

March 2008

The Conservationist

Potomac – Patuxent Chapter

www.pptu.org

Cumberland Valley Update

Our March program speaker, Tom Baltz, has been a fly tier for over 40 years and has spent the last 30 years angling the limestone valleys of South Central Pennsylvania near Carlisle. Tom will share his extensive experience with us in his presentation entitled – “*Cumberland Valley Update*.” His talk will discuss the past, present and future of some of the primary and most well known limestone trout streams in Pennsylvania's Cumberland Valley. Highlighted will be the Yellow Breeches, Big Spring,

Letort, and Falling Spring. He will also offer comments about other streams in the area which offer excellent fishing opportunities. While not giving away too many specific fishing spots, Tom will offer the adventurous angler some tools and a strategy for finding his "own" spots. Tom is the only four time Pennsylvania State Fly Tying Champion and his flies have appeared in Field & Stream, Fly Fisherman Magazine, Art of Angling Journal, Eastern Fly Fishing, and American Angler magazines, the Orvis catalog and the recently published book “Guide Flies.” He is a regular contributor to the Mid-Atlantic Fly Fishing Guide and appears at fly fishing shows around the country. As a special treat come early and see Tom tie his fabled ParaNymph at the Tying Bench at 7 PM. A full time fly fishing professional since 1974 and one of Pennsylvania's first licensed fishing guides, Tom is an Orvis Endorsed Fly Fishing Guide who was named North East Trout Guide of the Year (2001) by Orvis.

By Nick Weber ■

Another Look at South
Central Pennsylvania
Wednesday, March 19

7:00 PM

(see bottom of page for directions)

Guest Presenter

Tom Baltz

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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

is published monthly, except Dec., Jun., Jul., and Aug., by the Potomac-Patuxent Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

The content of signed articles are the opinions and views of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions, views, and policies of Trout Unlimited, the Potomac-Patuxent Chapter, or their respective officers and directors.

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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

TU – A Fishing Club or Conservation Organization?

A week or so ago, I received an e-mail request from Trout Unlimited (the national organization, not our chapter) asking me to take an online survey. I don't know whether this request went to every TU member that the national organization has an email address for, or whether it only went to chapter presidents – the e-mail didn't say. If the former, you may have seen it yourself.

The thrust of the survey was to find out what members thought the purpose of Trout Unlimited was – is it an organization of fishermen and fisherwomen, or is a conservation organization? To me, this is somewhat of a false dichotomy; hunters and fishers have been at the forefront of the conservation movement for over a century.

Yet I know what precipitated the survey. Last spring, TU announced that it was strongly considering no longer getting involved in stream access issues since stream access had nothing to do with conservation. After an uproar from the membership, they reversed their tentative plan late last year. It does, however, have a lot to do with fishing, and for some reason, those who are most passionately interested in cold water fisheries conservation tend to be fishers. Imagine that.

I don't want to dwell too much on stream access; there are plenty of shades of dun involved. I don't believe anyone ever objected to the rancher in Montana who charged three dollars for people to park along the stretch of the Madison River that ran through his ranch. At the other end of the spectrum, a great many people object to private owners attempting to prevent legal access to public waters. (Think the Little Juniata, if you've been following that.)

I believe that any attempt to cut the "fishing club" out of TU is a short sighted one. Our chapters will not survive if we're viewed as just a way to funnel money to the national organization. TU started out as an organization of fishermen interested in protecting and improving cold water fisheries. Conservation is just the most important sub-goal of this. What do you think? ■

February 2008 Outing Report

By Dennis Covert

Pulling in the parking lot next to Camp Peniel Bridge at 10:00 am, Will Amland and I were the last to arrive. Already there in various stages of gearing up were Michael Golob, Art Friedlander, Steve Graves, and Ken Bowyer. The weather was a little cool, my truck thermometer pegging 37 degrees, but with no wind it was comfortable enough. Naked tree trunks and bushy hemlock contrasted against a backdrop of snow cover softened by the diffused light of overcast skies. The dark stream bed coming up through gin clear water ran through it all like a dark brown ribbon.

Water levels were near perfect and clear of ice, so after a brief conference on when to meet back at the lot we spread out to ply our deceptions. Heading up stream I noticed black stoneflies in several sizes ranging from very small #22 to a larger # 20 littering the snow close to water boosting my confidence in the little black nymph I had on. Thirty minutes and a couple fly changes later I began to realize my mistake of not wearing thermal socks. Standing in knee deep water turned stealthy wading into clomping around on cold blocks.

