



March 2006

The Conservationist

Potomac-Patuxent Chapter

www.pptu.org

Mad for Shad

By Sebastian O'Kelly

Shad continue to garner attention these days, earning star billing in a number of fly fish magazine articles, big buzz on fly fish Internet bulletin boards, and plenty of gossip among DC long stickers. After all, they fight hard, take a fly willingly, are steadily growing more prolific, and come right into our Potomac River backyard. What's not to like?

Last year at this time, we had Jim Cummins of the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin address the remarkable success story of restoration of American shad in the Potomac. For a more detailed account of the effort, I recommend PPTUers turn to Sandy Burk's *Let The River Run Silver Again!*

So we know they're there, how do we catch'em? That's what this month's TU meeting will cover. Grizzly from Angler's Lie will be coming to tell us the when, where and how, with a slide presentation that focuses on one of the best spots, Fletcher's Boathouse on the Potomac. Among other tips, you'll learn that the techniques are different when targeting American versus hickory shad; where in the water column the fish lurk; and the type of flies they like.

On a personal note, after two years I'm stepping down as Chapter speaker organizer and writer of this column. I'm not sure if the job has been filled yet, but interested persons should contact our President, Nick Weber. ■

THE SHAD ARE COMING!

Monthly PPTU Meeting
Wednesday, March 15, 2006
7:00 PM

FEATURED GUEST SPEAKERS

David "Grizzly" Lambert, Manager of The Angler's Lie and **Newell Steele**, Owner of The Angler's Lie, will tell you how to catch America's Founding Fish.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE!

- **Order your PPTU Fly Fishing Shirt Today!**
- **Youth Fishing Camps - Application Deadlines Approach**
- **The March Outing — Gunpowder One Fly Contest**
- **Maryland DNR Designates New Fly Fishing Water close to home**



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

By Nick Weber

Although winter is still officially here, and the Blizzard of '06 may have kept us home for a day of shoveling and hopefully a little fly tying, it is time to plan our spring activities and launch our individual and chapter fly fishing agendas. The chapter, as you will read elsewhere, is earnestly seeking young fishers to sponsor for the fly fishing Summer Camp. We have heard from past participants that it is of truly high educational value in terms of conservation, stream ecosystem knowledge, and fly fishing development. Please help identify a young fisher whom we can help go to camp.

You will also find an article in this issue that identifies a new close in fishery that we are excited to help get started. Those of us who have been involved with it have seen that it has some very nice water. We appreciate the good will of the DNR to supply both rainbow and brown trout so that the potential of this tail water fishery can be explored. The help of private property owners like the Girl Scouts was crucial to opening this water for the regulation. I hope that we will hear from those of you who are willing to try this new section of the Patuxent River.

On the conservation front, our Mid-Atlantic Council (MAC) of Trout Unlimited has a couple of major conservation thrusts that you should be aware of. They include several activities affecting western Maryland fisheries where water releases from dams impact the fishability of the stream in terms of flow and water temperature. Solids release is also on the agenda for the paper plant at Luke. Another major issue on the MAC plate is an effort to help retain and restore brook trout in our area. You may be aware of the TU initiative, Back the Brookie. The MAC has associated with other northeast regional TU Councils in an effort to share and combine interests and knowledge of the problems confronting brook trout habitat. They will develop strategies to help insure that our native eastern trout is conserved and enjoyed by future fisher generations. Our chapter needs to play a role in this native trout conservation effort. ■



Tackle and Tactic Tips

By Jay Sheppard

Backing is an important component of a fly rod-der's system to catch fish. Most fly fishers do not fully understand all the purposes of the backing and how to use it properly. Backing is more than just to ensure you can let a big fish run and take all your fly line. If installed correctly, it gives the reel its maximum diameter for the retrieving of the line. For each crank of the handle you recover more line with a full spool than a nearly empty one. A full spool (line and backing) also creates fewer coils in the fly line when it first comes off the spool that day.

I figure the backing also allows me to wade around a large, deep pool to get to the other side and retrieve my fly that is snagged on some log—saving me many flies each year. Backing comes in various types and strengths. For most trout fishing you should just use the 18-20 lb. Dacron or Micron lines. Never use monofilament, as it stretches too much and creates stresses on the spool. You want the maximum amount of backing on the spool and still have just enough room to wind all the fly line onto it. If you can find the room to do so, it is easier to wind the fly line on the spool and then the backing to achieve this maximum load of the latter, but I usually just fiddle with the amount by starting with too much backing and slowly cutting it back.

