



November 2002

# *The Conservationist*

Potomac-Patuxent Chapter

[www.pptu.org](http://www.pptu.org)

Wednesday, November 20

## World-Class Fly Tyer Tim Trexler

tells all about

## Atlantic Salmon Angling

The Fish—The Rivers—The Flies

**T**im began fly fishing and fly tying at age 12, after winning a cheap bamboo fly rod at a church festival. Soon after that, a friend of his father gave Tim a box of assorted fly tying materials and a Herter's vise. There was no one to teach him. Tim's early

education in the arts of fly fishing and fly tying came exclusively from magazines, catalogues and books.

Tim began tying full-dressed Atlantic salmon flies in November of 2000, and quickly found his niche in the world of salmon-fly tying. He was the 2001 Irish Open Flytying Championship's overall champion. In the 2002 FQSA World Salmon Flytying Championship, his creation "Colors of Water" won a gold medal, and he received a silver medal for the compulsory pattern, the Black Dose.

In a slideshow, Tim will introduce us to what he calls the "King of Gamefish", the Atlantic salmon. He will take us on a travelogue to the Maritime Provinces of Canada and to Newfoundland, where we will see the beauty of these salmon and the rivers they inhabit. We will learn a bit about the fly fishing techniques used to catch and release these fish, the people who guide the anglers, the threats to continued survival of this species, and some of

the successes in conserving them. At the climax of the slideshow, Tim will show us slides of his prize-winning salmon fly creations.

Be aware that Tim's enthusiasm for Atlantic Salmon is contagious, and don't be surprised if you depart the meeting with intentions for a salmon fishing trip buzzing in your head. Try it. Like Tim, chances are you will love it.

Time will not permit Tim to demonstrate his tying techniques during our meeting. But you will be able to observe them at your leisure during the Fly Fishing Show at the University of Maryland on January 11 and 12. Our chapter's membership recruiting booth is likely to be just down the aisle from Tim's tying table.

[*Editor's Note:* Be sure to watch Tim as he ties because you can learn a number of techniques that will improve your flytying, even though you never intend to tie the "stained glass window" classic Atlantic salmon flies.]



**This is the last issue of *The Conservationist* for 2002**

**We'll be back in January 2003**

**Have a Happy Holiday Season**

**And great fishing in 2003**



### 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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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

**(Phone: 202-545-8776)**

**(theconservationist@juno.com)**

**For contributions to *The Conservationist* only**

## President's Column

**A**s I write this in October, stream flows in our region remain extremely low, contributing to a growing realization that our wild trout fisheries are seriously imperiled unless the drought ends soon. While helping the DNR Fisheries staff take their annual census of trout in the Gunpowder, I learned that Prettyboy Reservoir now holds only about 3 billion gallons, whereas when full it contains 19 billion gallons. With Prettyboy being a storage resource of the Baltimore City water system, we can expect it to be drawn down even further. But one has to wonder; will the reservoir reach a low point at which there will be serious harm to the wild trout fishery downstream?

The situation is not unique to the Gunpowder, and whether new rainfall comes soon enough to avert trout fishery disasters is dependent on Mother Nature. More conservative usage of water by the human populace would certainly be helpful. But the negative impacts of continued drought on our trout populations are substantially beyond the control of our TU chapter.

On the positive side, the drought may stimulate, among elements of the human populace, an increased interest in critical aspects of the public water supply. Coincidentally, our chapter is launching a program to educate school children, and through them their parents, about the importance of improving and preserving the quality of the watersheds in which we live. Called "Trout in the Classroom", it is a hands-on learning experience in aquatic ecology that will involve students in two Montgomery County schools. Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find an article describing this education initiative.

For Fiscal Year 2003, the board of directors has committed the chapter to an increased level of support for youth education programs, including Trout in the Classroom. During the coming year, your chapter's financial resources will be applied more to education than to explicit stream conservation projects. Benefits from the education program will be long-term, and likely have a bigger payoff than some on-stream projects would produce.

In another forum of education, we have, for the past 6 years, been blessed with the tutoring talents of two long-standing chapter members, Jim Feudale and Dave Pratt. Many chapter members

*(Continued on page 3)*

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## President's Column

(Continued from page 2)

have directly benefited from their on-stream coaching. Jim, as Mentor, has passed on much of his inestimable knowledge of trout angling techniques to newcomers to the sport and to more experienced anglers wanting to polish skills that weren't quite what they could be. In his mentoring, Jim always worked equally hard to pass on to his students the conservation and personal-conduct ethics that he so highly values.

