



January 2005

The Conservationist

Potomac-Patuxent Chapter

www.pptu.org

Wednesday, January 19

Annual Fly Tying Meeting

It's time for our annual fly tying meeting and demonstration, one of the chapter's most popular events of the year. Whether you tie or not, this is a good one. Get primed with some of our best hackle wrappers as they show how to create flies from the tiniest dries to bucktail streamers to mongo saltwater creations. We'll also have a kids table, plus an expert knot tier for those line to leader to tippet questions.

So get home from work, take your tie off, then come on down to see some ties that are much more interesting than those you wear for your 9 to 5! ■

—*Sebastian O'Kelly*

THE FLY FISHING SHOW



Mark Your Calendar

Join Us at the Fly Fishing Show! The 13th annual Fly Fishing Show will take place on **January 15th and 16th 2005 at the Reckord Armory, University of Maryland, College Park, MD.**

Daily admission is just \$14 (children under 12 admitted for \$2) or \$24 for both days. As we get closer to the show we will provide more information on this year's speakers and special events. Remember to mark you calendar and as in years past "Fly Fishing is not Part of the Show, it is the Show." For more information log on to: www.flyfishingshow.com.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

The last time I wrote this column I think I whined about my physical condition. A number of you called or sent emails with words of encouragement. Thank you, they meant so much.

A lot has happened to me since then, including a successful surgery to repair two ruptured cervical discs during a short 20 hour stay in the hospital. As I write this piece in early December, I am feeling great with no neural pain that I experienced before the surgery and virtually no remnants of the discomforts due to the surgical procedure itself.

By the time you read this piece I'll have finished the six weeks of severally restricted activity and hopefully no longer have to wear the stiff neck brace. Maybe I will have already tried out the new fly rod and reel I got for a Christmas present. How did I know of this present by early December you ask?

A lot has happened to all of us also since our last newsletter. We successfully went through a national election that will have continued importance to us as we worry over our cold water resources. On the local front, the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) has just been released for the proposed intercounty connector (ICC) highway linking Montgomery and Prince Georges counties. ►

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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

EDITOR: Matt Baun
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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

(Continued from Page 1)

The national elections continue the need for vigilance and our active participation in the national dialogue over natural resources protection vs. their commercial exploitation. Hopefully we can strike a reasonable balance between the competing interests, but the Administration through executive order, moved the balance very far towards the commercial interests by requiring all competing interests to show cause why any commercial exploits should be disrupted. It used to be the other way!

The promotional releases for the ICC's DEIS promise improved traffic flows and economic benefits to the County with little environmental consequences, a marked departure from the previous three such studies done in earlier years and different political climates. Hopefully these are fair conclusions. We'll join with other interested groups to review the DEIS.

From time to time I remind the membership of the need for new volunteers to step forward and help support the administrative functions necessary for an active chapter like ours to operate. We have been fortunate in that a number of great folks did just that. Now we are in need of help in our membership activities and in the Vice President's position. Jim Greco has asked to be relieved of his position and we are actively seeking a replacement for Jim; customarily that would mean a replacement for me in May during our next elections. Jack Dawson is moving to another area and we need to fill behind him. Give me a note or a call if you are in a position to help.

This month's program is our annual fly tying demonstrations. It is always a well attended affair. Next month we'll begin a new course in fly tying for beginners and intermediate tiers. Past classes were sold out quickly, and I suspect by the time we get this newsletter the February's class will be filled. Jim Greco is again teaching this course and should be consulted if you have not registered. ■

—Lou Boezi



2005 Potomac Patuxent Fly Tying Class

If you have decided this is the year you will finally take the plunge and learn how to tie flies, this is the perfect opportunity. Our chapter is once again sponsoring a 6 week tying class for its members. This year, Jim Greco and his able colleagues, Paul Prevost, Dave Wittman, Jack Dawson, and Dave Piske have volunteered to teach the class. These tiers bring a wealth of experience to the classroom.

Primarily aimed at novice tiers, this class will also benefit intermediate tiers who would like to refresh some of their basic skills. The emphasis will be on teaching a solid foundation in the basics of tying nymphs, dries, emergers, streamers and terrestrials. The class will be held at the Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center, located at 1000 Forest Glen Road, Silver Spring, MD, on Tuesday nights from 7:00 PM until 9:00 PM on February 8, 15, 22, and March 1, 8, and 15.

