

February 2008

# *The Conservationist*

Potomac-Patuxent Chapter

www.pptu.org

## Maryland Trout Rivers - Video Presentation

**The February 20 chapter meeting** will feature a video presentation on Maryland Trout Rivers. Most of us have fished several Maryland trout streams. This month's presentation will give us an opportunity to see those streams from the viewpoint of an angling photographer. His video captures the essence of Maryland's trout rivers, including hatches, fishing, fish, and scenery of several of our state's excellent trout streams.

Photographer, angler, and guide Jason du Pont has synthesized a video comprised of footage from his video shorts seen on the Backwater Angler website along with new and previously unseen footage. Jason's talk will provide narration and details on what is important in fishing in different seasons since the video encompasses a year on the rivers. The primary focus will be on the Gunpowder River. However, the Savage River and North Branch of the Potomac will receive some attention as well. Our presenter is a native of Southeastern Pennsylvania, is a Towson University graduate, a fly fisher for seventeen years, and a guide for four years. He has been published in the Baltimore Sun, Eastern Fly Fishing, and American Angler Magazine. Come hear and see this interesting presentation. *By Nick Weber* ■

### Maryland Trout Rivers - Video Presentation

*Wednesday, February 20*

*7:00 PM*

*(see bottom of page for directions)*

**\*\*Guest Presenter\*\***

***Jason du Pont***

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### Monthly Chapter 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, then go past Holy Cross Hospital and 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 in a Microsoft Word attachment. 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

By Bob Dietz

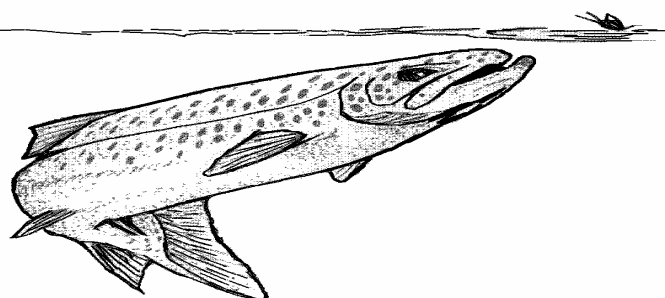
Everybody talks about the weather ...

I had planned use this column to remind you that spring is not really that far off and the cabin fever won't last too much longer. With the kind of weather we've have had so far this winter (I write in mid-January) you might not have had cabin fever at all. There's been no meteorological excuse not to be out fishing.

Even if weather continues, however, maybe we should just pretend it's 12 below outside for a few days. If you're at all like me, you'd rather be fishing in nice weather than tying flies or organizing your vest. I've noticed that in past, the vast majority of the flies I tie during the year are done in January or February. That usually means I have more than enough little black stone flies, and if I'm able to convince myself that April isn't that far off, I sometimes have an adequate supply of Hendricksons. Each year I promise my self that I'm going to keep up the pace for the rest of year; I'll do sulfurs when it gets to be closer to May. Of course, I never do; I end up buying sulfurs for that big trip over Memorial Day. Like I said, I'd rather be fishing than tying. If winter would just last a few weeks longer ...

Even if you don't tie, that "all winter to get ready" is shorter than you think. Take the time now to put away the flies that have been sitting in your drying patch all year. Those that used to be dry flies and are completely matted down can be reconstituted over a steam kettle, but you have to do it. Do you have enough tippet material, and is it fresh? How about shot? Now is the time to do an inventory.

And while you're at it, consider washing your vest. Maybe I'll even get around to that this year. After all, I have all winter to prepare and it's 12 below outside ... ■



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# January 2008 Outing Report

By Dennis Covert

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The January outing was to the Yellow Breeches in Pennsylvania. As I loaded up the truck and headed to the rendezvous point to pick up Will Amland the temperature was already 52 degrees and it wasn't even 7:30 yet. The morning air was filled with the scent of thawing earth, thick enough to taste and lent a spring-like feel to the outing instead of the normal midwinter chill of January.

