



March 2003

The Conservationist

Potomac-Patuxent Chapter

www.pptu.org

Wednesday, March 19

Joe Bruce

Author and Fly Fishing Master

Will share his experiences on our favorite topic:

Fly Fishing for Albacore, Shad, Stripers, Smallmouth Bass, and Trout

Joe Bruce has been with us several times before, and each time he does a great job of sharing more of his vast knowledge of our sport. This year, Joe's presentation at our March 19 meeting will be somewhat different. He has developed a popular format where his audience is simply invited to ask questions about any topic Joe considers himself qualified to address.

Get Tickets Now, while they're still available

Grand and Premium Raffles

Four exceptionally valuable prizes are being raffled as part of PPTU's 2003 annual fund-raiser. Not more than 100 numbered tickets will be sold for each of these prizes and ticket-holders need not be present at the drawing of the winning ticket. Raffle tickets for these four prizes went on sale at the February chapter meeting and sales will continue until all tickets are sold, or until April 16, the date of the drawing at the April chapter meeting.

Grand Raffle

In the Grand Raffle there are two wonderful prizes:

1. Guided drift-boat fishing for those fabulous wild rainbow trout in upstate New York's Delaware River. The prize winner and a companion will enjoy two days on the river with the expert tutelage of a professional guide from the West Branch Angler Resort near Deposit, N. Y. One day of on-stream fly fishing instruction may be substituted for a day of drift

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In addition to being a successful author, Joe's areas of expertise range from fly fishing in Maryland for spring shad to albacore hunting around Harker's Island or stalking bonefish on the flats at Belize. Joe is an expert fly fisherman for striped bass, smallmouth and largemouth bass, trout and brim, and he has also developed skills in photography.

For those of you who haven't been to "Joe Bruce's The Fisherman's Edge", located in Catonsville, MD, west of the Baltimore Beltway (I695) on MD 144 (Exit 13), take Rolling Road to Edmonson Avenue, and stop in for a cup of Howard's coffee while you enjoy the atmosphere of an old fashioned shop crammed with everything a fly fisher needs. It's run by the friendliest and most knowledgeable staff in town.

Don't miss this extraordinary opportunity to get all of your questions answered by someone who has been there and done it well. Put it on your calendar now, and don't miss our 7:00 PM, Wednesday, March 19, 2003 meeting. See you there!



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

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 articles, letters, fishing news, tying tips, book reviews, and even poetry about trout fishing should be sent to the Editor as plain MS-DOS (ASCII) text or Microsoft Word attachments to e-mail messages containing brief descriptions of the attachments. Attachments received without a description will be deleted without opening.

The deadline for submissions is the twelfth (12th) day of the month prior to the month of publication

EDITOR: John Colburn

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President's Column

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find a description of the major raffle prizes offered in our annual fund raising this year. Our ability to offer these and the other prizes you may win in the silent auction and the barrel raffle at our April 16 chapter meeting emanates from a lot of hard work by some of our chapter members as well as the generosity of the prize donors.

Although I expect many more chapter members will also pitch in by the time of the April meeting, I'd like to recognize those who have gotten us off to a roaring start. Bob Serrano has taken on the challenge of keeping all the many elements of the event moving in synch and in the same direction. The truly inspiring cooperation of the major prize donors came about through the efforts of Jim Greco, Jim Greene, Willy Oldes and Val Walters. Next time you see these folks, give them your thanks for a job well done.

A complete list of prize donors is still in the making, and we are grateful for all they have done, and are in the process of doing, to support PPTU. We will recognize all of them in the April newsletter.

Without slighting that entire list, we take special pleasure in acknowledging the contributions of (in alphabetical order) Anglers' Art in Carlisle, PA; Anglers' Lie in Arlington, VA; Backwater Anglers in Monkton, MD; Keystone Anglers in Lock Haven, PA; Orvis, Tyson's Corner, VA; Sage; and West Branch Angler & Sportsman's Resort in Deposit, NY.

