

The Conservationist



PPTU.org

Potomac-Patuxent Chapter Trout Unlimited

January 2021 • Published monthly except June, July, August and December

“Fly Fishing the San Juan River”

Noel Gollehon - Seneca Valley Trout Unlimited

January 20th, 2021 at 7:30PM

We're mixing it up in January with a speaker from our neighboring TU chapter talking about one of our favorite subjects: destination fly fishing! The San Juan River in New Mexico has been one of the most famous trout fisheries in the world. Our guest, Noel Gollehon, is the President of Seneca Valley Trout Unlimited in Germantown and has fished the San Juan for over 20 years.

The San Juan River starts in the San Juan Mountains in southwest Colorado. It enters the northwest corner of New Mexico before heading towards Utah and the Colorado River. The 4.25 mile stretch below the Navajo Dam holds an estimated 80,000 trout averaging 17” in length, with plenty of fish over 20.” Noel will discuss his lessons learned for fishing the river: How to rig your line, what flies to use, and which areas of the river to fish. Plus, he will talk about getting there, places to stay and eat, and experiences with some of the best guides on the river.

A little about Noel: He is a native of New Mexico, but has lived in Maryland for years. He has traveled back to New Mexico at least annually until 2020 (the COVID year) and has always worked the San Juan into the trip. Noel is active in the Seneca Valley Chapter of TU and has served several Mid-Atlantic Council roles.



The virtual meeting link in the meeting notice below will be posted on the PPTU web page and additionally emailed to our membership and friends. Hope to see you on Wednesday, January 20th at 7:30pm for what should be an exciting virtual trip.

Tight lines,

– *Karan Singh*

Monthly Chapter Meetings – Virtual Until Further Notice

Time and Day: 7:30 PM unless a new time stated, Third Wednesday except June, July, August and December

Virtual Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84954277013?pwd=M05WdjBuL1c5d3d1cnl4WXdoOYTU4Zz09>

Visit our website: www.pptu.org

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Presidents' Column - Randy Dwyer



As I write this column, I find myself having a stronger sense of optimism than I had even just a few days ago. We all know 2020 was the pits. A year to forget. A year that none of us anticipated. As far as PPTU was concerned we correctly stopped having in-person meetings in March and cancelled a great series of speakers and outings for our chapter members throughout the spring. Our assisting Scouts to receive their Fly-Fishing merit badges, fly tying gatherings and all the behind-the-scenes leg work for a hot dog booth at Bass Pro went for naught. Honestly this all seems very long ago. I'm now looking forward to a better 2021 and the freedom to gather as we have in the past.

We pivoted as the times warranted and started having virtual meetings in the fall. These meetings were a great success on many levels and we can all thank Karan Singh for orchestrating the [line-up of excellent speakers and content](#): Brook Trout in Maryland by Andrew Sarcinello, Health of Smallmouth Bass by Shenandoah Riverkeeper Mark Frondorf and our very own VP Joe Taylor's Western Adventures allowed all members to log-in from home and we drew many visitors from neighboring chapters. If you missed any of them, I encourage you to [view the presentations](#) on our webpage.

The fall also [presented opportunities for chapter outings](#) that followed proper COVID-19 protocol. Thanks to Lou Reichel, our Outings Coordinator, in August many attended the annual trip to Boiling Springs for the White Fly hatch; September's One-fly contest on the Gunpowder drew many new and longtime members alike – which was won by new member Roman Pretruniak, who has bragging rights through 2021.

Our October outing to western Maryland was an exceptional highlight as it was one of better attended campouts in recent memory. Folks arrived with everything from tents to fifth-wheel RVs intent on fishing the Savage River and North Branch of the Potomac. The weather was excellent and even though the water levels were low, some excellent fishing was had with a few catches that topped 20+”.

November's outing to Big Spring, PA was an opportunity to thank Ken Bowyer for 17 years of service as PPTU's Mentor Coordinator! He's taken

hundreds of new members to area waters for their first taste of fly fishing.

