



The **Conservationist**

Potomac-Patuxent Chapter

November 2011

Published monthly except
June, July, August and December



The Fall Fundraiser - November 16, 2011

November is upon us and it is once again time for a special program. This is an important opportunity to support our Chapter and at the same time obtain items we have been interested in or an experience we will remember for a life time. The possible experience of a lifetime may be the trip to the West Branch of the Delaware River for a three night two day guided fishing trip. The West Branch is a truly incredible fishery. The second prize is a Weekend Getaway for two at the Allenberry Resort/Playhouse near Carlisle, PA on the Yellow Breeches that includes lodging, dinners, breakfasts and theater tickets for two. The third prize is a waterproof digital camera. The West Branch fishing trip, Weekend Getaway for two, and waterproof camera are the prizes that can be won by purchasing tickets at the meeting. These prizes will be awarded at our January 18th meeting. However, tickets purchased at the fundraiser do not require you to be present to win in January. Furthermore, great silent auction and bucket raffle items will be available for interesting and sought after gear will gain much attention. Finally, a flea market will likely offer many wonderful items at bargain prices as in the past. Bring your items as well and donate 15% to the Chapter. Don't forget your check book to get some — **needed** – holiday items for your fishing closet or for someone else!

As a bonus and a highlight of the evening, the Fundraiser offers an opportunity to ask questions to a panel of fishers whose knowledge and advice is always well received. Many have said this is a very special meeting for this aspect alone. This gives many of us a chance to gain insight on a wide range of questions that arise on tactics, gear, and destinations which has led to new information for many of us. Come hear this interesting Q & A segment of the meeting. You will definitely learn something, particularly if you bring a question. - Nick Weber

Special time for this event is 6:30 – 9:30

Monthly Chapter Meetings

Time and Day: 7:00 PM, Third Wednesday except June, July, August and December
Place: Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center, 1000 Forest Glen Road, Silver Spring, Maryland

DIRECTIONS TO THE SENIOR CENTER

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

Visit our website: www.pptu.org

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Handling Trout – Don't Kill them with Bdr Manners!

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President's Column - Dennis Covert

November always makes me a little restless. Though it's the heart of autumn and my favorite season I know it's fleeting and in a few short weeks winter's cold grip will take hold. It is a month of extremes, at times Indian summer will reign and have us shedding clothes and basking in the warm afternoon sunshine. On other days frosty temperatures and raw winds will make our hands and ears sting if left exposed. All month the big fish in our local waters will be on the move aggressively feeding; further afield returning steelhead from the Great Lakes of Erie and Ontario will be pulsing up into their home rivers and tributaries. Fishing reports from Steelhead Alley and the Salmon River will sing to us like a siren song and pull many of us north to feel the reel screaming power of fresh run chrome.

Autumn has a short shelf life, and as such I think we should gorge ourselves on as much fishing, leaf color, crisp morning air, and big buck and bear sightings as we can. Our memories of this autumn have to last all the way to next, and I have a whole collection of mental images I can conjure up to get me through the heat and humidity of July and August. Flushing woodcock out of fresh wet snow in the early morning half light, fishing buddies with rods held high and deeply bent, their breath condensing into white clouds on every whoop are just a couple. Dig out the stocking caps, thick socks, and long underwear, it's going to be a wonderful month to fish!

November is also the month we hold our annual fund raiser at our Chapter meeting and there will be a plethora of silent auction items and raffles giving members a chance to donate and win some great prizes. This, along with our monthly raffle and Annual Supporting Contribution is how we fund our many activities throughout the year. In addition to paying the room rent and speakers for our monthly chapter meetings, we give financial support to Trout in the Classroom, Project Healing Waters, Kids Fishing Days, and contribute to youth camps so that several more children can afford to go. We support Boy Scout Projects, do tree plantings, and help the DNR stock the Patuxent River our home water, plus post the Catch & Release signs you see along its banks. To be successful, all of these activities require a combination funds and boots on the ground participation. So I hope to see you at the November meeting. Give generously, enjoy the discussion and ask some questions of our panel of experts. 🍁