Your patronage of these supporters of Trout Unlimited will be much appreciated by them. And when you contact any of them, please give them your thanks for their support of Potomac-Patuxent TU.

Dave Piske

The highly skilled professional staff of ***The Conservationist*** strives to be as correct as possible in information, spelling, and grammar. They also wish to satisfy all the readers. Therefore, at least one intentional error is left in each issue of ***The Conservationist*** to satisfy the nitpickers.

If you find any errors in information, please notify the editor. If you find any errors in spelling or grammar, do not tell anyone lest you reveal yourself as a closet nitpicker.

Grand and Premium Raffles

(Continued from page 1)

boat fishing at the option of the prize winner.

Additionally, these lucky two souls will enjoy three nights of lodging in one of the Resort's large cabins fronting directly on the river, with meals included. For more information on the Resort and its many amenities, go to www.westbranchangler.com on the Internet.

This prize is valued at \$1600. Each raffle ticket for this prize costs \$30, and no more than 100 tickets will be sold. Remember, two people get to go fishing with this prize. Our thanks go to West Branch Angler Resort for making this prize available.

2. A top-quality pontoon boat manufactured by Outcast. This is the 8-foot long PAC 800 model and it's as suitable for rivers like the Potomac and the Susquehanna as it is for lakes and ponds. It comes complete with oars, a cargo platform and a stripping basket and is quickly assembled using six stainless steel pins. It weighs 55 pounds, about the weight of a canoe, but it's much more stable. Outcast's pontoon boats are known for their outstanding quality of materials and workmanship.

This boat will get you to places where the big ones lurk, and where wading is impossible. Grizzly at Anglers' Lie says, "These boats ought to be outlawed because they are too much fun." A similar model, the PAC 900, is on display at Anglers' Lie in Arlington, and we thank Newell Steele and Anglers' Lie for making the PAC 800 prize available.

This prize is valued at \$1100. Each raffle ticket for this prize costs \$20, and no more than 100 tickets will be sold.

Tickets for the two Grand Raffle prizes will be sold at PPTU meetings and at selected fly shops. They may also be purchased by mailing your personal check to Bob Serrano at: 8419 Greenbelt, # T2, Greenbelt, MD 20770. Checks should be payable to: "Potomac-Patuxent Chapter, Trout Unlimited". Bob will then mail the ticket(s) to the address you provide.

Premium Raffle

As a means of giving some preference to PPTU members and guests, tickets for the Premium Raffle will be sold only at PPTU meetings in February, March and April.

In the Premium Raffle there are two marvelous prizes:

1. Two days of guided trout fishing for two persons on the famous trout streams of North-central Pennsylvania and two nights lodging in superb comfort at a private lodge. This will be wade fishing on such streams as Fishing Creek (Clinton County), Kettle Creek, Pine Creek, Penn's Creek, or others in that area. The professional guides from Keystone Anglers (an Orvis Endorsed guide service) will lead the way and help you with their intimate knowledge of these streams. More information on Keystone Anglers and Lightning Ridge Lodge can be seen on the Internet at: www.keystoneanglers.com.

This prize is valued at \$740. Each raffle ticket for this prize costs \$15, and no more than 100 tickets will be sold. We thank Rocco Rosamilia, owner of Keystone Anglers in Lock Haven, PA for making this prize available.

2. A Sage XP series fly rod. This is a 4-piece travel rod that will be convenient to take anywhere you go. It's the popular 8' 6" length and is for use with a 4-weight line. This rod has a fast action. Our own Val Walters, who owns one like it, says it's a sweetheart of a rod to cast.

This prize is valued at \$600. Each raffle ticket for this prize costs \$10, and no more than 100 tickets will be sold. We thank Sage for making this prize available.