Drifting an orange egg pattern through the elbow pool, a nice brookie that had previously escaped my detection suddenly swung into view directly in front me for a better look at the fly then settled back into its run. I spent the next several minutes casting to it and changing flies, until I could no longer ignore the cold water and finally gave up, clomped out to the road, and walked downstream in hopes of invigorating some warmth through increased activity. I soon came across Ken and Steve standing next to the road peering down into the creek. Getting closer I could see they were talking to an angler not in our group. He was regaling them with a tale about an eighteen inch brown that lived in one of the pools just below, and seemed to be reeling them in with little resistance. They reported trying several locations up and down but hadn't seen a fish. Moving on, I stopped at the truck for coffee and spied Art downstream making his way back up through the streamside tangle casting to pocket water as he came. When close enough I asked about his luck. He said he took a very nice brookie about 14 inches on a Prince Nymph. Okay! >

Just then Will ambled in, reporting cold feet but also no fish. Motivated by Art's success I was up for another go and told Will I would meet him back at the truck in another hour.

Getting into the canyon I noticed the stream has changed some since I last fished it. Some new blow downs have altered the nature of some of the pools and runs and I spent some time just looking up and down admiring the scene. This is a beautiful place. It occurred to me some years ago that I had begun to judge all similar water against this stream, more often than not, thinking; yep, this is a nice place, but it's not as pretty at Big Hunting Creek.

Blocked by a blow down, I struggled up a steep snow covered bank to get to a pool on the other side. Three quarters of the way up I realized I wasn't going to make it and tried to slide backwards a little in an effort to grab a medium sized tree trunk that was just out of reach below me, and would then work out the remainder of this situation from there. It proved to be a poor plan and things quickly slid out of control. I spilled ass over stocking cap backwards throwing my rod so I wouldn't land on it, and after a complete somersault came to an abrupt stop against an arm sized dead branch that broke with a loud crunch. I seem to find a new way to take a tumble about every trip or two, but what really amazes me is thus far, knock on wood, I haven't broken anything on me or a rod. However, deciding I might have used up most of my luck for one day I trudged downstream to a more level outlet and then back up the road heading for the truck.

Catching up with Will he reported the same catch rate as me, none, but said he talked to Michael who had one on but lost it, then minutes later he drove past us waving on his way out. Getting back to the lot it was 2 pm. The only vehicle left besides mine was Art's. He was no doubt warmed by his previous success was still off and adding to the count.

It was great to see that much water in the creek, and apparently, at least a few of the stocked brookies have held over. Art saved us from the skunk demons, and we all logged a great day of winter fishing that should hold us over until at least tomorrow, or maybe even a couple of days.

Join the fun and come out for the next outing on March 22, for the One Fly Contest on the Gunpowder. Anyone needing info on the March outing should contact Dennis by phone at 410-740-833 or by email at denniscovert@hotmail.com.

Patuxent Report

By Jay Sheppard

By early March all of our local special regulation waters have been stocked with browns and rainbows. This includes the upper Patuxent Special Area (above rt. 97; no-kill), as well as the Flies-Only section below Brighton Dam and the Delayed Harvest section of the Middle Patuxent in south Columbia. These sections were float stocked, for the most part. Give these fish a week or three to acclimate to their new homes, and they should reward the careful angler with some fine sport.

Please do not fail to have with you the phone number of the Natural Resources Police call center: 1-800-635-6124. I have it logged into my cell phone, which I carry in a ziplock bag when on the stream. It still amazes me how many poachers I encounter on our waters every spring—folks simply want to take fish home by any means possible and from any waters they can access. We put a lot of effort into stocking and otherwise managing our trout waters, do not let these miscreants take away our fish! ■

PPCTU 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, PPCTU.

The ASC or Annual Supporting Contribution, is the contribution our chapter asks from each member as an annual contribution of \$15 (going up to \$20 after the May 2008 meeting). Members who make this contribution get the Conservationist (either in print or on the web), 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.

Spring PPTU Outings Schedule

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.

April 14 — Deer Creek, MD, Shad Outing

The Shad outing is best on a week day in hopes of smaller crowds. If you ever wanted to catch fish after fish in the 1-1 ½ pound range, this is the outing for you, and it is a great opportunity to test out that new 4 or 5 wt rod you may have just built. These are Hickory Shad, sea run fish that come up through the bay to spawn in Deer Creek. Fishing Deer Creek above the bridge where it runs into the Susquehanna doesn't require any special licensing. We will meet at 5:30 am at the pumping station near Stafford Road.

April 19 & 20— Western MD/ Yellow Creek, PA

This outing concentrates on the streams and rivers of Western Maryland and Yellow Creek in Southern Pennsylvania. We will meet at 7 am in the parking lot next to the old stone bridge that crosses the Casselman River just off Route 40 near Grantsville. Saturday night I (we) will be staying at the Casselman Inn at Grantsville MD which is approximately a mile from the Casselman River.

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

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 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. Members who have not made an Annual Supporting Contribution will be asked to contribute \$15. Contact Ken Bowyer at 301-627-7154 or by e-mail at kenbowyer@comcast.net.

Tackle and Tactic Tips

BY JAY SHEPPARD

Last month I discussed a few tricks for fighting large fish on light tippets in a moving river. There are many dozens, if not hundreds, of other tricks to fight fish and get them to the net. Books and magazine articles cover these numerous tactics, so I will only mention a few of them here.

