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Don't Tell Me What To Door Fonts and Poaching

You'll notice that this column is in a font that you don't usually see in the Conservationist. It's called "Comic Sans" and there's an organized movement to have it banned. There are web sites devoted to its demise, and even bumper stickers. Of course, when I found out about it, I had to use it.

That seems to be human nature. Tell someone they can't or shouldn't do something, and that person will instinctively react with "don't tell me what to do". This applies to fishing regulations as well as to selection of type faces. Put special regulations on a section of the stream and you can bet that someone is going to poach that section just to be defiant.

Only when one of two things happens is that person (typist or poacher) likely to desist. The first is when there are strong disincentives to continue their behavior. If I were typing a document for my employer and were told not to use comic sans or I'd be fired, I pretty sure I wouldn't use it - if I knew they were serious. Likewise, without strong penalties for poaching, that are both enforced and publicized when a violator is caught, it's unlikely that we're going to see an end to poaching anytime soon. We as individuals can't do anything about the publicity, but we can at least call the poacher hotline the next time we see someone with a string of fish in a catch & release section of stream.

The other thing that can dissuade someone from using an absurd font or from poaching is to not make arbitrary rules in the first place. Aesthetic sensibility is not a very good reason for banning a font - there is, after all, no accounting for taste. On the other hand, my employer can easily articulate a valid reason why not to use comic sans - the government will only accept proposals submitted in certain fonts. It may be that the government is being arbitrary, but my employer certainly isn't, and course I'll comply. (Actually, the government isn't being arbitrary either; they have a valid reason that takes too much space to articulate here.)

The aesthetics of fly fishing vs. worm dunking really isn't a very good reason to designate sections of streams "fly fishing only" if those regulations do nothing to enhance the fishery. On some streams, such as the Gunpowder Falls, the regulations obviously do a tremendous amount of good for the fishery. On other streams, the designation seems to be arbitrary - if there's zero chance of trout surviving into the summer, why put special regulations in place? Well, there is at least one reason I can think of, and that involves access. Some landowners will allow fly fishing, but not bait fishing, because of the trash problem associated with the latter. If there's a good reason for special regulations, make it known. If there is no good reason, get rid of the special regulations - it only encourages law breaking, and alienates potential allies against anti-fishing groups such as PETA - who had darned well better not tell me what to do.

Bob Dietz

TROUT IN THE CLASSROOM UPDATE & CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Nearing their release in May and June, around 2,000 rainbow trout fry are growing and well in 18 Maryland elementary and middle schools under PPTU's Trout in the Classroom (TIC) program. Supplied in January as fertilized eggs, the fingerlings will be stocked in local waters just before the end of the school year. And hopefully some of you will be able to volunteer a half day to help with one or more of the fingerling release programs in Howard and Montgomery counties. The four Howard County schools will release into the Middle Patuxent near Columbia.; the six Montgomery County schools will stock fingerlings into Little Seneca at Boyds.

TIC is a cornerstone of PPTU's youth education effort. Started in three Montgomery County schools just a few years ago through chapter initiative and funding, the program now has expanded to six Maryland counties. PPTU's work is part of a widening national TIC network promoting cold water conservation by helping to develop the next generation of environmental stewards. Today's youngsters hold the future of trout fishing in their hands. They are the ones who in the years ahead will help protect our threatened trout waters and enjoy the pleasures of recreational fishing. TU national now recognizes TIC as an important initiative and funds a staff position to promote exchange of ideas and experience among the various programs nationwide.

The Maryland program is a partnership involving the schools, PPTU and the state Department of Natural Resources. Each school provides its own miniature hatchery, mainly an aquarium, chiller and water filter. PPTU supplies both fertilized Kamloops rainbow trout eggs donated by a hatchery in Washington state, trout food and technical support. Chapter members also help with release programs, demonstrating fly tying and casting and helping with on-site stream surveys. DNR provides permits for trout rearing and stocking, offers technical support to schools and often provides on-site help on release dates as well.

How about getting involved with TIC as a volunteer for a few hours on one of the release days?