Other Prizes at April 16 meeting

In addition to the drawings for the Grand and Premium Raffles described above, there will be a silent auction and a barrel raffle during the chapter meeting on April 16. The prizes in the silent auction will include fly fishing lessons, guided fishing on nearby streams, and personalized fly tying lessons. The barrel raffle will include about 30 prizes of highly desirable fly fishing equipment, books, assortments of hand-tied flies and a tying vise. You will need to be at the April meeting to win these prizes. More details on these prizes will appear in the April issue of *The Conservationist*.

Remember, there is a vital purpose behind these raffles and auction. All of the net proceeds the chapter earns from them go to support our mission-based conservation and education

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Grand and Premium Raffles

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programs. Without your financial help in the form of ticket purchases and auction bids, we would not be successful in carrying out the TU mission in our own neighborhoods. So, please open your billfolds and purses, and here's hoping you win a prize for doing so.

What's the secret to winning at a raffle?

Buy a ticket. Better yet, buy lots of tickets.



Patuxent Report

We will hold a stream cleanup on the Patuxent Saturday morning, April 8. Please mark your calendars. This annual event is in coordination with the Izaak Walton League and many other conservation groups. Meet at 8:00 A.M. at the Wildlife Achievement Chapter on Mullinix Mill Road, just off RT. 108 east of Damascus. Bring hip boots, gloves and a heavy duty rake, if you have them. Work ends at Noon; they will provide a free lunch afterwards. This is a great family activity; almost any age can help. PPTU members and friends work the stream around the access points to pull out trash dumped into the river. Contact me for further information and if you plan to help.

Unless there has been flooding from heavy rains or a late ice storm, the Special Area should have been stocked twice by the first week of March. Some 2100 brown trout and 1250 rainbows were in these first two stockings. A third stocking of rainbows is scheduled for later this month. The browns were float-stocked away from the bridges to spread them out, while the rainbows were mostly placed near the bridges.

As in past years, we will avoid stocking trout in sections that hold good numbers of wild trout by stocking from the Rt. 94 bridge downstream to Howard Chapel, including Cabin Branch below Hipsley Mill. We greatly appreciate the two dozen members and friends who helped stock the Special Area; this required taking a day from work and wading in some COLD water.

Jay Sheppard

Trout Tactics Hatchery Trout Don't Eat?

For many years I have been pointing out the problems of trying to catch hatchery trout those first few weeks after they have been stocked. They may not show much reaction to our fly or lure offerings soon after they went into the stream. Give them a chance to learn how and what to eat.

Until now, everything they saw in the hatchery was edible. Suddenly, bits of leaves, bark, and twigs look inviting as those items swirl past the trout. These just do not digest, which gives them a full belly and no interest in items they cannot smell—with the packed stomachs they are now probably asking "where's the stomach pump? ...[or] Pepto-Bismol?" They also never had to chase moving prey and will need some practice; short strikes are the norm for these novice predators. Be patient.
Jay Sheppard



Wading Safety

That Water Is Cold!!

Everyone needs to be careful of falling in the water and getting hypothermia. March and April can still be dangerous if one gets soaking wet while far from a warm car. Sport shops carry small packets that can generate a good deal of warmth; carry a few with you until the late spring. Don't forget to throw your wallet into a zip-lock bag before your step into a stream.

Mark Your Fly Boxes

As one last tip, please mark your fly boxes with your name and phone number or address. I have found several boxes over the years and been able to return only one. You can use gummed address labels covered with transparent tape on the *inside* of the lid (to prevent wear) or some other means to mark them. Otherwise, I appreciate your leaving your fly boxes along side the stream or in the parking lot for me to find.

Jay Sheppard

Tackle and Tactic Tips

Soft Hackles and Wet Flies

A year ago I wrote about wet fly fishing being a lost art, yet it is one of the easiest to master by even the novice fly fisher. I praised the soft hackle style as being one of the best wet flies. I will quickly review the casts and presentations that are often used in this method of fly fishing.

