow pool of more than 5 feet and see if you get many off the bottom, let alone in the mid-

depths!??? Up at the head, yes, back in the middle, usually not!

Yes, you can sink a nymph just below the surface in a really deep pool to match a hatching insect. However, where they have two weeks to watch the nymph sink and drift past them...usually NADA! I have given up trying to sink standard nymphs in such really **deep** and clear pools. I try something or somewhere else!

Another writer suggested that he also would have bet \$\$ that trout are more discerning about surface drag than subsurface drag. He further opined that possibly the effect of a trout's having a better look at nymphs than at dries is overcome by the additional comfort they have while feeding below the surface. Since mistakes made while feeding on the surface can be so costly (think heron or osprey), trout just tend to be more cautious when feeding at the surface.

I replied that YES, he had another very important variable. The trout's comfort zone may be very important. They may take risks if there are lots of food items on the surface in the middle of a sunny day but may not want to otherwise expose themselves.

Something at mid-depth may be a better choice for them from that point, as he suggested. They may be far more willing at least to grab a potential food item well below the surface and reject it with little loss of security. What we really do not know so much about are all the refusals of nymphs down near the bottom.

I have often watched a wild trout circle a sunken nymph as it drifts back to me. Clearly they are interested but wary about taking it. It is a lot easier to see refusals of a dry fly.

However, when we cast a nymph 40 feet and into some deep water, who knows how many trout see the nymph, move initially toward it, and then refuse it OR do inhale it for a moment without disturbing the indicator or leader laying on the surface????

Nobody said this was a simple sport and catching trout on a fly would be easy. All these complications add to the challenge of fooling a trout and is one of the main attractions to the sport for so many of us.

Stay tuned for more gleanings from the PPTU list serve discussions.

Jay Sheppard



East-West Connections

Last winter, I was offered an opportunity to attend a work-related seminar in Denver during the first two weeks in June. My first thought was "Great, I'll have a chance to do some western fishing". I had never been fly fishing beyond our local waters, so I was glad to have some time to educate myself and get prepared in the months before my trip.

What better place to start than with Trout Unlimited! In no time, I found the excellent web page of the West Denver chapter. After a thorough read of their site and related links, I still needed a little more direction; there was just too much to choose from.

So I sent an email asking for some help to narrow down the list a bit. In short order, I got a very informative reply from one of their members, Dave Shickle. He suggested that one of my best bets would be the gold medal waters of the South Platte running through Cheeseman Canyon near Deckers. Dave was my first "East-West" connection; he used to live around here, and he told me that his wife caught her first trout on the Patuxent.

I ended up booking a guide through The Flyfisher, Ltd. in Denver. By chance they set me up with Greg Cunningham, who along with guiding, also works for Brookside Flies, a major supplier across the country. When I told him where I was from, he started rattling off the names of all the shops around here. He also knows Jay Sheppard from marketing that most famous fly, the Patuxent Special. "East-West" connection number two!

Greg turned out to be an excellent guide, and he certainly knew what he was doing. Cheeseman Canyon is a popular destination, and we had plenty of neighbors, but if it started to get too crowded, Greg always could find another piece of empty water to fish...and he had me on fish when other guided anglers were getting blanked.

I guess I hooked around 10-12, mostly browns with the odd rainbow, average size about 15". Most everything went for a #20 Black Beauty trailed behind a brown San Juan worm attractor.

What was a new concept to me, was the use of two strike indicators, placed about 6-8" apart. I found this system very handy in monitoring my drift in a swift current.

Aside from the fishing, the scenery was impressive, the weather mild, and the company pleasant.

All the right ingredients to make memorable my first western fishing trip. It's hard to believe that the very next day, this corner of paradise would be choked with smoke from the Hayman fire.

My wife joined me for the final days of my stay in Colorado, and we headed up to Rocky Mountain National Park for some hiking adventure. It was here that I encountered my final "East-West" connection.

We were chatting with one of the park rangers, and mentioned that we were from Maryland. He told us that his daughter lives in our state and he always enjoys the area when he comes out to visit her. Perhaps being a little too humble, I agreed, but replied we didn't have such striking mountains or the beautiful native Greenback cutthroats that we had found in the lakes and streams of the park.