Dave, as Outings Chair, taught many members the secrets of the trout streams in our region. His quiet on-stream manner belies the fact that he always knows where the trout hang out. Anyone who went on his outings would learn a lot about where to cast their fly.

Jim and Dave, each independently, have recently decided to retire from those roles. For Dave, his role will end with the December 1 outing to the Lower Savage. Jim has already hung out the "Retired Mentor" sign. Please join me in thanking them for all they have contributed in these two roles and wish them "tight lines" in places they won't be admiringly trailed by others wishing they had the same skills.

This is the last issue of "The Conservationist" in 2002. So I extend my best wishes to our readers and their families for a joyful holiday season and a healthy year in 2003. *Dave Piske*

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### PPTU Chapter and Board Meeting Dates

**T**HE FOLLOWING ARE THE DATES of the PPTU Chapter and Board of Directors meetings for the 2002-2003 year. The eight chapter meetings are on the third Wednesday of each month except December, June, July, and August. The ten board meetings are normally held on the first Monday of the month except when a Federal holiday falls on that Monday. All meetings are held in the Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center at 7:00 PM.

Please mark these dates on your calendars:

Chapter Meetings	Board Meetings
November 20	November 4
January 15	December 2
February 19	January 6
March 19	February 3
April 16	March 3
May 21	April 7
	May 5
	June 2

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## WANTED Preferably Alive >>>>Reward<<<<

**T**HE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE POTOMAC-PATUXENT CHAPTER OF TROUT UNLIMITED is looking for a few good volunteers, men or women, to fill some important positions in the chapter:

- One or more mentor(s) to share their passion for fly fishing by tutoring our less experienced anglers in the art of using the long rod. Here's a chance to meet, by appointment, fellow members committed to learning the sport. With two mentors, one could focus on top-water tactics and the other on under-water tactics if they so desire.
- One or two outings leaders to lead small groups on fishing trips to waters within a half-day's drive. You don't have to catch the fish—just get your parties to the places where the fish are so they can catch them. Two outings leaders will mean no more than 6 trips per year for each.
- A program chair who will line up presenters and programs for the eight chapter meetings each year. You don't have to put on a program yourself, although you can if you'd like. The board members and other committee chairs are usually more than willing to help with suggestions.

Chapter members are invited to seize these opportunities to help make the Potomac-Patuxent Chapter an enjoyable and enlightening experience for all the members and visitors.

Oh yes, the reward! It's not taxable! Money can't buy it! It's the gratitude of your fellow members of PPTU.

Contact Dave Piske (e-mail: [dpsk@aol.com](mailto:dpsk@aol.com)) for additional information.

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### Annual Warning

Hunting goes through mid-winter in many sections of Patuxent River State Park, so be careful and stay alert. The firearm season for deer is still a way off, but squirrel hunting starts the first Saturday of October, and dove and archery season for deer will both be continuing as this is mailed. Suggest fishing on weekdays or Sundays; otherwise, wear a bright-colored hat on Saturdays, in particular. Sunday hunting is banned in Maryland, but I have heard many firearms back in those woods on Sundays. *Jay Sheppard*



## Trout in the Classroom

### A New PPCYU Initiative

**T**he Potomac-Patuxent Chapter of Trout Unlimited is breaking exciting new conservation ground this fall with a *Trout in the Classroom* program to help young people become stewards of our aquatic resources and advocates for clean water. By raising trout in their classrooms, elementary school students will learn about the habitat requirements of trout and how to keep them healthy.

The program has just gotten under way in two Montgomery County elementary schools - Westbrook in Bethesda and Highland View in Silver Spring. Fourth-grade students in each school will receive fertilized trout eggs, hatch them into alevins, raise and then release the fingerlings in local streams next spring. The program will provide hands-on experience in the life cycle of trout and serve as a vehicle for integrating math, science, language arts and other subjects. Although *Trout in the Classroom* is operational in several other states, this will be its first appearance in Maryland.

While trout are important in themselves, they are also the canary in the mine in regard to water quality. In this program, they are the vehicle for learning about the importance of clean water and the difficulty of maintaining it. Moreover, in addition to environmental education, the program will encourage young people to enjoy sport fishing as part of a healthy life-style and way to connect with nature.

Through Congressional Aquarium in Rockville, Kenlin Pet Supply has donated tanks for the program. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will donate brown and/or rainbow trout eggs or alevins. Other equipment, trout food and remaining program costs will be funded by PPCTU. Expansion to additional schools is planned for future years as demand and availability of funding from other sources increases.

An advisory committee consisting of chapter Board members and a DNR representative will oversee and facilitate the program. Chapter treasurer Jim Greene is program coordinator.