The fly is normally cast across the stream to the far side. The angle across the stream depends upon three factors: how deep one wants the fly to swim, where you suspect the trout to be waiting and how fast the water is moving. Slow water and a shallow drift means casting just above and to the other side of the suspected holding position. As deeper presentations and faster waters are encountered, the casting target point moves upstream from the suspected trout lie.

In an average flow with moderate depth sought for the fly, a cast nearly straight across will often work. In really fast water the fly may have to be cast to a point that is quartering upstream and across to the other side. Even from the same casting position, the fly fisher should make slight adjustments on every cast.

Repeated casts to the same point can be made: just alter one of the variables available, such as the amount of time allowed to drift and sink. This will change both the depth and path the fly follows during a retrieve with the same amount of line. Some of the other variables would be where the rod tip is held at the onset of the retrieve, if the tip is allowed to slowly move up or down the stream as the fly swings, if any line is retrieved or released out the tip, and if a mend in the line is added at the onset of the drift.

When casting to the very same spot while standing in one place, there may be at least a dozen different drifts and subsequent retrieves possible. All will change the depth, speed and path the fly swings on. Just watch the tip of the floating line to get a sense of the path and speed the fly is following.

One other factor needs to be pointed out with soft hackle flies. Adult insects are not always able to maintain themselves on the surface of the water. Small waves to us are monster tidal waves to them. Many emerging insects are swallowed up by the water action. Trout are always wanting to eat the

most amounts of food for the least amount of energy expended. (Sounds like many of us in our daily lives!) Why should they swim up to the surface where predators and faster currents are often present if the very same insect is being drowned right in front of them?

I have stood on bridges during a heavy hatch and watched pods of trout remain suspended a few feet below the surface. They are clearly feeding, but rarely come to the surface. This almost invariably takes places at the head of a pool. It was not until I was able to catch a couple and flush their stomachs that I could confirm my suspicions. They were taking all manners of stages of the dominant hatch, but all these were either drowned adults and emergers or nymphs that could not quite make it to the surface.

For such situations you might try submerging your dry flies, such as the small stoneflies that dominate the early season hatches. A drowned mayfly dun pattern is usually not very effective. The main reason is that once the naturals get sucked below the surface, their wings become like flags in the wind. . . very soft and flexible. In those cases, either one of the old standard wet flies with a down wing and a body of the appropriate size and color may work very well.

I would also suggest that if you tie your own flies, you make the wings a tad narrower and longer. Naturals appear to have long, thin wings that have rolled up and now flop all over the place. A clump of soft hackle (e.g., partridge, hen, even marabou) of the right color might work well, too.

I dead drift these soft hackle flies at the heads of the pools, often with a tiny split shot a foot above the fly and a strike indicator a foot or two above the weight. Both emergers and drowned adults cannot swim, so they can only drift with the currents and hope that they eventually get back to the surface to continue their emergence, if they do not die first from drowning.

Several times I have been standing at a small hydraulic water fall when a hatch is under way. If the hatching insect is dark, the white water at my feet can sometimes seem full of thousands of dark blobs swirling constantly in the foam. Upstream, the trout are actively taking the duns on the surface. Below me, surface activity is almost invisible for the first 50–75 feet below the head of the pool. Yet, you can watch regular flashes as the trout gorge on these drowned duns, often shoulder to

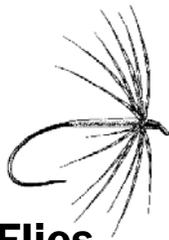
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Tackle and Tactic Tips Soft Hackles and Wet Flies

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shoulder with others. So have a few "drowned duns" in your boxes this spring. Sulphurs, blue-winged olives, and any of the other major hatches of mayflies, as well as the smaller stone flies, are often drowned in the faster sections of our local streams. This is a major feature of such high gradient waters as Big hunting Creek, the Savage River, and Gunpowder Falls above Falls Road. Simple patterns are often all that are needed in the faster waters at the head of a pool. Come summer, try drowned ants and beetles, too.