Students should have their own basic tools (contact Jim for a list) and vise with them on the first night of class. For PPTU chapter members the \$95.00 tuition fee covers the room rental, class handouts, and tying materials for flies to be tied in the class with the balance of revenue going to the PPTU Chapter for use in its education and conservation efforts. Non chapter members are welcome to join, too, and their tuition will be \$110.00 which will also include a subscription to our newsletter, *The Conservationist*.

Thanks to the generosity of Mr. Randall Kaufmann, author and owner of Kaufmann's Streamborn Inc. fly fishing shops and catalog company (<http://www.kman.com>) this year we will have a reference text available for class members. *Fly Tying Made Easy for Beginners*, by Randall Kaufmann, is a wonderful, full color tying manual which normally retails for \$21.95 and will be available to students for the reduced cost of \$11.00.

Anyone interested may contact Jim Greco by phone at 410-997-2787 or email at Jimg6128@aol.com. Registration will be on a first paid first served basis with a limit of 20 students. ▶

As long as there are openings available, students can also sign up at our PPTU booth at the College Park Fly Fishing Show, or at our January chapter meeting. This class fills every year, so register early if you want to take the class. ■



—Jim Greco

Tackle and Tactic Tips

Winter is a great time to review and inventory all your gear. Floating fly lines that are showing very minute cracks over the first several feet from their tip are worthy of immediate replacement. The cracks allow water to seep into the line's braided core and cause the tip to sink.

If you are replacing the backing or have a new reel consider that the fly line occupies a lot of space for its length compared to the backing. I like a lot of backing even on my lightest reels so that I can walk down a stream and then back up the other side to retrieve a valuable fly lodged on the far side of a deep pool. The smaller weight lines are not designed to be cast any great distance, so why carry an extra 40 feet of fly line you cannot cast or mend with a 3 or 4 weight rod? I take a double taper line for 4 weights and smaller lines and cut them in half. One half is saved in a Ziploc bag in my freezer for use several years later. Casting more than 43 feet of a #3 or #4 line, plus the leader, is just not something you will ever do with regularity. Use the extra space for more backing. For a 5 weight system, I use a Weight Forward line and just remove about 20' of the running line butt section before loading it on the reel. For a 6 weight, I remove only 10–12 feet of the rear end of the weight forward line to give me more space for backing. We are not going to be casting 90 feet of either of these lines nor need to mend that much of the running line.

Check all your flies and lures. Do they have good sharp points? Are the windings on the heads of the flies still tight or do they need a drop of head cement or even a quick wrap of new thread? Repairing a slightly damaged fly can mean a serviceable spare in your box. Check your waders for actual ▶

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Myths That Fly Anglers Live By

Myths may be defined as ideas or beliefs we invent for some purpose, often to elevate ourselves in one way or another. We fly anglers are not immune to myths, and at times I think we are even more prone to them than are other anglers who are viewed (by us) as lower on the food chain. Over the years I've heard many angling myths, but a few of them are especially noteworthy. These involve a kind of superiority, and they even at times slip into moral superiority. Here are three that may be worth pondering:

Myth 1: Stocked trout are dumb and easy to catch, whereas wild trout are much harder to catch, and thus are more worthy of our efforts. This myth is captured by the often-repeated analogy to the effect that "a wild trout is to a stocked trout what an eagle is to a chicken." This is such a neat analogy that I have found myself offering it up from time to time. However, the analogy is also wrong-minded. Some of the easiest fish I have ever caught are stream bred. Those wild fish that are rarely fished over can be amazingly gullible, often falling prey to flies that are so badly tied that they are painful to look at. On the other hand, if you want to give yourself a lesson in angling humility, try your skills on the stocked trout above the Allenberry Dam on the Yellow Breeches. There live some of the most damnably fussy fish in the world -- and all are stocked. Trout that have been fished over a lot and caught and released several times, and those living in slow, clear, and food-rich water, can be impossibly hard to trick, whether they are stocked or wild.

