



September 2005

The *Conservationist*

Potomac-Patuxent Chapter

www.pptu.org

Wednesday, September 21

Westward Ho!

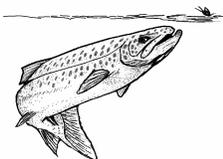
A perusal of the title of this month's newsletter might lead our intrepid fly fisher to conclude that September's meeting will be about the glory waters of the West – the Madison, the Yellowstone, Bighorn, Green, et al. Instead, the focus will be on a river closer to home, but one that many liken to a Western river.

A good-sized tailwater, deep and remote in parts, brawling at times, and capable of giving up some big fish. It is also technically speaking to the West of us Eastern starboarders. But not nearly as far away as the famous waters listed above

It is the North Branch of Potomac and we have a speaker who knows its waters almost as well as the Mighty Chief Potomac himself when he walked its banks so many years ago. Ken Pavol, retired Maryland DNR official, former Western Regional Manager, and current spokesman of the Western Maryland Professional Guides Association, will be telling us not only where and how to fish the North Potomac but also noting the environmental challenges facing it.

So come over and learn about a river that with some improved management many believe has the fishing potential to match those well-know Western rivers. †

—*Sebastian O'Kelly*



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Greetings to all as we begin our PPCTU year.

As your new president, I will attempt to fill the very big shoes that Lou Boezi wore here for the last 2 years. I want you to know that Lou and a host of very helpful folks on the board have helped me get started in the new position, and I look forward to their guidance and support throughout my tenure.

With their help and a lot of good will, we have begun our planning process for meetings and outings as well as other activities that we feel will start us off with enthusiasm and provide us with great experiences. Elsewhere in these pages you will find notices for the Tying Bench and Angler's Corner which are designed to share useful information for all who come to the monthly meeting.

We are also actively pursuing conservation efforts in keeping with the spirit of our newsletter banner by exploring potential new trout water in nearby Montgomery County. In an effort to reach out to our community and share the art of trout fishing with both young and old, we hope to open the door to new fishing techniques for these age groups as well as expand our future membership. ?

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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 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 Microsoft Word attachments. 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

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In addition, I feel that we should further develop our interactions with other area TU Chapters in order to reach our common conservation goals.

In an effort to grow and constantly renew the Chapter, I encourage you to contact me or other board members with ideas that will help us have a richer fishing experience and foster water resource conservation so we can share the enjoyment of trout fishing with all who have an interest in it as a recreational pursuit. Let us know what's working as well as the areas where we can improve.

I also hope you will give us a hand when we need your help. In the short time that I have been a Chapter member, I am impressed with the depth and breadth of your knowledge and I am confident that this knowledge will increase the trout fishing experience of our members as well as others in our community. Let's go fishing! I'm available.

— Nick Weber

Patuxent Report

My expectations are that maybe 25% of the brown trout survived this summer's flows and heat. In a normal year, we might see 20% of the stocked fish survive. The better flows should leave a fair number of trout scattered up and down the river for the rest of the year. A small number of rainbows also might be found to holdover this year in a few sections. If you are interested in helping in the annual electro-fishing surveys of this stream, please contact me by the September meeting. This is always a good opportunity to help and also to see where the trout are (or are not). This is a weekday pursuit with **chest waders** required. Dates and times have not been determined as we go to press. Similarly, if you have any interest in the Gunpowder or other stream surveys, let me know, too, by September 15.



—Jay Sheppard

Tackle and Tactic Tips

In the middle of one of the really hot spells this summer, our PPCTU list serve had a dialogue regarding reshaping the hook in order to increase hookups with fish. Several members were discussing how many fish they were missing and the 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 it 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. Never grasp the hook point itself with any amount of pressure, as it will likely weaken it and break off 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, I assume 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 15–20 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. ?

After missing the first 6 to 8 takes, I started to count the number of misses. After missing maybe 15 takes, my tippet then had to suddenly stop and start under before setting the hook. 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 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 two-thirds of the fish in the pool. Eventually I hooked and landed 5 trout out of the next 6 takes!!! Where I had gone from Jay: ZIP; Trout: 30, I was able to score 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 actively retrieved, which causes the tippet to twist. Also, most trout really slam these patterns and the hookups seem to be a good percentage of the takes.