PPTU Mentor Program Beginner's & Beyond

Ken Bowyer provides one-on-one streamside fly fishing instruction to PPTU members. Participants must show commitment by having waders or hip boots, 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 🌻

Patuxent Report - Jay Sheppard

In late September, several local waters were stocked with trout: Patapsco River & the Little Patuxent are 2/day streams that had trout stocking. PPTU also float stocked a couple hundred rainbows into the Middle Patuxent Delayed harvest Section. As we go to press, we have learned that a few hundred trout will be stocked in the main Patuxent below Brighton Dam the last week or so of October. Most of these late stocked trout will be rainbows, but there will be a few browns mixed in the load. That action should provide some recreational fun throughout the rest of the fall and winter on this increasingly popular section of the river. This section of the



Patuxent is mostly public land and no hunting is allowed, unlike the upper section above the reservoir which is heavily hunted all fall (ex. Sundays). 🌻

Address changes? Moved? Please keep us up to date on your addresses.

Please send any notices of corrections or change of address to: PO Box 2865, Wheaton, MD 20915. If we do not have your current address, including email for those being notified electronically, we cannot send you future issues of the Conservationist.

Tackle and Tactics - Jay Sheppard

In the middle of one of the really hot spells this past summer, our PPCTU list serve had a dialogue regarding reshaping the hook in order to increase the hookups. Several members were discussing how many fish they were missing and possible ways to widen the gap of the hook to get more hookups. I am repeating some of this discussion so that those not on the list serve might learn about these tactics and tips. "Offsetting" the hook is likely my most potent 'secret' to hooking more fish. This was suggested to me more than several decades ago by my good friend, Lefty Kreh. Offsetting the hook point does not actually widen the hook gap but does alter the shape of the hook.

Looking straight **down** from **above** the hook, take your hemostats or fine needlepoint pliers and grasp the hook **bend** so that the side of the jaws towards the eye of the hook abuts the rear of the shank — right where the fly body ends. The points of the pliers must cover both the bend at the rear of the hook shank **and** the hook point itself. That is, the tool is at right angles to the hook shank before any

bending takes place. It is very important that you always grasp the hook bend with the top of the bend closest to the 'throat' of the pliers. The most pressure on the metal of the hook is exerted at this point. You do not want to ever grasp the hook point itself with **any** pressure, as it will likely weaken it and break later! The shank of the hook is then bent to either side of the plane of the original hook about 15–25°. When completed, you will see that the very tip of the hook point juts out to one side of the hook shank.

I am not exactly certain of the mechanics of why this causes better hookups. Instead of the hook slipping straight out of the closed jaws, the bend places a barrier to that simple egress, and the hook twists into the jaw. However it works, it does do that!

I was at the “PhD Pool” on the lower Savage maybe 25 years ago. There was an incredible hatch of #18 Baetis/BWOs with 40+ 12–15" trout, mostly browns, suspended below the surface in a long pod from the head to the tail of the pool. Each was rising steadily every 25–40 seconds. A real sight! I found a pattern that definitely got their attention. (It was a simple #18 parachute dun in all pale gray: hackle, wing post, body.) After missing about the first 6–8 takes, I started to actually count the number of misses. In nearly all of those misses I did not even feel the trout! All of which just reinforced the name I gave this pool in the early 80s! After some 30 misses in less than an hour, I retrieved the fly (for the third or fourth inspection) and offset the hook point. By this time I had teased maybe 75% of the fish in the pool. Eventually I hooked and landed 5 trout out of the next 6 takes!!! Where I had gone from trout–30, Jay–ZIP,

I scored 5 points to their one in the final minutes of the game!

All my hooks are now offset (and flatten the barbs, if present) before I tie the pattern. The only exceptions are the attractors that will be **actively** fished — streamers, most wets, woolly buggers, Patuxent Specials, etc. I think the offset makes these flies twist in the current as they are being actively retrieved and that twists the tippet. Also, most trout really slam these attractor patterns, and the hookups seem to be a good percentage of the takes.