Jay Sheppard



Book Notes Soft Hackle Flies

With the possible exception of San Juan Worms and their ilk, soft hackle flies are probably the easiest to tie and, as Jay Sheppard noted in his column, the easiest to fish. They are about the oldest fly pattern we know about, at least in the British Isles. Dame Juliana Berner wrote about them in her *Treatyse of Fysshynge with an Angle* in 1496, not as something new, but as if they were in common use on English and Scottish streams.

Through the ensuing years soft hackles were occasionally mentioned in the literature, most notably by W.C. Stewart in his book, *The Practical Angler; or the Art of Trout-fishing More Particularly Applied to Clear Water*, written in 1857 and reprinted with three editions at least 17 times through 1958. Stewart called his soft hackle flies "Spiders," but they are soft hackles used in the border country of England and Scotland. The tying and fishing instructions are as valid today as they were through the past century and a half.

Soft hackles pretty well got shoved aside in the dry fly versus nymph controversy between Halford and Skues and their adherents, especially this side of the Atlantic by the followers of the English fads. But knowing fly fishers, both here and in the "Mother Country," continued to use them without a lot of fanfare, but lots of fish.

In 1976, Sylvester Nemes privately published a slim volume entitled *The Soft-Hackled Fly* which described the tying of soft hackles and how to fish them on the downstream swing. In 1981, Nemes produced a second book, *The Soft-Hackled Fly Addict*, with reproductions of the color plates from Pritt's *North-Country Flies* and additional tying methods and fishing instructions. The coda of the trilogy, published in 1991, was *Soft-Hackled Fly Imitations* wherein Nemes gave the patterns for soft hackled flies that imitated specific fly hatches, many of them patterns of his own development. These three books sparked something of a revival of the soft hackled fly fishing and a small blizzard of writings in the fly fishing press, some of it good, but lots of it uncredited repetition of the earlier works.

One of the better of the later writers—the best in my estimation—is Dave Hughes. His book, *Wet Flies; Tying and Fishing Soft Hackles, Winged and Wingless Wets, and Fuzzy Nymphs* (Stackpole, 1995), goes into the history, tying, and fishing of the four types of wet flies. Hughes acknowledges his sources and gives the credit due them. *Wet Flies* is the book to get if you want to get into tying and fishing wet flies. The tying instructions are clear and well illustrated, and the fishing methods are based on Hughes' own considerable experience.

For the history buff, the Nemes trilogy is a good investment since they are still in print or were until recently. Stewart's *The Practical Angler* is fairly available in the later editions and usually not overly expensive. If you are a student of Middle English or can find a modern translation of Berner's *Treatyse*, you'll find that much of what we know about fishing is centuries old.

Regardless of which book(s) you do get, tie up some soft hackles and give them a good try this summer. You'll become a believer.

John Colburn

Becoming an Outdoor Woman

Do you know a woman who might enjoy a weekend learning how to fly fish in a fun and relaxing environment? The Maryland DNR is offering an introductory Fly Fishing and Fly Tying weekend through the Becoming an Outdoor Woman (BOW) Program, April 4-6, 2003.

Go to <http://www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/bow.html> or contact Karina Blizzard at (410) 260-8559 or in MD toll-free 1-877-620-8DNR, Ext. 8559. E-mail: kblizzard@dnr.state.md.us

The Last Word

Such a Deal II

(Continued from page 8)

cheap flies lasted about three casts and then fell apart and did not produce a single fish but that very expensive \$1.95 fly caught 13 fish. Go figure. **Get this one:** We spent 1.5 hrs helping a “customer” understand what he and his wife needed to begin their fly fishing adventures. We said we would include a 1 hr casting lesson with the purchase of a complete rod & reel outfit from our store. [*Probably a \$165.00 value—Ed.*] They said they would think about it. The next day they stopped by for their free casting lesson after they had purchased their stuff at the Big House. By the way they were mad at us for not giving them a FREE Casting Lesson.