## Fishing the Connetquot River

**I** had to go up to Long Island on September 25th and took the opportunity to fish at Connetquot River State Park Preserve while I was there. I made reservations for the 12-4 pm time slot. The cost was \$15 plus another \$20 for a one-day non-resident NY fishing license. Due to an impending rain I was one of only two people fishing the time period in the entire park. I selected beat 12; the other gentlemen had selected beat 11.

When I arrived at my spot I noticed the water was dark brown from all the rain the day & night before. I'd never seen it so dark before. A few fish were rising, and all I could determine was they were rising to terrestrials falling out of the trees.

I caught a few fish on a black ant, tried a bead head nymph to no avail and then fun started. I then put on a Patuxent Special I had tied (I am new to tying) and was catching a fish or getting swipes on almost every cast. After a while I switched over to a Chartreuse bodied wooly bugger with a flashabou tail (another one of my ties) and the action was just as strong.

After about two hours the gentlemen who fished below me was leaving, and I asked him how he had done. He stated he had caught about two dozen trout on a white streamer.

I stayed with the Chartreuse bugger for about another hour and then switched to a fly my best friend had tied over 15 years ago, an orange bodied Grey Ghost. I thought the action was good before, but as soon as the fly hit the water, trout were coming right up on it as soon as I stripped it once. Even after its use 15 years ago and the pounding it took that day, it still was in great shape.

Overall I caught and released 17 trout, one being a rainbow and the other 16 were brookies. I lead-ered at least another dozen. They all averaged 10-13" in size.

Of course, the very last cast almost produced a brown that was at least 18" long, but unfortunately I noticed his approach as I was pulling the fly out of the water. It was too late to stop the motion.

Even though the sizes were on the smaller side (for the Connetquot that is), I believe I had my best day ever fishing there. *Artie Haglich*



## Tackle and Tactic Tips

**L**ast August we had an exchange of ideas on strike indicators—types, colors, use, etc.—on the chapter's list serve\*. I will try to synthesize the suggestions and questions several members had about this tackle tool.

First, I would offer that before these came into widespread use most fly anglers fishing with a dead drifted nymph had marginal success in detecting subtle takes by trout. I am firmly convinced that strike indicators have greatly improved the catch rate for the average fly fisher.

Strike indicators can be special devices (yarn, small plastic "bobbers," or various other attachments to the leader) or just the leader and tip of the fly line.

The problem is knowing when a fish is toying with the fly. Dry flies are very simple to use, as any strike is easily seen. We can rarely directly observe dead-drifted nymphs. Infrequently the trout turns and flashes where we may see that movement and suspect it is taking the offering. Otherwise, we have no real way to detect the take. Experienced trout are not about to take the fly and move any distance with it for more than a second. They can spit out a fraudulent food item very quickly.

When using a dead-drifted nymph, there must be a light but constant tension between the indicator (leader or other device) and the weight or fly. If not, the fish may not instantly telegraph any disturbance to the fly. The weight above the fly or fly must be upstream of or directly below the indicator to maintain that subtle tension. If the fly precedes the leader or indicator down the stream, then the fish may take the fly and cause slack to occur between it and the surface indicator. The usual result is no detected strike.

The simplest strike detector is the leader and fly line. As it rests on the surface, a strike may be de-

tected when the terminal point on the surface suddenly changes direction or disappears below the surface, often with a little series of "V"-shaped ripples coming off the tip of the remaining line. This may work well under some circumstances, such as very flat water flowing at a constant rate.

The usual slack in a leader after it is cast may negate any activity at the fly being detected until that slack is removed. The various strike indicators are intended to more quickly detect the take of the dead-drifted nymph, as there is usually less distance between them and the fly.

For the average fly fisher, use of an indicator greatly increases their catch rate. It takes a lot of experience and a good eye to detect a strike on a leader and fly line without such a device.

I personally like the little plastic ball indicators that have a hole through them so that I can wedge a toothpick tip on the end toward the fly. These are easily adjustable up or down the leader. For colors, I do like the various brightly colored ones, but they seem to attract the attention of the stocked trout, in particular. So I have gone to almost exclusively bright white, which is sometimes hard to spot until suddenly a white "bubble of foam" starts heading upstream! I get about one or two hits per year on the white versus several a day on stocked streams with the various reds and greens.

I would use the large yarn indicators on really large rivers when fishing heavy nymphs in deep, fast water.

