



February 2010

# *The Conservationist*

Potomac-Patuxent Chapter

## *Tips, Techniques, and Tactics to Become a Better Angler*

*February 17, 2010*

William Heresniak, of Eastern Trophies Fly Fishing, will be speaking at our February Chapter meeting. As titled above, he will show you the techniques and tactics that he uses and teaches to his clients. His presentation will include the following; video footage of how to hook and land more trophy fish, what attributes make a fly effective to catch trophy fish and other tips, secrets and suggestions from a guide. In addition to the presentation, he will have custom flies for sale at discount prices, free DVD's, fishing music CD's, and a reproduction or two of the fish which have been caught on the North Branch of the Potomac River including the elusive Tiger Musky. He will also be offering trips at discount prices which will include a donation back to the chapter from Eastern Trophies Fly Fishing.

With over 30 years of fishing experience, William has been guiding since 2003. With a professional background in education, athletics and coaching, guiding only comes naturally. William has landed endless numbers of trout over 20" and has helped numerous clients catch trout, small mouth bass and tiger musky up to 43-inches long. His efficient techniques, and focused style of fly fishing will not only help you bring larger fish to your net, but give you a greater respect for the size of trout that inhabit the waters of the Mid Atlantic.

Contact William at [www.easterntrophies.com](http://www.easterntrophies.com), [william@easterntrophies.com](mailto:william@easterntrophies.com) or 571.213.2570

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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.

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## President's Column

### New Years Resolution's

I enjoy celebrating the New Year. I don't mean staying up and watching the ball drop or cracking open a bottle of bubbly. I enjoy celebrating a new beginning. The New Year is just that - a new year. It's a reason to change, to get rid of old habits, and to turn over a new leaf. I never tell anyone about resolutions that I have made because I never keep them. However, with perhaps a similar mind set, I always make and set personal goals and strive to achieve them through out the year.

So whether they are called personal goals or New Years resolutions why not try to start the New Year with some goals, ideas, or whatever you call them to set a new course, direction or focus that could be fun and give yourself and perhaps others some pleasure.

Whatever they are called, it is clear that the goals or resolutions probably would include not only some that affect you personally, but also others that focus on other people in a positive way or outcome.

Why not make a goal or resolution list and place it on the refrigerator, your desk or night stand, somewhere you will see it daily, and just try to achieve a few of them.

Here are a few ideas I may try.

- Go on a PPTU Chapter outing. You will make new friends by doing this and actually make time to fish.
- Take a youngster fishing. If your kids are grown up and have children of their own take all of them. If that's not possible, ask a trusted neighbor if their children would be interested.
- Take a friend fishing or call a friend and make a date to go fishing at some favorite stream wherever it may be.
- Take up fly tying or rod building. If you already have, tie something new and challenging. Buy a bamboo blank and get into cane.
- Volunteer to do your part in your Trout Unlimited Chapter. There are plenty of projects that could use your help and probably some that you might find interesting.

Now go and just DO IT! Happy New Year.

Larry Vawter

## **Early Meeting Segments begin at 7 pm**

### **Tying Bench**

This month will find Jordan Gregg tying his glass body caddis. Jordan has used his pattern effectively on the North Branch of the Potomac, Savage River, Gunpowder River and more from spring until fall. Jordan says that the great thing about this pattern is that it can be fished as a nymph, wet fly, or an emerger depending on how you dress the fly. He ties it in a number of colors and sizes to match the hatch anglers see at various times on our streams. We all must see this as he says - fairly easy tie. Sounds like a pattern that is a must try this coming year.

### **Angler's Corner**

Come by the Anglers Corner and check with Dennis Covert on the planned outing to Big Hunting Creek 2/27 or the one fly contest scheduled for Beaver Creek on 3/27. You can also hear the tales from the recent outing to the Yellow Breeches. Dennis Covert, our Outings Chair, and undoubtedly some of his cohorts will be telling all about what to consider in the way of patterns and gear. It should not take much convincing why you really should consider these fishing experiences with some of our fellow fishers. Have an idea for an outing, share it with Dennis.

### **Help for Stocking Needed**

Starting in mid-February PPTU helps DNR stock many of our local streams. If you have not helped in the past, this is an excellent way to learn more about a stream, as we pull the float boxes up or down the trout streams. This is a weekday activity (sorry no weekends) and chest waders are required by all participants. If you are not already on my email list, drop me a note: (jmsheppar@aol.com) or sign up at the next monthly meeting. As soon as we learn the stocking dates, we post them to the email list to see who can help on those dates. We float stock three local streams: upper Patuxent above Triadelphia Reservoir, Patuxent below the reservoir, and the Middle Patuxent in south Columbia.