The dates so far confirmed are:

Little Seneca -

Tuesday, May 5; Friday, May 8; Thursday, May 28; Monday, June 1; Monday, June 8; Thursday, June 11

Middle Patuxent -

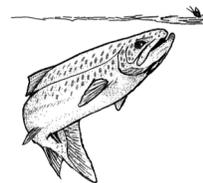
Thursday, May 14; Wednesday, May 27; Friday, May 29

We're looking particularly for volunteers willing to give up to three hours or so of their time on one or more of those days mainly to give eager kids some hands-on exposure to the basics of fly casting and/or tying.

Volunteers who could talk to kids about the ecology of a trout stream, e.g. what kinds of bug and other animal and plant life are found there and on the banks, would also be welcome. If you can spare some time to help, please get in touch with Dave Wittman (301 725-6791) or Jim Greene (301 652-3848), TIC program co-coordinators.

Jim Greene, CEO Waterwisp Flies

<jgreene@waterwisp.com>
<www.waterwisp.com>



Early Segments begin at 7 pm by Nick Weber

Tying Bench

This month will find one of our best tiers tying some of his best top-water patterns. Charlie Gelso will favor us with some of his favorite dry flies. He has chosen realistic caddises, including the hairwing caddis, the henryville special, and the enigmatic 3-hackle as the subject of his affection. In addition, Charlie says that May is a good time to begin using these patterns, if you haven't already. So break out the deer hair and whatever other materials Charlie would have us use and enjoy a little creation at the bench that will help fill our memory bank for catches throughout the season.

Angler's Corner

Come by the Anglers Corner and listen to the tales told about the just finished outing to Central Pennsylvania. Catch Dennis Covert, our Outing Chair, and undoubtedly some of his cohorts holding their arms out to describe fish fights and lengths smiling all the while. Query Dennis about his suggestions for the summer and where and when the next joint stream adventure will occur.

Have an idea for an article, or something you'd like to share with other chapter members? Material is welcome (and cheerfully accepted).

The deadline is the 12th of the month for the next month's issue. Please send articles, ideas, etc, preferably in MS Word or in the body of the e-mail to earthmomjo@att.net.

*Thanks,
Joanne Kla, Editor*

Homecoming

By Michael MacWilliams

Every beginning fly fisherman, at some point in his or her initiation into the sport, is confronted with a place that is completely confounding. Yes there are also places that, even as a beginner, one can manage to pull out a few fish every now and again. Were it not for these places where we were able to catch fish, many of us might not have been instilled with the desire to push on. However, once the seed is fully rooted, I think it is the places that prove most difficult that haunt us, keep us long hours at the vice, keep us reaching for the wisdom of the angling authors that line our shelves, and ultimately drive us more deeply into this sport.

Reflecting back on my own initiation into the sport, the stream that consistently drew me out of bed with the dawn only to send me back fishless with the evening, was Big Hunting Creek. Famous, possibly more so for the names of those who have fished it than the big fish who cruise its crystal clear pools, Big Hunting Creek lies nestled in the cradle of the Catoctin Mountains. Located a stones throw from the presidential retreat at Camp David, Big Hunting Creek and its highly educated trout have been pursued by many of Washington's most illustrious residents. Among these, President Eisenhower and President Carter were both ardent frequenters of Big Hunting Creek during their visits to Camp David.

During the spring of 1993, my initiation into the sport received a shot in the arm from another of frequenter of the retreat at Camp David, the newly elected Bill Clinton. Little did he know, that by instating a federal job freeze that first winter, he had sealed the fate of my upcoming internship, and left me, the proud owner of a new fly rod, with a lot of time on my hands. So, while my resume shuffled through the hands of various bureaucrats and beltway bandits, I had the luxury of spending my week-days on relatively uncrowded streams while the rest of Washington was hard at work.

I'd like to think that when Mr. Clinton's cavalcade was driving along Big Hunting Creek on the way to or from Camp David, he may have looked out of his window and seen me standing in the stream enjoying the vacation he had unknowingly bestowed upon me. If he did look down though, he most certainly would not have seen me into a fish. The truth be told, despite my repeated and whole-hearted efforts, I did not even hook a single trout at Big Hunting Creek that summer. Or the next. Or even the next.