I almost never place an entire fly line on my trout reels. I am not going to be casting more than about 50 feet for trout, if that far. For 4 weights and lighter, I prefer a double taper line cut in half, using one half (~42') at a time. For a 5 weight, I usually take a weight forward line and remove about 20' off the rear of the running section. For a 6 weight, I remove about 10 feet off the rear. All this gives me much more room for the thinner backing on the smaller reels. A simple nail knot will suffice for attaching the two lines. (If you intend to change lines regularly, get in touch, and I will provide you with directions on creating a loop-to-loop connection.)



It is very important that all backing be loaded tightly and smoothly onto the spool. When you ever really need the backing, you need to smoothly retrieve it back onto the spool. Loosely wound backing will allow the rest of the backing and the fly line to sink down into it. This will create major hangups, literally, the next time the line is pulled off the spool. I hope everyone gets into their backing this spring on a big fish! Being prepared so that the backing will function whenever needed will make for a fine day and not a bad one. ■

Youth Fishing Camps

By Paul Vicenzi

As in previous years, the Board of PPTU has again earmarked funds to provide financial assistance to chapter members participating in either of the two nearby fishing camps. A total of \$900 was approved and will be available for reimbursement of youth camp fees. In the event the chapter has multiple participants, the funds will be distributed on a pro rata basis.

High School aged girls and boys are encouraged to apply. Act quickly, the application deadlines are quickly approaching. March 15, 2006 is the application deadline for the Rivers Conservation and Fly Fishing Camp located in Boiling Springs, PA. This camp runs June 18-23, 2006 and costs \$275. For more info and application instructions, visit www.riverscamp.com. April 19, 2006 is the application deadline for the TU Conservation & Fishing Camp, in Syria, VA. The TU camp runs June 25-30, 2006 at a cost of \$450. For more info and application instructions, visit www.tucamp.org. ■

High Fashion!

Show your true colors by sporting your very own PPTU fly-fishing shirt. These stylish, high quality, long sleeve shirts are made by Columbia sportswear. Contact Larry Vawter at or before the next chapter meeting and place your order! The Shirt will Have the PPTU Logo embroidered over the Left Pocket. Cost of \$50.00, a savings of \$10.00 from Normal retail There will be a sample shirt for you to see at the meeting.

Patuxent Report

By Jay Sheppard

We will hold a stream cleanup on the upper Patuxent on Saturday morning, April 1. 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 last week of February. Some 1500 brown trout and 750 rainbows were in these first two stockings. A third stocking of rainbows is scheduled for late this month. The browns were float-stocked away from the bridges to spread them out, while the rainbows were placed mostly near the bridges. As in past years, we avoid stocking trout in sections that hold good numbers of wild trout by stocking from just upstream of 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. ■

PPTU MENTOR PROGRAM BEGINNERS & BEYOND

Available to members of PPTU current with their dues, Ken Bowyer will conduct one on one stream side 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.

New Fly Fishing Water

By Nick Weber and Jay Sheppard

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has issued a new fishing regulation, and it provides trout fishing water closer to home for many of us. The regulation is for the tailwater section of the Patuxent River below Brighton Dam. The regulation is Catch and Return, Fly Fishing Only from 400 yards below the dam to Mink Hollow Road. However, because of the limited availability of fish and the majority of water below Haviland Mill Road bridge being privately owned, the fishery will initially be focused between Brighton Dam and the Haviland Mill Road bridge a distance of approximately 1½ miles. The only parking access points are at Brighton Dam and a couple of roadside places at the bridge. However, the stream directly downstream of the bridge up to a point about 200 yards above the bridge is private property. To access the river at the bridge, one can walk upstream on the Howard County side to the fence coming to the stream. From this point to almost the upper end near the Dam is state property or property for which we have secured fishing permission. You will encounter one property immediately below red post marking the upper end of the area on the Montgomery County side with posted signs; we recommend that you do not exit the river or stay an inordinate amount of time in this short section .