Turning into the parking lot at the Yellow Breeches I spied Carl Smolka at the other end, hatchback open and just pulling on his waders. As Will and I sorted gear from the back of my truck Jim Keil materialized. On the drive up Will said he saw on the web the stream had been stocked just a couple of days before, news that had me hurrying to get rigged up and on the water just a little bit quicker.

I had tied some extra small stone flies in response to the latest report on the Yellow Breeches Fly Shop web site. Bent over the vice I fantasized about fish bumping each other out of the feeding lanes to intercept them. On stream this proved to be pure fantasy, and after a dejecting hour or more of drifting assorted sizes of stonefly nymphs with different midge color/size combinations as droppers without so much as even a glance from a trout, had me coming up for air and walking the run to see how others were faring. Carl had broken the ice by hooking a fish on a #20 black Zebra midge and 7X tippet, and Jim Keil said he saw some young fellas pull out a pig on a San Juan worm just below the outlet tube.

By noon temps were in the 60's, and insects began to appear on stone wall bordering the run. Exposed to the heat of the sun, midges as large as #18 and baetis #20-#18 hung in the light just above the riffles in the steam. Trout in the ultra clear water below could be seen grubbing the bottom then with short bursts of speed intercept something subsurface. Simultaneously with all this aquatic activity, little black stoneflies crawled around on bank side vegetation and down my neck, occasionally making me to stop fishing to dig out the more ambitious ones from under my collar.

Looking down stream I saw Jim Greene had joined the group and was working a run just below me. >

Then Jim Keil wandered back down stream to say he had gotten two rainbows, one on a red serendipity, the other on something else up by the pipe, and decided he had earned his lunch. I told him I'd pass, I hadn't hooked anything yet and I was still more interested in catching a fish than eating my sandwich.

The fish showing a total lack of interest in my flies had me out of ideas. I eventually tied on a #20 Griffith's gnat after seeing what I thought was a little rise. I didn't even know the fish was on until I raised the rod to mend line. At first I thought "Oh, just a little feller" then he started ripping off line making my little 7 foot 3 weight flex all the way into the handle. I coaxed him back to water in front of me twice and even had the net down, before another run through the fast water popped the fly out. Even so, it was the first fish of the year and it did feel good!

Throughout the afternoon we hop-scotched up and down the run. Will and Jim Keil both made forays down into the main stem, but in spite of the warm weather and a bunch of bugs the trout didn't turn on. Working my way back to the scene of my lost fish, Will waved me up to where he was, below the outlet where 30-40 fish congregated in a swirling eddy. Three of them already succumbing to Will's root beer crystal meth that he thought might be representative of a potato chip hatch, concluding this after seeing the fish react to something he thought came through the tube from the lake. The rest of the afternoon Will and I perched on the wall above the pod, changing flies and hooking one now and then. Jim and Carl stopped by to bid us farewell. I hooked and lost one each on crystal meth, a sow bug, and a deer hair cress bug, before finally landing my first of the year on a cress bug. Will wandered off for a short while to try a caddis on some near by water. It didn't entice any trout, but he reported it did fell a trophy Breeches sucker in a classic rise. Then, joining me back at the outlet a little later he landed his fourth brown of the day.

In all we tried too many flies to list, but if they were midge or stoneflies, dry or nymph, meth in #12-16, or beadhead patterns size #20 or smaller it's a good bet it saw water. The fishing is always good even if the catching is not. But everyone agreed that for a January outing that felt more like April or May, it was the little fix we all were looking for. The next outing is to Big Hunting Creek, MD on February 23. Anyone needing info can contact Dennis by phone at 410-740-833 or at [denniscovert@hotmail.com](mailto:denniscovert@hotmail.com).

## PPTU MEMBERSHIP FEES AND BENEFITS

Some chapter members have requested an explanation of the fees and benefits. The only "membership" fee is to national TU for \$35 per year. So if you are a member of national TU, then you are also a member of our chapter, the Potomac – Patuxent Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

The ASC or Annual Supporting Contribution, is the contribution our chapter asks for from each member as an annual contribution of \$15 (which is going up to \$20 after the May 2008 meeting). Members who make this contribution get the Conservationist (either print form or in a timely manner on the web), get discounts if they attend our fly tying class, plus discounts on books, etc. For reasons dealing with mandatory clauses in our by-laws, the ASC is not called dues or a membership fee, and the Conservationist is not called a newsletter. Members are still members even if they do not make an ASC.