If one can get to shore or is already on the bank, then the fisher has a real chance of landing a very large fish on light tippet. One can usually keep up with a fish as it moves down the stream so the fish is fighting both the current and the line tension. Usually along a bank a fisher will find a slower section of water in which to make the final battle. Then the fish is only fighting the fisher, and the latter does not have to fight the current as well. I followed a steelhead once down a large NY river 400 or more yards with trees along the bank before finally getting to a calm stretch of water. I seemed to have had to pass my rod around the trunks of hundreds of trees on the bank overlooking very deep water, but suspect it was only several dozen.

Do not be afraid to give line so long as the fish will not run into structures. Allowing the fish to pull line off the reel is work for the trout, and it will tire. Learn to lead the fish in a particular direction when feasible. Pointing the rod to one side or the other places the direction of pull to the fish such that it will often turn in that direction. In the final moments of a fight I find that suddenly and repeatedly reversing the direction in which the fish is swimming is one of the fastest ways to confuse and exhaust the fish to the point of landing it. This is usually done when the fish has only the leader and maybe 3–8 feet of fly line still out beyond the tip. As soon as the fish is headed in one direction I quickly reverse the rod to the other side and slowly make it turn back. Do that 5–10 times in rapid succession and nearly all fish will be ready to give up and slide into your net.

If one has a reluctant large fish down stream of their position in the middle of a large river, there is another tactic I have used with some success. It does not always work, but if you have no way to get out or wade down to the fish to get below it (see Feb. issue) you might think of trying this trick: drop the rod to one side of the fish and let slack line feed out so that a large loop of line forms downstream of the fish. The pressure of that loop▶

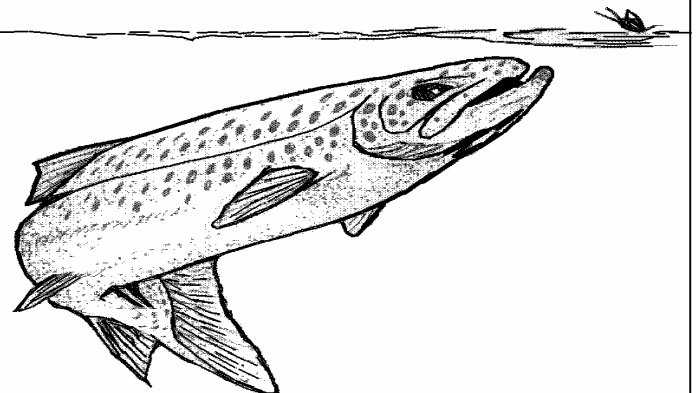
below the fish can both tire it and sometimes even make it head back upstream towards your position. Again, I have had only moderate luck with this trick, but if the choice is definitely losing the fish or trying to land it, you might think of this daring tactic.

As one last suggestion here in this short article, do not give up the chance to fight large fish on light tackle that may not be salmonids. We are lucky to have the Bay and Ocean nearby. If you learn how to handle lines, fight fish off a reel, and other tactics in the open saltwater, then you will be better prepared to fight a wise old brown trout in some much tighter quarters. ■



National Capital Angling Show

The National Capital Chapter of Trout Unlimited will be having its 33rd Annual Angling Show on **Saturday March 29, 2008** from 10 am to 5:30 pm at **Georgetown Preparatory School** in North Bethesda, Maryland. The featured speaker will be Ed Jawoworski, giving presentations on: "*The Changing Faces of Salt Water Fly Fishing*," and "*Trout Fishing 301*." In addition, there will be expert presentations from Dave Rothrock about getting started in fly fishing, the Project Healing Waters success story, and a riverkeepers' panel on our premier local small-mouth bass waters. There will also be fly casting and tying demonstrations and clinics, an authors' corner, a rod and gear swap, license sales, fly fishing guides, vendors of fine tackle, and sister non-profit organizations in the conservation community. Further information, including directions, can be found at www.ncc-tu.org.



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.

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

In the early portion of the meeting Tom Baltz will tie his ParaNymph and discuss some of the tricky aspects of tying parachute style dry flies. If you ever wanted to see a true expert on his home turf, come early and grab a seat to watch Tom, one of the best tiers around, show you one way to tie terrific parachute type patterns. Some of Tom's handiwork will also be available for purchase.

Tom ties for several fly shops and discriminating anglers coast to coast. His flies are in the collections of the Pennsylvania State Museum (Jack Eschenmann collection), the Pennsylvania Fly Fishing Museum, Vice-President Dick Cheney, and private collectors across the country.

Angler's Corner

Stop by the Angler's Corner to chat with Dennis Covert about the upcoming outings to the Gunpowder Falls River for the One Fly Outing on March 22 and the Shad Outing to Deer Creek on April 14. These two outings are always a good time and great fishing depending on who is telling the story. Suggestions for future outings are always welcome.



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