You will encounter deep water in several areas, and chest waders are mandatory. Likewise, you will also encounter some beautiful riffle areas with abundant holes, many log jams, as well as some large rock outcroppings with long shaded pools. You know these are the areas where the trout are likely to lurk. By the end of March, we expect about 1000 rainbow adults and about 500 brown trout will have been stocked in this section. In 2005, a similar number of trout was stocked, as well as a large load of fingerling rainbows. Last fall, we spent the day searching the two ends of the section with the DNR crew and found only a small handful of trout remaining, including a fair number of the now larger rainbow yearlings. ■



New Water — Continued from Page 4

We cannot yet forecast how well this fishery will do over time. We do expect some occasional problems with warm water some summers, as the dam is not configured to provide the kind of coldwater releases we see from Pretty boy Dam on the Gunpowder. Further, we do not see a wild trout population developing in this section. Unlike the Gunpowder, this section has a relatively poor supply of gravel and over necessities for a self-sustaining trout population.

We do not have any long term observations regarding the hatches on this section of the Patuxent, but from what little we have seen, there is a fair supply of the same insects, crayfish, and minnows that are found in the river upstream of the reservoir in the Special Area that has been in place for about 30 years. So the same basic flies for the upper Patuxent will very likely do well in this section, too. Finally, you should check the Brighton Dam flow at <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/md/nwis/uv?01591610> before trying this new area. We have found the stream wadeable at up to 80 cfs. Let us know about your successes on this new water this year. ■

PPTU Novice/Intermediate

Tying Class Meets

By Jim Greco

On Tuesday, January 31, 2006, we had a corker of a first meeting of the novice/intermediate PPTU tying class. Before getting to the actual tying, I had the great privilege of being allowed to put most of our seventeen students into a somnambulist fugue with the presentation of at least an hour's worth of lecture on hooks and materials.

After that, the evening really livened up with the beginning of the tying presentation and some of the student's first attempts at laying thread on the hook and coping with how to make a perfect whip finish. I think their appetite for knowledge is now properly whetted, with visions of new fly patterns on the horizon and huge fish taking offerings tied on the students very own vises.

Jim Arnold commented that the wounded Veterans, who visited us from the Walter Reed Army Hospital and tied at our last chapter meeting, inspired him to forget about the painful joints in his fingers and convinced him to pursue his call to the wise in spite of his aches and pains. One of the other highlights of this admittedly, tame first night occurred when Bob Serrano passed out the corks we use to mount the finished flies so they can be critiqued by myself and our other coaches, Robert Simpson, Larry Vawter and Dave Wittman.

Contrary to the rumors circulating around the chapter, Pam and I do not personally drink all of the wine it takes to produce forty or more wine bottle corks for this one class. Special thanks go to Mr. Eric R. Stein, the gentleman owner of *Decanter Fine Wines*, located in the Hickory Ridge Village Center on Freetown Road in my home town of Columbia, MD. For months now, Mr. Stein and his crew have been dutifully collecting corks left over from the wine tasting his shop regularly hosts in order to supply our class. Next year he promises to take the class himself. I say; every time you visit his shop, let him know we expect many fish stories from him next year. Thank you Mr. Stein.

I also want to thank Randall Kaufmann, from *Kaufmann's Streamborn Inc.* catalog (<http://www.kman.com>), and Charlie Collins, from the *Collins Hackle Farm* (607-734-1765), for supporting us in our efforts to teach fly tying to everyone who wants to learn about it.

To all of you -- we really had a great time during the first meeting. Next year, we hope you will join us, too. ■

Coming in March NCC-TU Angling Show

Help support our neighbor -- the National Capital Chapter of TU during the club's Annual Show on March 25, 2006 from 10 am to 5:30 pm at Landon School in Bethesda, Maryland. The featured speaker will be Gary Berger. Further information, including directions, can be found at www.ncc-tu.com.

ADDRESS CHANGED?

If you have moved or see an error in your label on this issue, please advise both the National TU office (1-800-834-2419) and this Chapter (see PO Box below) with separate notices. Our mailing list is maintained separately from the National list; we do eventually receive word of the change from National TU, but it is often a few months before it affects your receipt of this publication and other mailings. Please help us help you. Thank you.

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March 25th Outing On the Gunpowder One Fly Contest *For Bragging Rights only!*

- Limited to PPTU members in good standing.
- One fly, barbless hook, lose it your done.
- Meet at the Massemore parking lot at 10:30
- Participants will fish in pairs.
- Pairs will be determined by drawing at 10:45
- Angler with the largest total of inches in trout brought to net wins the right to brag for 1 year.
- Contest ends at 3:00 pm
- Fishers must be back at the Masemore parking lot no later than 3:30 pm.
- Sign up at PPTU membership meeting or contact Dennis Covert at 410-740-8337 or via email at denniscovert@hotmail.com



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