When offsetting the hook, I do not twist the entire bend of the hook. The main pressure is placed on the metal at the juncture of the bend and the shank, so as to protect the actual point of the hook. I have never had any problems with breaking a point. If you get factory hooks already offset (e.g., Mustad 9485—like the 3906), the whole plane of the bend is bent to one side or the other. Looking from the eye to the bend and with the point up, if the latter is aimed to the left, Mustad calls that a "Kirbed" hook; if to the Right, they call it "reversed." Some fly tyers bend the hook after placing it in their vise. As long as the hook point is 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 point itself.

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 this exchange, 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! †

— Jay Sheppard

Early Bird Catches the Fly!

Pre-Meeting Demonstrations Start at 7 p.m.

Tying Bench

Zebra Midge and its variations. This month's tying bench will feature a great nymph that fishes well in most any water. Our featured tier, **Michael Abramowitz**, has successfully used this midge on far away streams as well as on the Gunpowder River here on home turf. Mike says that it is a simple yet effective pattern that beginners can tie with ease, and has used it effectively on trout as well as warm water species. This fly is one of Charlie Meck's top 10 flies that he uses "out West" as well on Pennsylvania streams, usually as a dropper.

Angler's Corner

A new segment of our meeting will feature one of our experienced anglers answering questions on tactics, tackle, and other useful things in his vest and memory bank. Ken Bowyer, a long time club mentor, will share some thoughts on one or more of your fly fishing questions that may increase your enjoyment and success on your next stream outing.

— Nick Weber



PPCTU MENTOR PROGRAM BEGINNERS & BEYOND

Available to members of PPTU current with their dues, Ken Bowyer or Paul Prevost will conduct one on one stream side fly fishing instruction. Interested members must show commitment by having waders or hipers, 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. Contact Ken at 301-627-7154 or e-mail kenbowyer@comcast.net or contact Paul at 202-244-0168 or e-mail pprevost@hotmail.com.

The Chapter's traditional Memorial Day weekend outing was held from May 27 to 30 in Western Maryland. This outing concentrated on Garrett County's big four trout rivers: the Savage, North Branch of the Potomac, Youghiogheny (Yock), and the Casselman. Joining me at the Casselman Inn at Grantsville were Club members Ken Bowyer, George Vincent, Pete Masler and Patrick Masler.

Area stream conditions were mixed. The North Branch was running heavy at a 1000 cfs, good for whitewater rafters but tough on flyfishers, and the Yock was reported to be running high and muddy. But the good news was that the upper and lower Savage, along with the Casselman, were in good shape and fished well.

The weather was typical for Western Maryland at this time of year. Friday evening at Grantsville was comfortable with just a slight chill in the air. By mid-morning on Saturday the temperature had dropped until you could see your breath. A cold rain also set in but later gave way to periods of sunshine interspersed with occasional showers. Sunday and Monday were warmer and drier.

Insect activity on the Casselman included tan caddis ranging in sizes from #18-#14 especially in the afternoon and evenings, along with a variety of mayflies including mahoganies, some sulphurs, and blue winged olives in sizes #18-#20, along with some very sparse sightings of the eastern green drake.

The Casselman was well stocked with some very large fish in the better pools and runs. Trout taken in the 10-15" range were common. I didn't hear of any monster fish being landed, however Patrick reported losing a very nice brown right at the net. My best fish was a very fat 16" inch brown.

A brief squall Saturday evening had catkins blowing off nearby trees and sluicing in the surface of the water. As they poured into the pool I was fishing, I suddenly became aware of insects writhing in the surface film. I couldn't tell if they were emergers or bugs that been on the catkins before being blown in. Whichever, trout began to rise among the catkins. ?

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Outings Report

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It didn't last long but the action was pretty exciting while it lasted.

When I caught up with George and Ken on Saturday evening at the hotel, they said they got to Grantsville on Friday afternoon and decided to try Laurel Hill Creek in Confluence, Pa. That's when Ken discovered that he had left his waders at home! Fortunately, George knew about Woodlands World, a small "Bass Pro Shop" not far away on US 40 where he was able to re-supply. Properly attired, their adventure continued.