Looking back, it is now hard to understand why I returned to Big Hunting Creek again and again when my trips to my many other home waters proved infinitely more successful. I rarely went fishless on the Gunpowder River and, even when I was first starting, twenty or more fish days were common when casting to native brook trout in the streams of the Shenandoah National Park. Yet the fishing logs don't lie. Often I forsook these waters to make yet another attempt to elude the elusive trout of Big Hunting Creek.

Certainly, part of the draw was the size of the trout that are clearly visible in the creek's quiet pools. Although I can't say that I condone the practice, the creek is routinely stocked with large numbers of trout that are almost all trophy fish much larger than the small stream could naturally support. Walking along the stream, large trout are often clearly visible, and they are so used to seeing people and being cast to that they seldom move from their lie until you are almost close enough to touch them with your rod tip

To a novice fly fisher used to catching small brook trout, the prospect of catching these large rainbows and browns was too enticing to pass up. And although I had never caught one of these fish on a fly rod, a tale of childhood poaching reveals that I did land a nice rainbow here almost a decade before: Camping in the Catoctin Mountains as a young Boy Scout, I had wandered out of the woods – rod in hand – to try my luck on the local stream. A proficient kid with a spinning rod, I reached into my pocket for a small bit of bagel left over from breakfast, and placed a ball of dough on my small hook. My rig consisted of a single hook with one split shot placed five inches above the hook. Drifting the bagel along the edge of a large rock brought out a nice sixteen-inch rainbow. Proudly carrying my catch as I climbed up the bank, I was soon to learn that these waters were restricted to artificial lures only and were managed as a catch-and-release fishery!

Haunted by this big fish in particular, and the many others that I saw on each subsequent visit to Big Hunting Creek, I was determined to reproduce my childhood success here, but this time legally and with a fly.

Across several summers I made countless trips to Big Hunting Creek, and the log reads almost as the fishing diary of Alonso Hagen in *Trout Fishing in America* or the *Angling Journal* of our own fabled Paul N. Pultroon. If I summed up my first three summers at Big Hunting Creek it would read something like: Fish Risen: 3. Fish Hooked: 0. Fish Landed: 0. Those first summers, the few fish raised were even counted as minor victories. After all, a trip on which I was able to rise a fish was certainly more exciting than one in which I couldn't even get a fish to acknowledge my fly's presence.

Although I may not have known it at the time, all of these trips served a fundamental role in shaping the direction of my education in fly fishing. My first March Browns were tied to imitate the early season hatches in the hopes that I could catch one of these trout before the water became low and crystal clear. My collection of books on tying and fishing terrestrials grew as I tried to figure out how to catch these trout during the summer months when the water was low and the insect activity was almost non-existent. However, my time in the east was coming to a close and, in the end, I moved west without succeeding in catching one of the large trout of Big Hunting Creek.

Years later, as I found myself winding through the mountains south of Gettysburg on the way back from fishing with a friend on the Yellow Breeches, I decided that it was time to revisit my old stomping ground at Big Hunting Creek. It was a warm humid morning, and the forecast called for temperatures in the high 90's. When I stopped in Thurmont to pick up a license, the air was already thick and oppressively hot.

Heading out of town, the road soon picked up the creek and I found myself winding along the familiar mountain road that led into the Catoctin Mountain Park. The water in the creek was lower than I ever remember seeing it, and as I walked downstream I began to question the rationality of laying down \$31 for an out-of-state license to fish this small trickle of water that I once considered one of my local streams.

I watched the water carefully as I sat beside the stream rigging up my small four-weight rod. I hadn't seen a single fish as I had walked down the stream, and the water was so low that I had seen very few spots that looked even remotely promising. Nonetheless, I was here, and more than anything, I wanted to see whether the experience gained in the years that had transpired since my last visit here more than four years ago was sufficient to help me unravel the riddle of these highly educated and finicky fish.

I felt a small glimmer of hope when a small trout nudged my size 20 parachute ant. Even after resting him, I was incapable of rising him again on subsequent casts. My hopes faded as I moved up past him to cast into the next pool. Perhaps, I reflected, this is how it should be, and those big trout would remain in my consciousness as a challenge to return to and think about on long winter nights. However, despite the heat, I was not ready to admit defeat quite yet.