"True" he remarked, "But you can't get a decent crabcake around here."

Joe Robinson



Quote of the Month

"Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day.
Teach him to fly fish and you sell him rods,
reels, and equipment for a lifetime."

*Sandee Middleton
From FFF ClubWire*

Trout Unlimited Members:

Renew your membership at PPTU

Last year National TU announced that it would accept renewals of memberships sent through the chapter. In return, the chapter receives a rebate of \$5 for each renewal processed.

We hope every member will bring their membership renewal notices to the chapter meetings. We will accept cash, check (payable to TROUT UNLIMITED), or credit cards for these renewals. The chapter will take it from there.

If you forget your renewal notice, we only need to have your membership card so we can obtain your member number.

Help support the chapter by bringing your next annual renewal to the monthly meeting.

The Big Old Trout

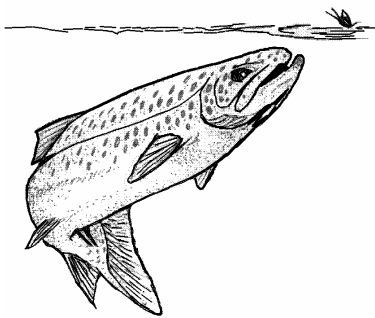
My wife and I ventured up to Codorus Creek on a overcast March 9th day of this year to fish for my 51st birthday. We met only three other fly fishers who had fished from early that morning until about noon. They had all gotten skunked.

I went out and tried some of the pools they had and managed with the aid of a very small blue winged olive nymph to cajole a few browns to hit. One of these I was convinced was at least 16 inches, but after yelling to my wife that I'd gotten a "huge" brown, I measured it at 13 inches.

Of course I always exaggerate, and there was no way to record my "gargantuan" fish because I had run out of film in my camera.

I was forced to write this poem as a way of recording the landing of this monster, and felt that perhaps *The Conservationist* would like to publish the memory of this behemoth.

The poem goes like this:



The Big Old Trout

Under the twisted roots of the Sycamore he
must have been lying
Like some uncle brooding in the quiet waters
of his den.

He did not see me towering over the bank
With my wand of a green rod poised for
the attack.

Holding onto the Sycamore trunk
I executed the upswing casts onto the water.

And, he had to think: "What a pea sized nymph
is bouncing over the rocks, whisker like
in the current."

"Is it worth the effort of my red spotted sides
to swing out and nab the bug, as its bubbles
trail behind it?"

Then the surge of tunneling into the current;
The palpable gills sucking in the midget
counterfeit.

With what rage does his red fin row now!
Headed first for the weed bed, then for the
very roots of his den.

Swinging up and back into the current
He saws the line; He flips sausage like
On the water's viscous surface,
Sounding like snorting liquid.

Then to have him in my hands,
Peering at his yellow eye;
Dislodging the minute hook
From his pink tongue.

The muscle of a snake in his body
Fins through the amber water.

Letting the current take him back.

The roots of the Sycamore long displaced
As an adequate home for the likes of him.

Jed Feffer
March 16th, 2002

New address for contributions to *The Conservationist*

BECAUSE OF THE LARGE AMOUNT of spam I receive on my regular e-mail address, I have opened a separate address for contributions to *The Conservationist*:

theconservationist@juno.com

Please use this address for all articles and other contributions to *The Conservationist*.

For all other correspondence, please use my regular e-mail address:

johnwcolburn@juno.com

The policy about identifying any e-mail attachments with a brief statement about the contents and your name still applies. Otherwise I'll delete your message without opening any attachment.

John Colburn

Three Weeks in Alaska—Self-guided

Glenn, my fishing buddy, and I had always wanted to fish Alaska. We knew that to stay at a lodge would be cost prohibitive and restrictive. We wanted this to be an adventure of a lifetime and planned to do it in a way that would not break us financially.

We started the planning stages over a year in advance. Our 49th state has a lot to offer the visiting fly fisher. We started our planning around the best place to catch a variety of species followed by weather considerations.