There is no "subscription" to the printed newsletter. The only newsletter we publish is an annual one, which is also on our website. It is freely available there to chapter and non-chapter members. Members who make an ASC can receive our publication as a side benefit. To some, this might not make sense, but after hundreds of hours of discussion last year, this was the best we could do to be in compliance with the National rules.



## PPTU MENTOR PROGRAM: BEGINNERS AND BEYOND

One on one stream side fly fishing instruction is available to PPTU members. Participants must show commitment by having waders or hippers, a rod and reel outfit, and leader.

Discussions will include equipment, knots, casting, flies, dry fly and nymphing techniques, entomology, reading water, conservation, etc. at nearby streams. Members who have not made an Annual Supporting Contribution will be asked to contribute \$15. Contact Ken Bowyer at 301-627-7154 or e-mail [kenbowyer@comcast.net](mailto:kenbowyer@comcast.net).

## Patuxent Report

By Jay Sheppard

**H**unting season will continue through much of February in some sections of the Park, so be careful. Early stockings are expected to start sometime in the last half of February for the Middle Patuxent Delayed Harvest section, the flies-only section of the main Patuxent below Brighton Dam, and the no-kill, no-bait section of the Patuxent special trout management area above Rt. 97.

If you have not helped in the past and want to help stock trout this year, call or email me (301-725-5559 or [jmsheppar@aol.com](mailto:jmsheppar@aol.com)) BEFORE the February meeting or sign up at the January or February monthly meetings. If you have not helped on this activity, you must have chest waders and be able to help on a weekday. Although this is strenuous work, it is very rewarding, as you may get to see 1.5–2.5 miles of stream and some of the trails. Those already on my E-mail list need not contact me, unless they have a new E-mail address since last March. ■

## Spring PPTU Outings Schedule

### February 23 — Big Hunting Creek, MD

Enjoy getting started on the 2008 MD trout season by joining in the outing to Big Hunting Creek in Frederick County, MD. This stream has a lot to offer as close as it is to our area. It has slow runs, tailing riffles, plunge pools, and rapids, but is a small stream with easy access from Rt. 77 which runs along it. This time of year you may encounter the small black stonefly hatch during the mid-day, even if there is snow on the ground!

### March 22 — Gunpowder, MD, One Fly Contest

This will be a great tune-up for the spring season and the Gunpowder is another stream close to our area. The outing will feature the always fun one fly contest, which will test your skills as an angler and make for friendly streamside competition. Reigning champ Nick Weber will be on hand to defend his title. Talk to Dennis for contest rules.

For more information or to sign up for an outing, contact Dennis Covert, the Outings Coordinator, by email at [denniscovert@hotmail.com](mailto:denniscovert@hotmail.com) or phone at 410-740-8337.

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# Tackle and Tactic Tips

BY JAY SHEPPARD

Last month I discussed setting the drag on your reel to better fight fish. I have subsequently fished with a couple of buddies. Both had some questions, and I made one intriguing observation. The observation was that after fighting a large rainbow in the 2 lb. range my partner must have missed his morning cup of coffee: he got the tip of the fly line just inside the tip of the rod and then went hand over hand up his rod to try to hand line the fish to the net using only the leader, which had a 6X tippet. Needless to say, the fish broke him off and took his fly. Hand lining is clearly useful only when the strength of the weakest connection is many times the weight and strength of the fish.

One question was how to fight a large fish on light tippet in a river once it got downstream of your position. Under optimum circumstances, one would want the fish to always stay upstream of you so that it is fighting you and the current at the same time. Keeping them upstream of you is the main problem and often hard to do. I have tried giving them almost total slack while they are still upstream so that they face the current and that has worked a few times. Pointing the rod in a direction that might lead the nose of the fish into the current is sometimes workable, but once they get headed downstream at high speed, then they usually succeed in getting below you. If they are in heavy or even moderate current on a light tippet, then you face a number of problems. As Lefty Kreh pointed out to me some decades ago, the trout no longer has to expend any energy to just hang off the end of the line—it may even 'go to sleep.' What a break for it! So how do you get the fish to your net when you would likely lose it if you just directly reeled it upstream and into the net?