*Have an idea for an article, or something you'd like to share with other chapter members? Material is welcome (and cheerfully accepted). The deadline is the 12th of the month for the next month's issue. Please send articles, ideas, etc, preferably in MS Word or in the body of the e-mail to [earthmomjo@att.net](mailto:earthmomjo@att.net).*

## **PPTU MENTOR PROGRAM BEGINNERS & BEYOND**

Ken Bowyer and Tim Pawlowitz provide one-on-one streamside fly fishing instruction to PPTU members. Participants must show commitment by having waders or hipsters, 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. Instruction will be tailored to individual needs. Members who have not made an Annual Supporting Contribution will be asked to contribute \$20.

Contact:

Ken 301-627-7154 or e-mail [kenbowyer@verizon.net](mailto:kenbowyer@verizon.net).

Tim at 410-203-0369 or e-mail [tpawlowi@msn.com](mailto:tpawlowi@msn.com).

### **New Membership Secretary Needed**

The chapter still needs help from someone familiar with MS Access to assist us in maintaining our membership/ mailing list. If you are familiar with that software and want to help us, please contact Jay Sheppard (jmsheppar@aol.com) for more information. This database is one of the main tools of the chapter in keeping in touch with our 400-500 members. Simple data entry and some simple edit checks are about all that are required to do this invaluable work for the chapter.

### **Address changes? Moved?**

Please keep us up to date on your addresses. We have saved a lot of money in recent years by using email to alert members that their Annual Supporting Contribution is expiring or some other important information. We frequently have the Post Office returning undeliverable copies of the Conservationist from members who have moved without letting us know. Send an email to Jay Sheppard (jmsheppar@aol.com) with any changes.

### **MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL**

Existing members should renew their TU membership using any of the following methods:

Mail your Renewal Statement to TU National

Call Customer Service at 1-800-834-2419

Navigate to [www.tu.org](http://www.tu.org). Click **Join/Renew** tab at top, then click on the "Renew Membership" link on the left. You will need your login name and password.

## Tackle and Tactic Tips

Winter fishing can be fun, if you are prepared for both the changes in fishing tactics and the elements. Having fished in weather where the air temps never reached even 30° in the afternoon, one must be prepared for penetrating cold. Layers of clothes are of course the best. I use breathable waders and have stood in water for hours that was at the freezing point. Multiple layers on the legs are a real must for starters. Fingerless gloves, good thick socks, and something to keep the head warm are all very important, too. Wool shirts, jackets and pants really help if you fall into the water.

Keep your chest waders cinched up tight for two good reasons: keeping water out if you fall into it and keeping the warmer air trapped inside even if you do not get wet. Have a real plan of immediate action if you or a buddy fall into the river—how far to the car, etc. Hypothermia is a real problem when we dunk our bodies into ice water. Totally immersed in such water the average person can only survive a matter of maybe 10 minutes before losing consciousness. Moved out into the open, below freezing air does little to stop the hypothermia from setting in. Being prepared may save a life.

Fishing tactics dramatically change, as the water descends past the 40° mark and reaches the freezing point! Trout easily move about in such cold water, but their movements and reaction times have slowed considerably. They are still a lot faster than the bait fish, which are easy prey for them, as the minnows can barely move in the freezing water. We have to use streamers and similar attractors like the very slow bait fish and crayfish they might imitate. We might use 1–3 foot strips of the fly line or a fast retrieve on the spinning reel last October, but now we have to practically fish everything dead slow, almost dead drift. Just a slight glimmer of life will attract the trout's attention, but if you move the lure or fly too fast the trout will not chase it more than a foot or two. A simple swinging streamer, wooly bugger or Patuxent Special works well.

Nymphs always work, too, especially if they can be dead drifted into the slower waters or kept on the bottom for a longer period than you would in warmer times. It is very possible on a warm day well into the 40s to see trout rising to tiny blue-winged olives or black winter stone flies. Midges are active at almost any temperature above freezing, as are the stoneflies.