George and Ken fished the Savage and Monroe Run Saturday, reporting them to be fishing well. George hooked and landed a brown and a brook trout; Ken lost a nice fish in some submerged tree roots. Sunday and Monday had Ken and George fishing the Casselman with the rest of the party. They reported finding good hatches of sulphurs and tan caddis from the bridge to the state line and caught several nice fish in the 10-15" range.

Overall, even though the North Branch and the Yock weren't fishing well, the Savage and the Casselman made the trip a success. Unrelated to fishing, but an interesting point along the river is that Stanton's Mill is under new ownership. Currently the mill is producing flours and corn meal ground using electric power. However, the new owner has been busy restoring the original millrace and restoring the mill to operate with water power. When we were there, the millrace dredging was complete and a period water wheel had been found. It should be water powered by now. †



— Dennis Covert
Outings Coordinator

Conservation Camp

TROUT Unlimited's conservation and fishing camp in Syria, Va., was very fun and educational for me. There, we (the campers) learned many techniques for evaluating the health of the stream, including electroshock fishing and rock scrubbing.

We also learned how to interpret the results of these techniques and how to identify the qualities of a good stream. We learned about stream restoration techniques and how to identify a stream type. Overall, we found the Rose River to be very healthy. Although the pH was lower than desirable, there was still a huge biodiversity among the fish and the macroinvertebrates. We even found several massive (~1.5") stoneflies that take several years to mature, indicating that this good stream health went at least a few years back.

During the electroshock fishing we even found a small cutthroat trout. In fishing further upstream on the Rose, other campers caught native brook trout and wild browns. A short distance downstream from the area we electroshocked, another camper and I each caught a 12 inch wild rainbow one night. I had a lot of fun at the camp, and learned a great deal about conservation and fishing. I even won the "Best Conservationist" award.

I think it was even more fun and educational for the campers who had never fished before. By the end of the week everyone was able to cast a lot better, and even us "hotshots," as the counselors grouped us more experienced fishermen, learned quite a few new casts thanks to Phil Gay and some of the other very experienced fly casters. If I could, I would definitely go back. †

— James Keil

PPCTU November Raffle

This year we will be having our major fundraising activity at our November general meeting rather than in April. The board believes that changing the date better meets the needs of our membership. At our general membership meetings in September, October and November, we will be selling raffle tickets for 4 major prizes. This will be your opportunity to win that trip of a lifetime or maybe win some much needed high quality fishing equipment. We are happy to again be able to announce that **Grand Prize will be a trip for two to the West Branch of the Delaware River in Deposit, N.Y.**, courtesy of the West Branch Angler and Sportsman's Resort. More details on the prizes will be announced at the September meeting. Members of the PPCTU Board will have the tickets on hand so be sure to flag them down. Good Luck and Happy Fishing!

ADDRESS CHANGED? Missing an Issue?

If you have moved or see any error in your label on this newsletter, please advise both the National TU office and this chapter with separate notices. Our mailing list is maintained apart from the National list; we do eventually get the notice of address change from National TU, but it is often a few months before it affects your newsletter and other mailings. Please help us help you. Thank you.

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-0905 or NTU-0905.

Upcoming Outings

September 24th — Day trip to the Gunpowder River. The group will meet at the Massemore parking lot between 7 and 7:30 a.m., and fish until 5 p.m.

October 7-9 — Weekend camping trip to Big Run State Park on the Savage River. The group will be camping Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights. You are not required to stay all three nights. Also, Chapter members who do not camp may make arrangements at the Casselman Inn in Grantsville, (301)895-5055, or another area motel. Sign up sheets will be circulated at the meeting! Any questions, please contact Dennis Covert.

Here, Fishy, Fishy.

Next time you're at your tying desk, tie up a couple extra flies and set them aside. Nothing special, just whatever you're tying. When you have a half dozen or so tied, bring them to the next chapter meeting so we can offer them at future raffles. If you attach your name, we'll be sure to thank you when they are raffled off. Just one more way to help protect the trout. Thanks!



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