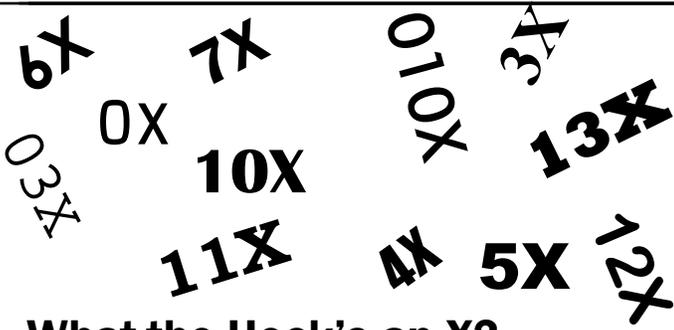
Another popular technique is the use of a tandem rig where the indicator is actually a large dry fly to which the small nymph is attached—giving two choices to the trout.

Next issue I will try to cover some other aspects of strike indicators and their use with a dead-drifted fly.

*Jay Sheppard*

**\*To subscribe to the chapter's list serve, send email to [ppctu-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:ppctu-subscribe@yahoo.com).**





## What the Heck's an X?

[*Editor's Note:* I wrote this several years ago when I was working in a fly shop and editing the *Hackle Bender*, the newsletter of the Magic City Fly Fishers TU chapter in Billings, MT. It still applies here on the East Coast.]

**R**ecently a female customer at the local fly shop would not buy a 9-foot knotless tapered leader because the 6X tippet did not have a breaking test of three pounds. The only 9-foot leader that came close to that strength was a "super-strength" with a breaking test of 3.5 pounds.

Even when I showed her that the tippet of a standard strength 7-1/2-foot 6X leader had a test of 3.0 pounds and explained that the size of the two tippets was the same, she wouldn't buy it because her husband had given her strict orders to buy only a leader with a breaking test of three pounds. I often wonder if her husband would have beat her with 12-weight fly line if she had followed my advice.

In another instance, an old fly fisherman admitted that he didn't understand the "X" system of leader diameter and always used the test strength of the tippet when buying or making a leader or adding a tippet. Since he was otherwise reasonably intelligent, I assumed that he never received a lucid explanation of the "X" system and didn't understand its advantages over the "pounds test" system.

So, taking my trusty word-processor in hand, I'll try to explain the "X" system and its advantages.

First, the breaking strength of monofilament depends upon several factors: the composition of the material (No, it isn't all *just* nylon), the diameter of the strand, the temperatures at which the material was stored (heat weakens monofilament), how long it had been exposed to ultra-violet light, and probably a raft of other factors I know not of. Therefore, the "pounds test" on the label has very little chance of being accurate after the monofilament leaves the factory.

The only factor listed above that is relatively constant is the diameter, and that is easily checked with a micrometer or a leader gauge. Three different brands of 7X diameter monofilament had label breaking strengths of 1.9, 2.0, and 2.5 pounds—*a difference of more than a half a pound*—and that didn't take into account any of the factors listed above except diameter and composition.

So if our fisherman tied a 7X tippet of Brand X material to a leader ending in 7X Brand Y material, he could possibly have a tippet 24% weaker than his leader. And when you consider such weakening factors as the effect of knots, abrasion on rocks, temperature, ultra-violet light, etc., etc., etc., that 24% is quite a difference and could make the difference between a break off or a landed fish.

So let's go to the one constant factor in leader material: the diameter. Most modern leader-making formulae give the sizes of the various parts of the leader (butt, taper, and tippet) in "X" sizes, and most ready-made leaders have the "X" size in BIG letters and the "pound test" in little letters.

So what the heck's an "X"?

Simply put, an "X" in leaders is equal to one one-thousandth of an inch. That's the easy part.

So what's the "X" system?

Zero X (0X) equals eleven one-thousandth of an inch (0.011"). (No, I don't know why, and it's immaterial. It just is.) And the monofilament diameter decreases one one-thousandth of an inch for each "X" number; 1X equals 0.010", 2X equals 0.009", 3X equals 0.008", and so on.

"That's simple," you're saying, "but what about this spool marked `03X'?"

Well, something had to be done about monofilament that was bigger than 0.011", so someone invented the "0nX" system where the diameter increased one one-thousandth of an inch for each "n" number; 01X equals 0.012", 02X equals 0.013", 03X equals 0.014", and so on.

"So, what does this have to do with `pounds test'?"

Not a darned thing, and that "p.p pounds test" on the label of that spool of tippet material is probably not what it measured at the factory because too many things change. I once saw a man with a spinning rod and four-pound test line keep a 115-pound girl swimming champion from swimming across a pool, and I've had trout in the Big Horn

(Continued on page 7)

## What the heck's an X?

(Continued from page 6)

River break four-pound test leaders. Now, do you really believe there are trout in the 'Horn that weigh more than 115 pounds?