3. The **Biggest Reason** that really made us decide to close was that The Orvis Company decided to break the tradition of only putting their products in the Pro Shops like ours. They decided to start putting their products in G I Joe’s in Portland, OR. [*A chain of general hook-and-bullet sporting goods stores in the Northwest, usually selling below the suggested retail price—Ed.*] A BIG BOX store. It appears to me that they [*Orvis*] want to sell a lot of stuff and really don’t care if YOU the Customer can ask questions of the professional to find out if your purchase is correct for you. **Trial and**

error on your part means you will have to spend more money to get the correct product **OR** you can be very wise and purchase your fly fishing products at a pro-shop that can advise [*sic*] you, assemble your products and give you advise on where to use your products safely. **Skip the Big Box Stores and purchase your products in the future at Pro-Shops. Think you really save money at Big Box Stores? Think again when you need to know: 1. Where to go 2. What to use 3. How to use it 4. And what is the best equipment to do the job, unless you like to throw away a lot of time and poor equipment having a “good” time.** [*All emphasis above is in the original except where noted.—Ed.*]

[*Editor’s note: Fly Country Outfitters is/was a full-service Orvis dealership. They had a contract with Orvis that required that they sell only Orvis rods, reels, waders, and other major items and at the Orvis catalog price. In turn, Orvis gave them a slightly better break on wholesale prices. For instance, FCO could not sell Sage or Winston fly rods or Hardy or Scientific Angler reels, Simms waders, or any product that directly competed with Orvis. Incidentally, all these manufacturers or suppliers require that their products be sold at the suggested retail price.*]

I guess the only thing I can say is “Such a deal the flyfishers of Salem, Oregon, got.”

John Colburn

Address Changed?

Missing an Issue?

If you have moved or see any error in your label on this newsletter, please advise both the TU national office and this chapter with separate notices. We maintain our mailing list 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.

This past year we had several reports of members not receiving their newsletters. Make sure we have your correct address, including 9-digit ZIP, and that you have paid your dues. If you are missing a back issue, please contact us for a copy

Renew TU Membership Thru Potomac-Patuxent Chapter

National TU will accept renewals of memberships sent through the chapter. In return, the chapter receives a rebate of \$5 for each renewal processed.

We hope every member will bring their membership renewal notices to the chapter meetings. The chapter will take it from there. We will accept cash, check (payable to *Trout Unlimited*), or credit card for these renewals.

If you forget your renewal notice, we only need to have your membership card so we can obtain your member number.

Help support the chapter and bring your next renewal notice to the monthly meeting.

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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-0903 or NTU-0903.

First time visitors receive two free issues of this publication.

The Last Word

Such a Deal II

I didn't realize when I wrote that "Such a Deal I Got" Last Word column in the January 2003 issue that I was being prophetic. Today I got a newsletter from Fly Country Outfitters, the fly shop in Salem, OR, where I worked before moving to the Soldiers' Home in Washington. George Hadley, the owner and a good friend, wrote, in part:

Fly Country Outfitters is closing its retail store...February 25, 2003. Many of you have asked why...here are the reasons:

1. The sales have declined this last year due to the recession, not too surprising.
2. The Big Box Warehouse [a discount warehouse] in town has drawn off more of our customers than we originally thought would happen. People just can't resist the pull of those cheap flies and stuff. **Example:** A friend of mine just had to buy a dozen of those cheap flies and one of my very expensive \$1.95 flies. He called me after his fishing trip to confirm my worth fear. The

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Return Address:

Potomac-Patuxent Chapter TU
P.O. Box 2865
Wheaton, MD 20915

Wednesday, March 19, 7:00 PM

Joe Bruce Answers Your Questions

Senior Center on Forest Glen Road
Silver Spring, Maryland

FIRST CLASS MAIL