One could very slowly reel the fish upstream and hope there would be no sudden shock to break off the trout. This process would not exhaust the fish to the point of later death from a buildup of lactic acid unless the water temperature was above ~68°F. However, I consider this the last option. The first would be to get to shore if you can, and move down the side of the stream to get below the fish. This will also get the trout into slower water in most cases, which really helps. If I cannot get to shore easily, then the next tactic I use is to point the rod to one side or the other, with me facing directly downstream. At the moment the fish is ►

hanging directly downstream of the rod tip, I reverse the rod direction and go to the other side. With a 9' rod, this means the rod tip (and the trout) cover a distance of about 20' from side to side. The trout has to swim to get to this new position and, therefore, burn energy. Do this ten or so times and you can usually wear out the salmonid.

The next tactic is to go downstream to end up on the other side of the trout while leaving it in the same spot in the stream. With the rod pointed quartering upstream with a few feet of flyline left outside the rod tip, I'm about even with the fish. Then I circle downstream below the trout to try to net it. This may not be best for landing a large fish on light tippet in moving water, but it can work. ■

## Online Delivery of *The Conservationist*

Members who have made an ASC for the current year or just joined Trout Unlimited and are assigned to PPTU, have the option to access the complete current issue of *The Conservationist* online. This saves PPTU the printing and mailing costs and allows members to access the issue before it is usually mailed. Send your request for access to [pptu-owner@yahoogroups.com](mailto:pptu-owner@yahoogroups.com) and indicate the email address you wish to use for this purpose and whether you want to continue or suspend mail delivery of the paper copy. A special listserver is used to send an announcement with the link for each new issue. Those who request online access will be sent an email alerting them to be on the lookout for an invitation to join this special listserver. This will be followed by an email from [pptu@yahoogroups.com](mailto:pptu@yahoogroups.com) that contains the official invitation.

**You must reply** to this second email to accept the invitation and be placed on this list. No reply is interpreted as a declined invitation. Spam filters may intercept either or both of these messages. Please check your Junk Mail or Spam folders if your invitation doesn't arrive normally. **Failure to accept the invitation for any reason means you won't be included when the announcements go out, and you will not have access to the new edition.** As always, any problems you encounter can be reported to [pptu-owner@yahoogroups.com](mailto:pptu-owner@yahoogroups.com) and we'll do our best to help. But please help us by being diligent in responding to the invitation. We hope you find this new distribution channel useful and effective. And remember, complete past editions as well as the first page of the current edition are available at our [www.pptu.org](http://www.pptu.org) website.

### NOTICE TO PPTU MEMBERS

Remember to return your videos and books on time. Many fellow members would like the opportunity to rent the books, tapes and DVDs that you rented the month before. Late fees will be applied if they are not returned by the next chapter meeting.



### Renewals for TU Members

Existing members should be renewing their membership to TU by any of the following methods:

- Membership Renewal Statement that is mailed to them,
- Call Customer Service at 1-800-834-2419 to renew by phone, or
- Online at [www.tu.org](http://www.tu.org).

For online renewals, click on the **Join/Renew** tab at top, then click on the "Renew Membership" link on the left. You will need to know your login name and password.

## ***Tying Bench & Angler's Corner*** By Nick Weber

### ***Tying Bench***

This month's fly is the Three-Hackle. This easy to tie and productive fly is a favorite of our own Charlie Gelso since it can imitate many things, including the tiny black winter stonefly. Stop by the Tying Bench and see Charlie tie this important pattern. Charlie is the co-author of *Guide to Maryland Trout Fishing*, *The Catch-and-Release Streams*. Copies are available at the meeting. Have Charlie autograph one for you!

### ***Angler's Corner***

Stop by to chat with Dennis Covert about the recent trip to the Yellow Breeches as well as upcoming outings to Big Hunting Creek and the Gunpowder Falls River. Dennis is also interested in suggestions about new water for our outings. So don't hesitate to chat with him about an idea for an outing.



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