In the next issue of *The Conservationist* I'll give a lucid explanation of the shotgun gauge system.

No, I cannot explain women's dress sizes!

[Recently there has been a rash of postings on the PPTU List Serve about tippet sizes down to **12X!!!** Now, according to the X size system, 11X minus 12X equals negative 1X, or negative one thousandth of an inch!!!

"Tain't possible, friend.

[Far be it for me to accuse the maker of that tippet material of lying, but there is something on that spool, and while I haven't put a micrometer on it, I'll bet that if I did, it would measure something—*not negative 0.001*". And those spools of 11X (0.000") tippet material, why would anyone buy a spool of nothing?

[It's been pretty well known for years that tackle makers have been pretty free with the truth in advertising about some of their products. Could it be that, since their customers are anglers—themselves often stretchers of the truth—they feel that it's okay to stretch things a little?]

John Colburn

## FINAL NOTICE MEMBER'S ASSESSMENT NOW PAYABLE

The annual assessment (see page 8) is now payable. Check your label—if we have stamped it in red with "**FINAL NOTICE...**", you must send your \$15 now or pay at the November meeting in order not to miss the January issue. Some members have already paid this year, so they show "PP-0903." Make checks payable to "POTOMAC-PATUXENT CHAPTER - TU" and mail to our chapter mail box. Full time students are waived the assessment, but you must send us your graduation date. The assessment covers only the newsletter and related administrative expenses; all donations above expenses at raffles, etc., go to the resource and not to support our members with free newsletters, maps, etc. **This is the final mailing** for those having "PP-0902" or no "PP-" date on their label. **There will be NO separate mailings to remind current members of this obligation. Please take note and action today! Thank you.**

## The Last Word

### Paying Your Own Way

(Continued from page 8)

"I pay for my fishing license, I buy my own tackle, and I pay my TU dues and PPTU assessment. Why, I even contribute to the fundraising activities of TU and PPTU," you say, "How come you tell me I'm freeloading?"

Again, look around PPTU. Look at the list of Officers and Committee Chairs on page 2 of *The Conservationist*. Read Dave Piske's President's Column. There are vacancies on that list and in Dave's column. Ask any of the committee chairs how many people are on his or her committee. I'll bet that in 90% or more of the cases the answer will be one: the chair.

Trout Unlimited is chartered as a conservation outfit, working to preserve the nation's coldwater fisheries. The Potomac-Patuxent Chapter is a conservation and education organization. There are a number of conservation and education activities conducted by PPTU throughout the year, and there are a number of such projects that could be conducted if there were a few people to help with the work.

So, to ease that guilt that I hope you're feeling, get out of the freeloading crowd and join that elite twenty percent! Take one of those vacant positions in PPTU. Help out on one of the committees. Put on your work gloves and help on a conservation project. Take part in an educational activity.

There are people who will help you, and there are a lot of people who will be very grateful for what you've done. Heck, you might even enjoy doing it!

John Colburn

## Moving?

### Not getting *The Conservationist*?

**I**f you plan on moving or if you're not getting *The Conservationist* in the mail (You did pay your member assessment?), be sure to notify both Trout Unlimited's national office and PPTU of your new or correct address.

It takes about three months for your address change to filter down from TU to PPTU, so be sure to notify both as soon as you know your new address.

## Inside *The Conservationist*

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**Did you vote?  
If you didn't vote,  
You don't count!**

## 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

### Paying Your Own Way

**F**or the sake of argument, I'm going to say that 80% of all anglers are pretty much freeloading when it comes to their sport.

I chose the words "all anglers" because the statement applies to 80% of those who use some sort of rod or pole, a line, and a hook in the attempt to catch any species of fish. It includes men, women, and children; flyfishers, hardware casters, and worm dunkers; people of all colors and religious beliefs—anyone who fishes for sport.

Why "80%"? Look around PPTU. About 20% or less of the membership do 80% of the work in making the club run, making the club an attractive outfit for anglers to meet and mingle with kindred spirits. It's the same in any volunteer organization, 20% do 80% of the work.

Why "freeloading"? Again look around PPTU. With the exception of attendance at meetings, when was the last time more than 20% of the membership participated in any chapter activity? Again, look at just about any volunteer organization, the old 20%-80% rule comes into play.

*(Continued on page 7)*

Return Address:

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



Connetquot River, Long Island, brook trout caught on a Patuxent Special.  
(See story on page 4)

## Reminder

**There is no December meeting!**  
**Next meeting is January 15, 2003**

**FIRST CLASS MAIL**