Ahead of me was a small pocket of water slightly smaller in diameter than a casting ring. As I reflected on the hours spent casting on the platform in Golden Gate Park that separated me from the fisherman that had cast to these same pools years before, I began to believe that I was finally up to the challenge before me. My small parachute ant alighted softly on the far side of the pocket and had only drifted a few inches back towards me before the water erupted around it and I was into a nice brown trout. I stood up and moved closer as the fish darted back and forth across his small pool looking for somewhere to escape. As I reached down and removed the hook from his mouth, I smiled with satisfaction at my first Big Hunting Creek trout (on a fly).

My hopes buoyed as I moved up to the next pool, but my prospects were suddenly dimmed as I looked longingly up at my fly in the branches above me and down at the empty spot in my fly box where my row of small ants had been. A grin crossed my face when I noted that my fly was in good company among the half dozen other flies that decorated the limb that would be its final resting place. The various March Browns, Beetles and other terrestrials that decorated the limb above me demonstrated the degree of education that the trout in the pool ahead of me had received. Many of the trout in this stream probably see more flies in a season than I typically carry in my vest. Perhaps it is this degree of education, provided by the many storied anglers who have fished this stream, that has drawn me back to fish here again. Unlike the wild trout of the McCloud, Fall and Yuba Rivers that have become my usual quarry, here in the cradle of the Catoctin Mountains I was again faced with some of the most educated trout I have ever known.

Scanning my boxes for a new fly, my eyes fixed on a row of midges, and I attached a size 22 CDC Griffiths Gnat to the end of my 6X tippet. Having been educated by the various flies that decorated the limb over my head, I shifted my position and roll cast into the next pool. Almost immediately I found myself lifting my rod, as I was into another brown slightly larger than the previous one. He held deeply in the water, but eventually I was able to move him and bring him to hand.

Despite this nice brace of brown trout, I still felt that these were not quite the large trout that haunted me. Big Hunting Creek is renowned for its large trout that hold in clear still water. These fish are so used to being cast over that they seldom move, even when a sloppy cast collapses almost on top of them. However, the two browns that I had caught were from the pocket water and not from the stillwater pools that hold the largest fish. Ahead of me though, was a long shallow run, and as I prepared to make my first cast a silver flash at the head of the run caught my eye.

I sat down on a rock from which I had a clear cast and studied this trout for a while. This was the kind of fish I remembered: the large trout in slow clear water that kept me coming here and leaving fishless time and time again. Finally I prepared to cast, figuring that at most I had one chance. My first cast landed slightly above the fish and he moved slightly as it crossed through his field of vision but he did not take it. I rested him, looking through my fly boxes, but eventually decided to make a second cast with the same fly – he did look at it after all.

On my second cast, my fly disappeared in a small swirl. I set the hook and almost instantly the pool came alive with activity. As the trout darted from rock to rock I was amazed at the number of large fish that moved from their positions as the large rainbow nosed into every hole he could find. Experiencing little success in his home pool, the trout headed down towards me and into the pocket water I had just finished fishing.

Looking down on this large fish resting between my feet before gaining the strength to swim back into his pool, I reflected on how this fish could practically be the twin of the large rainbow I had caught here on a bit of bagel nearly twenty years ago. This fish, like its predecessor, is one that will stay with me, and draw me back to these quiet waters nestled in the heart of the Catoctin Mountains.

Michael MacWilliams is originally from Maryland. He now lives in San Francisco, California, and is a member of the Golden Gate Angling and Casting Club. This article originally appeared in the Bulletin of the Golden Gate Angling and Casting Club and is reprinted with permission.