Myth 2: There is a thing that represents "true" fly fishing, and everything other than that is merely a cheap imitation. Anglers who are stricken by this myth often say things like "only fishing with a dry fly or an unweighted nymph is real fly fishing." Or, "fishing with wooly buggers is not fly fishing." It is as if there is a thing, "true fly fishing," that represents true gold rather than an inferior alloy and, and this was deemed to be so by the gods. My response to fishing buddies who display this myth is the query, "how many angels are on the head of a pin?" Anyhow, the myth is a good example ►

of what I like to think of as "hardening of the categories." It reflects a kind of either-or thinking and ignores the fact that the phenomenon called fly fishing and its many possible definitions are constructions or inventions of people. There is no thing that is "true" fly fishing in any absolute sense.

Myth 3: Releasing fish after catching them is morally superior, whereas keeping them for the table is morally decadent. This myth allows its proponents to set themselves apart from fishing low-lives (myself included) who enjoy eating trout when they are taken from waters in which they will not survive and/or are overpopulating. It makes releasing fish into a moral principle and seems to ignore the fact that it isn't especially kind to repeatedly traumatize (catch, release, catch, etc.) these little creatures. I suspect in the mind's eye of most anglers, the reason for catch-and-release is simply to have more fish for us to catch, and the corresponding fact that in a time of angler overpopulation, if we didn't have catch-and-release, we wouldn't have enough fish to catch in order to support our habit. This understandably selfish motive then gets turned into a moral thing that allows us to feel good about ourselves. The epitome of this myth was displayed many years ago when a fishing buddy and I were on the Salmon River (NY) fishing for steelhead. We accidentally hooked a Chinook that was just this side of the happy hunting ground. It was essentially dead.

When we joylessly pulled the salmon to the shore, we took the hook out and left the fish on the bank to take its last breath. From upriver we heard a booming voice saying, "This is catch-and-release. Return that fish to the water." In shocked unison, my buddy and I replied, "The fish is dead." The voice of all goodness rejoined, "This is catch-and-release -- return the fish to the water." Following my cardinal principle of never arguing on the river, I kicked the dead fish back into the water and pondered what catch-and-release was about in the context of fish that spawn and die in a watershed in which no reproduction occurs.

Myths are not bad things. They can make us feel good and often serve to further important social causes and institutions. But some fishing myths are just downright annoying. Or maybe they exist so that we can have fun arguing about them. ■

—Charlie Gelson

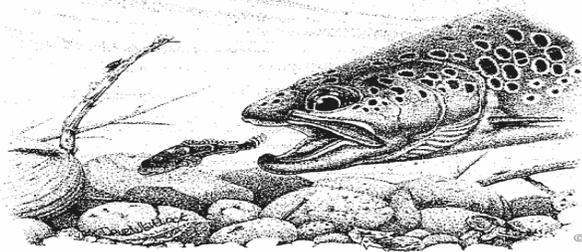
Hunting season will continue through most of February in some sections of the Park, so be careful. In early February, I intend to replace some of the signs, particularly around all the major access points on the river. We need your help, so please contact me at or before the January meeting. Hip waders will do fine, and we may cover a couple of large sections of the stream. If it is a pleasant day, we could catch a few holdover or wild trout!

If you want to help float stock the trout this year and do not plan to be at the January or February meetings, send me an email (jmsheppar@aol.com) or call me (301-725-5559) BEFORE the February meeting (this will be announced again in the FEBRUARY issue). If you have not helped on this activity, you must have chest waders and be able to spend a weekday helping out.

Although this is strenuous work, it is very rewarding, as you typically get to see 1.5–2.5 miles of stream: every deep hole, submerged log, and slippery rock can become permanently imbedded in your memory or another part of your anatomy if you trip up! This activity is not suggested for those just learning to wade. A sign-up list will be at the January and February meetings. If you are already on my Email list of volunteers, please do not contact me—I will be contacting you again with details on dates for stocking in February. We hope to start stockings some time after the February meeting and be mostly done by the first week of March.

Next month we hope to announce some progress on the establishment of a new trout fishery in this watershed. Stay tuned! We hope this will come to fruition by the 2006 season. ■

—Jay Sheppard



Dave Whitlock @ www.davewhitlock.com

Tackle and Tactic Tips

(Continued from Page 3)

or developing leaks. Fill up one leg at a time to the level of a knee and search for leaks coming through the material. Slowly force the water up the first leg and into the second. Using a crayon or china marker, mark the pin hole leaks with small tick marks above and to one side. Carefully inspect the area on the inside of the knees for abrasion. Over the years I have found that these areas can slowly wear by rubbing against each other as I walk. Obviously, the seat of a chest wader can show signs of wear from sliding off a log or stream bank. Make any required repairs. Hang all waders to prevent creases and keep them dry in a dark, cool place.