Work the pools and not the fast pockets or runs. Trout will not hang in the fast currents like they did last spring or fall. There is simply not enough food coming past them to keep their energy levels up. Stick to the deepest pools and work the side eddies or the shoreline. Do not forget to check behind the larger boulders or logs, too. If the water is clear, watch for schools of suckers hugging the bottom. Where there are suckers there are other bait fish close by, and near the bait fish will be some trout lurking to rush into the school every few days to grab another meal—unless it spots an injured one. If your offering imitates a sick minnow or crayfish, then you are more likely to hook up with the trout.

So slow down all retrieves, have a serious plan if you fall into the water, carry a cell phone in the OFF setting, and dress warm. One last caution—tell someone where you are going! You will find the streams to be deserted. Go fishing this winter, even in the snow!

Jay Sheppard



## Just an Ordinary Day

by Reed Hellman (© 2010 used with permission)

An ordinary spring day on Conococheague Creek, near Shippensburg, PA: A few guys with fly rods wade the flow, working against currents stiffened by last night's rain. The very ordinariness of the scene makes it so extraordinary, because those ordinary looking young men casting to the elusive trout are all disabled active duty servicemen and veterans, receiving treatment at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

"This is Project Healing Waters," said Darv Stutz, organizer of the fishing trip. "We go to military and VA [Department of Veterans Affairs] hospitals and use them as a focal point for a fly fishing program. We teach the boys fly tying and casting, then take them out fishing."

Project Healing Waters started early in 2005 and serves military personnel who have been wounded, injured, or disabled. Fly fishing and fly tying aid their physical and emotional recovery by introducing or rebuilding skills and giving them opportunities to get out the hospital environment. Initially focused on the National Capitol area, the Project has expanded to 60 programs nationwide.

Bill Johnston, a Vietnam War veteran and double amputee, fishes perched in his wheelchair. "I really didn't know how before," he said as he retrieved his cast. "Groups like this are important. The program has done so much for so many of the guys." Johnston joined the program at Walter Reed and has since traveled with the group to Montana. Riding in the horns of a drift boat, he caught trout on the turbulent Yellowstone.

The Project brings local instructors to teach basic fly fishing, fly casting, and fly tying for the beginners and for those with prior experience who are adapting to new abilities. Participants do not pay for the instruction, activities, or equipment, including equipment to accommodate any special needs.

"It's the best thing that has happened to me," said Staff Sergeant Ryan Ferre, knee deep in the rain muddied Conococheague. He had been trying to work a trout holding under a branch hanging low into the creek. Ferre got involved a year ago when he began attending the weekly classes conducted on the lawn at Walter Reed. Since then, he has traveled to Colorado, Spruce Creek, PA and Mossy Creek, VA.

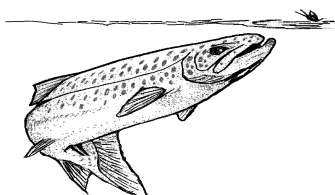
But, like the other wounded soldiers thrashing the Conococheague on that spring morning, he was not having any luck. His wound—a crushed vertebra and serious head injury—was not the problem; there was just too much water.

Lunch waited for the anglers and their "ghillies", volunteers who literally stood by in the water. Only the servicemen had licenses to fish that stretch of creek, but volunteers from local outdoors clubs and Falling Springs Trout Unlimited had all pitched in. That was the way that founder Ed Nicholson, a 30-year Navy veteran, had conceived the Project: As a communal effort by local outdoors people to share with injured service men and women, the therapeutic aspects of fly fishing.

"And, getting out with a group like this," said Bill Johnston, "You know you are going to have a good day."

For more information about Project Healing Waters visit [www.projecthealingwaters.org](http://www.projecthealingwaters.org).

Reed Hellman is a professional writer living in Alberton, Maryland. Visit his Website at [www.reedhellmanwordsmith.com](http://www.reedhellmanwordsmith.com), or email your questions and comments to [RHFishing@yahoo.com](mailto:RHFishing@yahoo.com).



# Late Breaking News!

**This year's fund raising raffle winners are:**

**The Winners of the Grand Prize Raffles are:**

**First Prize: Delaware River fishing: Don Gales**

**Second Prize: Rod & Reel: Jim Hansen**

**Third Prize: Waterproof Camera: Dr.Marshall Cowen**

**The Winners of the Card Raffles are:**

**The Wittman Rod (constructed by Jim Greco) & Reel combo: Carter Wildermuth**

**Hardy Reel (donated by Great Feathers Fly Shop): Bill Goldner**

Thanks to all PPTU members who participated and especially to those who sold tickets!!



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