Tackle and Tactic Tips

Jay Sheppard

Here are a number of tips for fishers to help them over the summer and coming years. Have a great summer fishing and leave a few uneducated trout for me to catch in our favorite streams

- 1) Do not ever apply insect repellent, sun screen or any other lotions to the PALMS of your hands when fly fishing. To apply such lotions to your face or neck, use the back of your hands with a liberal supply. Such lotions and repellents can seriously damage fly lines. For insect repellents, I much prefer the stick applicator and not the spray type—compact, direct application, no muss.
- 2) A number of us have left a rod on top of our car while we changed out of our waders and other gear and then driven off with the rod still on top. I have done this mistake three times and lost two rods I built myself. I have finally learned that the first thing I do after I open the car is to take the rod apart to store in its case or lay it inside for the next stop. Then I take off my vest. One must also be careful of where the keys are placed, too. Get a routine established and follow it to avoid losing rods and reels.
- 3) Use a gel fly floatant. Sprays are largely wasted into the atmosphere. The gels melt on your finger tip (a tiny drop is all one needs) and is then squeezed into the dry fly after it is tied onto the tippet and before it is cast to the water. Floatants do not work very well on an already soaked fly. Before casting, allow the liquified floatant inside the fly to cool and congeal. If the air temperature is less than about 60° a half dozen false casts should cool the floatant back to a gel. I also will let the fly freely float a few feet in front of me or in some small eddy where no drag will suck the fly under the water. One will see a small oil slick appear as the fly is first dropped on the water. Keep redropping the fly on the water until it has cooled the gel and no slick is visible. The idea is that the gel fill all the microscopic spaces inside the body of the fly—hackle, dubbing, etc. If the fly is drawn underwater while the floatant is still liquified, then the fly will absorb water far faster than desired. Apply some floatant to the tip of the floating fly line before it gets wet, too; that will clean the tip and help keep it afloat.
- 4) If there is a chance of an afternoon rain storm, pack one of the cheap plastic ponchos in your vest. They cost about \$1 and can be cut shorter to just cover you, your vest and wader tops. They take almost no space and are all one needs in a summer shower.
- 5) Change fish or change flies. Do not pound over the same water with the same fly for very long. I take most of my fish on the first good float over a trout, a few on the second and rarely on the third or later floats. So I either change where I am casting or change flies, if the trout continues to rise. Three good

floats of a dry or nymph over the same spot are about maximum effort I will use. Occasionally the trout is in a rhythm and the fly needs to pass over it at a precise moment in time for a take to occur; other than in that case, I will change flies or move to another fish. Beating the water with the same fly that is cast to the same spots for many minutes at a time does not catch fish.

6) Stop and observe what the trout are doing. Take the time to carefully watch what various trout are doing. Either get up on a bridge over the water or just sit on a rock in midstream where one can watch individual trout. As always, a pair of Polaroid sunglasses and a dark cap over the eyes will greatly improve your view of the trout. You want to know what the trout are doing. Are they chasing each other? (Usually not a good time for catching a trout.) Are they periodically moving to one side or the other to capture nymphs or other suspended prey? Can you see what prey they are taking or ignoring? Where are all the fish of interest located in the pool? Where can I enter the pool with as little disturbance as possible to any trout? Patience and observation will usually be rewarded more often than plunging headlong into a pool with no ideas as to what the fish are taking.

Patuxent Report

Jay Sheppard

Spend some time exploring the river's length and all its twists and turns. Don't forget to try to flies-only section below Brighton Dam and not just the lures and flies section above rt. 97 and the Triadelphia Reservoir. There are miles of trout waters within 30 miles of the White House or downtown Baltimore. Once the real heat of summer is upon us, plan on being on the water at first light and finished for the day before Noon. One may be rewarded with a nice trout on any of these waters.

MAC Accomplishments

The Mid-Atlantic Council of Trout Unlimited has a rich history of conservation work in the State of Maryland over the past 30 years. Some of the significant accomplishments of the Council and its member chapters:

- Initiated legislation that outlaws the use of chlorine in sewage treatment plants that discharge into natural trout streams, protects landowners and fishers on private property, increases fishing license fees to raise more funds for conservation work, and protects streams through a state stormwater management law
- Planned and funded the planting of countless numbers of trees and completed many dozens of other stream and riparian restoration projects throughout Maryland that benefit not just the local ecosystem but ultimately down to the Chesapeake Bay.