Check your reel for dirt accumulation or wear. Good reels should be lubricated only where needed, while one spot not to be lubricated is the pad on any drag system. If you hear a tiny ticking sound as the reel is rotated, then you may have something damaged or out of alignment. These issues may not be a problem when fighting a 13" trout, but these could spell a lost monster fish of a lifetime.

Consider emptying your fishing vest and resorting all the flies that are in the wrong box. You may also discover some long lost flies or other gear. My wife insists that I also toss mine in the washing machine at least twice a year to flush out all the sweat and dirt. How old are your tippet spools and leaders? Mono weakens with age; most mono is greatly weakened after 3 years under the best of storage conditions. Are your nippers and gadget retrievers still in good shape? Do not wait until the next fishing trip to find your waders leak or a new line or fly would help catch fish. ■

—Jay Sheppard

ADDRESS CHANGED?

If you have moved or see any error in your mailing labels (*Trout* or *Conservationist*), please notify **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.

Waders - How to Select and Care for Them

Did you receive a gift certificate for the Holidays and are now considering some new waders? I have been frequently asked what kind, type, etc., to get. My clear preference is for chest waders, as I only use hip boots a few times per year. Where I fish, the water always seem to be an inch deeper than the hippers! Besides, chest waders allow me to cross almost any stream at some point. Equally important, I am able to recover over 100 more flies per year by having chest waders, which pays for them in one season. The most important feature of any wader is its construction. Specifically, does it have nylon (or canvas) laminated to at least the outside? The plain rubber or vinyl waders may be cheap, but they only last until you encounter the first branch or submerged log. Nylon-coated waders permit most sharp objects to be brushed aside without damage. The nylon types may cost twice as much as the plain types but will last 4–9 years.

There are two general styles of construction: stocking-foot and those with the boots attached to the wader. The light weight stocking foot waders are terrific for long hikes and traveling, wearing in boats or cars, and to use on local streams without much brush, fences, or downed timber.

Always use a heavy wool sock or special neoprene bootie between the wader and the wading shoe and use a gravel guard above the shoe top to prevent any sand from getting inside. Sand can wear the stocking feet out in a matter of days. Stocking foot waders are slightly more expensive, since you also need the wading shoes, gravel guards and similar items. Waders with attached boots are generally cheaper, heavier and just as durable.

Another major material now in use is neoprene. Waders come in several thicknesses and are always covered with nylon or other durable fabric. These are really great for those sensitive to cold or those chasing fish in the colder months. We are just far enough south that I do not think they would be useful for everyone fishing locally. After the warmer spring days arrive, a neoprene chest wader can become very hot after a 5-minute hike down the trail.

Breathable waders are also now on the market. These are expensive. I have not heard of any ►

major or consistent problems with them. Most of us sweat a lot while fishing, so these do solve some of the condensation problem inside the waders. They are very light and usually have a neoprene bootie in the stocking-foot styles. I would not wear anything else now that I have tried them over the past 6–7 years.

Chest waders are good for other reasons: greater heat retention. When falling into cold water, a pair of hip boots give almost no further protection from heat loss. Chest waders usually have a belt around their middle, to prevent large volumes of water from entering and trap warm air and water inside. Keep the belt as high as possible and keep the top drawstring tight to reduce the amount of water coming into the waders **when**, not IF, you take a spill. Allow one extra boot size for extra socks. During colder periods (water temp. less than 45°), I wear quilted long underwear or sweat pants to trap more air and stay warmer in my light-weight waders. I have fished in 32° water with the air never above 28° for a whole day and not gotten cold with such protection.

If you plan on wading very rocky streams (North Branch or Savage River?), you need felt soles, otherwise the lug-type soles usually work well locally. Some do not care for them, but I find the Stealth Wading Shoes to work just fine; I particularly like the lack of snow buildup in the winter and dripping water in my car from the felt. If you need real traction on some streams, get a set of pull-on booties or sandals that have studs or cleats for the best grip on slippery rocks. ■

— Jay Sheppard

A Call to Action: PPTU Needs Your Help

PPTU needs to fill the following positions in the coming weeks. If you've been looking for opportunities to help out the Chapter, this is the time to do it. If you want to know more about what all is involved in doing the duties of these positions, please contact Lou Boezi at 301-593-5889.