The Alaskan rainbows were the much anticipated part of the trip with Salmon getting second billing. We began by researching the best possible rivers that would give us an opportunity to catch both rainbows and salmon. The possibility of other species would only add to the experience.

We poured over all the information we could gather on places and times. We narrowed the time frame down to the last week in June through the second week in July.

Weather-wise this was reportedly the best time for fair weather in the locations we would visit. Don't be fooled—plan for extremes and you won't be disappointed.

The time frame worked fine as Glenn had a real hankering to catch King Salmon on a Fly Rod. I had a 10 weight sitting in the closet unused and look forward to its unveiling. The fact that the species is the largest of the salmonids added to the excitement.

To keep expenses down this was a do-it-yourself trip. We booked the flights, made vehicle rental arrangements, hotel accommodations and float trip booking. I tied over 700 flies for the trip.

We bought coach tickets to Alaska, though the airline was not able to process us in time to make a flight so we actually flew 1st class to Alaska. If you can afford it, it's the only way to fly. This was pre-September 11th, and they allowed us to carry our two piece 9'6" rods on with us.

Once, we got to Alaska we picked up a four wheel drive vehicle and utilized Alaska's road system for a week. We brought a 6 man tent with a full fly for sleeping accommodations. Camping cost from ten to fifteen dollars a night.

We proceeded to catch King Salmon and Rainbows within walking distance of the Parks Highway.

We chose not to cook the first week. Eating at local

establishments sampling the cuisine and atmosphere of the locals proved most enjoyable. We even washed clothes at a laundromat and got a hot showers while we waited for our cloths to be done. Ahh, car camping at its finest!

For the second part of our journey, we had invested in quality clothing. Though we used it the first week, the polypropylene socks, long johns, fleece jackets and pants, breathable shirts, breathable waders and Goretex™ jacket proved to be invaluable.

We experienced it all, eighty degree days, sunny with out a cloud, and fifty-six hours of steady rain in the fifties with nights in the upper thirties.

For this to be an adventure we wanted to get off the beaten path. The only other road ways are Alaska's water ways. We planned to do a 76 mile float down one river into a another.

We talk to an outfitter for put in and take out spots and bought topographical maps of the river. We also invested in a GPS and down loaded the topo maps for the sections of the rivers we were floating. This was an invaluable tool as it provided us with water speed. The river had changed quite a bit since the topos were made.

The rivers we chose to float were class II and III. We stopped and fishing up feeder streams for salmon, rainbows and grayling. The trip normally was 7 days with a guide. Since we were guided ourselves, we chose to take our time and do some exploring over the course of 12 days.

The best part was staying at a campsite multiple nights. Breaking down and setting up camp daily was only detracting from our fishing time and three weeks in Alaska is not enough.

We saw only one other person on our float trip though Alaska's wildlife put in appearances daily. We saw several bears and had no problems though Glenn had a close encounter. I can't stress enough to take the necessary precautions because Alaska is bear country!

To make a long story short, we caught King Salmon, had opportunities to catch Sockeye and Chums. I must confess I hooked both but on a six weight I never had a chance. Then there were the Dolly Varden, Arctic Char and Grayling. We spent several days casting dry flies to grayling, some broke the 20" mark. Then there is the Alaskan Rainbow. They are not the same species of fish that

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**Fish stories
Poetry
and more!**

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.

First time visitors receive two free issues of this publication.

Three Weeks in Alaska—Self-guided

(continued from page 7)

we catch around here. I can't wait to go back. If nothing else, I will go back for the rainbows!

The cost was under \$4000 a piece including airfare, car rental, raft rental, float plane transportation and hotel room accommodations for three nights. The hotel was a great place for a hot shower and clean sheets. A delight after almost two weeks in the bush.

Do it yourself guided float trip may not be advisable for everyone but with a little planning you can fish Alaska and keep things reasonable.

I plan on going back in the next year or two. I expect that it will cost us less next time since part of that cost was on gear that we can use next time.

This time we will do two floats splitting up the twelve days and spend each of the three weeks in different parts of the state.

I have a feeling that steelhead or silver salmon may be on the itinerary!

Tim Pembroke



FIRST CLASS MAIL

**It's Election Season!
If you don't vote,
You don't count!**



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