- Besides Trout in the Classroom, has strongly supported youth education outreach activities, including a summer camp for young fishers, Boy Scout merit badges, and budding fishery biologists' college scholarships.
- Provided considerable expertise and funds for Project Healing Waters, a wounded veterans' recovery program that started at Walter Reed Army Hospital.
- Raised funds to support major stream restoration projects on dozens of trout waters across the State.
- Sent considerable financial aid to conservation projects benefiting trout and salmon around the country from nearby Pennsylvania and Virginia to the American West.
- Worked for 25 years to make Gunpowder Falls and lower Savage River self-sustaining trout fisheries, which are now two of the best fisheries in the eastern U.S., as well as promoted the establishment of new trout fisheries from urban to rural environments across Maryland.
- Persuaded Maryland to adopt regulations to protect trout from habitat destruction and losses, to increase the number of special trout streams, to adopt a sound trout management policy, and to establish a requirement that instream construction be prohibited between September 30 and April 1 to protect spawning trout and eggs in trout streams.
- Conducted dozens of fishing clinics in urban areas for kids, taught about water quality and watershed management through the Trout in the Classroom program, and held many dozens more workshops, classes and clinics for fishers throughout Maryland.
- Participated in steering committees and watershed associations resolving conflicts among various users and interests on the Youghiogheny, North Branch, Savage, and Gunpowder Falls Rivers, as well as other waters of Maryland, including supporting a permanent staff for the Savage River Watershed Association.
- Strongly supported wise and responsible development and natural resource management throughout the State on such projects as the ICC in the Washington suburbs and State forests in western Maryland.
- Assisted MD DNR over past 30 years in fish surveys, fish habitat assessments, providing public access, trout stockings of more than 300,000 trout, many dozens of stream cleanups, public education, law enforcement, and establishing sound fishery regulations.
- Provided detailed comments upon permit applications, proposed construction projects, and other similar developments to Federal, State and local agencies that related to water quality, habitat alteration, and impacts to fisheries.

PPTU MENTOR PROGRAM BEGINNERS & BEYOND

Ken Bowyer and Tim Pawlowitz provide one on one streamside fly fishing instruction to PPTU members. Participants must show commitment by having waders or hipsters, a rod and reel outfit, and leader. Discussions will include equipment, knots, casting, flies, dry fly and nymphing techniques, entomology, reading water, conservation, etc. at nearby streams. Instruction will be tailored to individual needs. Members who have not made an **Annual Supporting Contribution** will be asked to contribute \$20.

Contact Ken at 301-627-7154

or kenbowyer@verizon.net

or Tim at 410-203-0369 or e-mail tpawlowi@msn.com.

ADDRESS CHANGE?

If you moved or if the information on the mailing label on *The Conservationist* is wrong, please email Arnie Strand at ArnzMail@Verizon.net. You may also drop us a post card with the correction. PPTU maintains a mailing list separate from the national TU list.



MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Existing members should renew their TU membership using any of the following methods:

- Mail your Renewal Statement to TU National
- Call Customer Service at 1-800-834-2419
- Navigate to www.tu.org. Click on the **Join/Renew** tab at top, then click on the "Renew Membership" link on the left. You will need your login name and password.

Remember to return your videos and books on time. Many fellow members would like the opportunity to rent the books, tapes and DVDs that you rented. Late fees will be applied if they are not returned by the next chapter meeting.

The June PPTU Outing

Our outing for June will be to the Ken Lockwood Gorge, South Branch of the Raritan River, near Califon, New Jersey. The trip is scheduled for June 6-7 to take advantage of the fish-for-free weekend in the Garden State (no license or trout stamp required.) Camping is available in nearby Vorhees State Park, or there are motels in and near Clinton, about 5 miles away. Last year, Bob Dietz, Joanne Kla, George Vincent, and I stayed at the Courtyard by Marriott in Lebanon. Check out the two websites below for more information about the area we will be exploring. We will meet at the Trestle Bridge Pool at 5 PM Saturday to fish the evening hatch. Afterwards, we will meet for dinner at a nearby restaurant.

For more details, contact Bob Dietz at dietzredietz@cs.com or 301 854-6893.

South Branch of the Raritan

<http://www.flyfishingconnection.com/southbranchraritan.html>

Vorhees State Park

<http://www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/parks/voorhees.html>



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