- **Vice President**
- **Outings Chair**

The Swing Drift

I recently took a class on winter fishing in the Yakima River, and the swing drift was one of the techniques we covered to get fish out of big, deep holes. Although this is a popular West Coast winter tactic, I have never heard of it on the East Coast. It is a big water technique, but I can think of a few spots on the Savage and Gunpowder that I might find it useful.

The Yakima is big water (the present 1000 ft³/sec flowrate is considered barely enough to cover the bottom), and features little cover at this flowrate. Accordingly, the fish spend a lot of time in the winter in the deep pools. These pools can be a couple of hundred yards long, and the fish may be anywhere in them. The swing drift lets you cover all this water efficiently.

The best line for this is a sink tip at about 3 inches/second. Not having one of those, I used a detachable sink tip on my floating line. This works, but shall we simply say that casting it is "different". We used size 8 green woolly buggers tied unweighted (our guide/instructor liked to put the weight in the line, not the fly) and 3X tippet. According to our guide, the fly choice was not critical (woolly buggers, Patuxent Specials, and similar stuff will all work).

Let's fish a pool via the swing drift method:

Start at the upstream end of the pool, maybe just upstream of the riffle tail at the head of the pool. You want your first cast to swing your fly over the dropoff at the end of the riffle. Cast straight across the stream as far as is prudent.

After your fly hits the water, take one or two steps downstream. This both helps the fly to sink and sets you in position for the next cast. Once the line tightens, you are fishing. The stream current will provide all the action required; there is no need to strip the fly back. Keep your rod tip pointed at the line, with only enough angle to provide a shock absorber when a fish strikes. The fly will travel in a quarter circle through the deep part of the pool to a point downstream of you. When the fly finishes its drift behind you, ►



retrieve it and repeat the process. Remember to take your steps downstream after your fly hits the water.

With a swing drift, you can cover a lot of water very thoroughly. Since you are fishing far away from where you are standing, stealth isn't a big issue with swing drift fishing. On the winter Yakima, swing drifts will be typically used during early morning and late afternoon. Around noon the midges come out, and people shift over to dry midges for about 2 hours during the midge hatch. After the midge hatch stops for the day, it's back to swing drift fishing.

—Bill Miller

PPTU Mentor Program

Available to members of PPTU current with their dues, Ken Bowyer or Paul Prevost will conduct one on one streamside fly-fishing instruction. Interested members 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.

Contact Ken at 301-627-7154 or e-mail: kenbowyer@comcast.net

Contact Paul at 202-244-0168 or e-mail: pprevost@hotmail.com

'05 Proposed Outings

The Chapter regularly sponsors monthly outings to area trout waters. Here is the proposed schedule for Spring, 2005. More details on these trips are available on the web at www.pptu.org.

- February (TBD), Saturday trip to Beaver Creek, MD
- March (TBD), Trip to Falling Springs Branch, PA
- April (TBD), Trip to Rapidan River, VA
- May, Memorial Day Weekend Trip to Western MD

Letter to the Editor

It is a hearty thank you for the efforts of some, especially Mr. Ken Bowyer who willingly gave of his time and capabilities to help some fledgling fly anglers. My son, Matthew, and I had been trying to "hook-up" with Ken since last year's fly fishing show in College Park. It wasn't until September that we were able to do so. I believe that it is an honorable program and certainly a way that more mature/skilled individuals are able to guide green-horns such as ourselves. I can only hope that my ►

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.



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son and myself. will also be able to "pass it along" with others as time progresses. Fishing is a passion although enjoyed so infrequently but there is much more to fishing than just catching fish. Forgive my wordiness if you would please, but do pass this note of thanks along to others in the PPTU chapter. ■

—Mike Kalinowski

Got Clip Art?

If you fish, you daydream and if you daydream you do at the office, probably during a long staff meeting. And if you do all of these things, your daydreams probably end up in your notebook in something that may be loosely defined as "art."

Though, I don't have much need for your staff meeting notes, I do want your sketches so I can use them in the newsletter. Black ink on plain white paper works best. Mail or email them. Please contact me at 301-937-8015. ■

—Matt Baun, Editor

FIRST CLASS MAIL