When offsetting the hook, some fly tyers bend the hook after placing it in their vise. As long as the barb and hook point are not close to the jaws of the vise, this will also work. My only concern is keeping any undue pressure off the region of the hook barb and point — the weakest point of the whole hook.

Offsetting really helps if you have bulky wings or a body erected above the hook shank: parachutes, in particular. However, elkhair caddis, Wulffs, humpies, beetles, Chernobyl ants, and similar styles are also prone to having a lot of missed fish. I think the relatively stiff wings or bulky bodies help push the hook point away from catching on the jaw of the trout in some way. However, the offset hook point greatly reduces the problem of missed fish. Shortly after an exchange of emails many years ago, one of PPCTU's more ardent fishers, Joe Kunsman, went to a stream with some newly offset beetles and had a fine day. So this little 'secret' is now out. Enjoy more hookups! 🍀



Annual Supporting Contribution (ASC) now due—Final Notice!

Check your mailing label on this issue. If it reads "PP-0911" then you should mail in your \$20 as soon as possible or bring it to the November meeting. Some may not have noticed that we changed the annual donation from \$15 to \$20 after the May 2008 meeting. Also, those receiving this publication over the Web will be notified later this fall. The only "membership" fee is to national TU for \$35 (etc.) per year. So if you are a member of national TU, then you are also a member of a chapter—the Potomac-Patuxent Chapter or any other chapter of your choosing. The Annual Supporting Contribution (ASC) is the voluntary donation our chapter asks from each family to help us pay for our basic administrative expenses. Mail your check (payable to PPTU): PO Box 2865, Wheaton, MD 20915. 🍁



Help To Stop

Poachers

Reminder - If you spot poaching please place a call to

Catch a Poacher Hotline at 1-800-635-6124



Handling Trout — Don't Kill Them with Bad Manners!

- Jay Sheppard

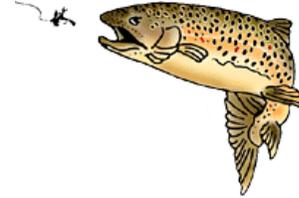


Handling trout can be a bit tricky, if you are going to return them to the stream. I suggest you take a landing net along, even though they are always hanging up on some snag, to first land the trout. The net then allows you to grip the trout around its middle with only its head sticking out of the netting to work the lure/fly loose. At this point, you will see the advantage to having pinched barbs on your hook (lost fish are not due to lack of a barb, but that's another story). A pair of forceps (available in most fly fishing catalogs) is an excellent tool to reach hooks. Never allow a trout to touch ANYTHING DRY...hands, ground, net, etc. Never stick your fingers inside the gill covers. Never grasp a trout like most bass are handled (i.e., gripping the lower jaw and flexing the jaw itself). If the water is above 60° or so, try to keep the trout in the water while working the hook out. Hold the trout in moving water until it can swim out of your hand and net on its own power (NEVER DROP a trout into shallow water--any more than you like to dive into shallow water either!!). Trout may die if placed on a stringer or played too long. They build up too much lactic acid in their system and that eventually can kill them. If a trout cannot look downward when removed from the water, its survival is clearly in jeopardy, and a large amount of oxygen is needed quickly to possibly save it. This reflex is the first sign that a trout may be in trouble. The sole reason bait fishing is prohibited in many special

trout streams is a higher mortality rate: 20–40% of all released trout caught by bait fishermen may die within 24–48 hours. Lures and flies produce less than 5% mortality rates. Cut off the fly on any deeply hooked fish, especially if ANY blood is seen. Trout are too valuable a resource to destroy, even by well-meaning fishermen. 🦋

Contributions should be sent to the Editor as plain text in an email or as a Microsoft Word attachment. The deadline for submissions is the twelfth (12th) day of the month prior to the month of publication. 🦋

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