The past year has also given many of us our fair share of loss. We must tip our hats to those who have passed away in 2020 and I'd be remiss if I didn't mention Jim Greene. He was a friend and mentor to many. Trout Unlimited and PPTU are in a better place today [thanks to Jim's enthusiasm and dedication to cold water fisheries](#).

We can all look forward to a better year ahead! I offer a warm welcome to our new members and thank everyone for renewing their membership in PPTU. Your chapter has much planned for 2021 and the board of directors is working hard to meet your needs. Please reach out to me or anyone of us with an idea or suggestion for a chapter activity.

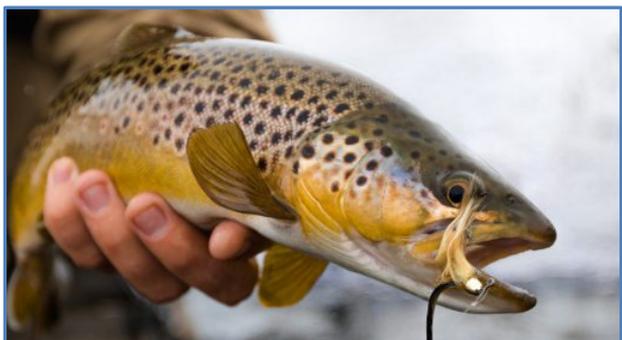
We will continue to plan events for you to enjoy. Stay tuned for a special [cicadas Brood X event in late May/early June](#) with more details to come soon! In the meantime, stay safe and tight lines to all!

Randy Dwyer
President, PPTU

PPTU Mentor Program Beginners & Beyond

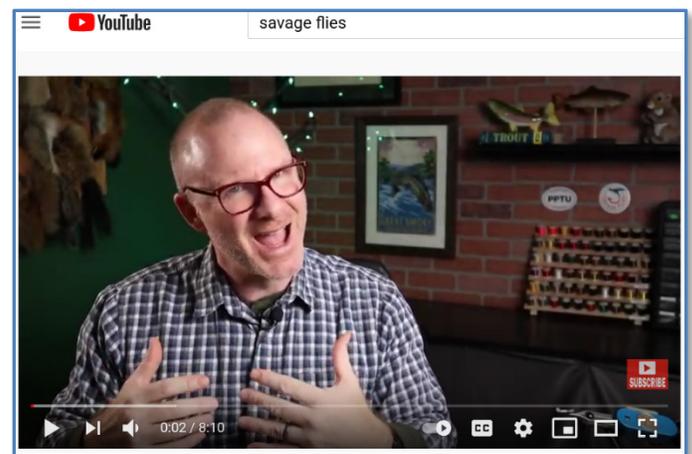
PPTU provides one-on-one streamside fly fishing instruction to PPTU members. Participants must show commitment by having waders or hip boots, a rod and reel outfit, and leader. Discussions will include equipment, knots, casting, flies, dry fly and nymphing techniques, entomology, reading water, conservation,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

Contact us by e-mail: mail@pptu.org



I Spy With My Little Eye... - Randy Dwyer

I spy with my little eye, something beginning with "P". Can you guess what it is?



Potomac Patuxent TU member Matt O'Neal recently started a fly tying channel on YouTube called Savage Flies. He's a proud chapter member and happily agreed to my request to include a shout out to all chapter members in his videos. Can you find our chapter reference in the picture? He changes his background often, so you'll need to keep an eye on it. Check his series of videos, they include all sorts of patterns and consider subscribing to his channel.

Patuxent Report - Jay Sheppard

In mid-November the state trout hatcheries were running out of room and needed to move out some extraneous trout. These were all small rainbows in the 7-9" range. We are still trying to piece together where these stockings went, but some were definitely dropped at the Annapolis Rock bridge on the upper Patuxent, as well as at Cabin Branch at Hipsley Mill. Likely one or more other bridges was also hit. Other streams reportedly receiving these fish included Morgan Run and Beaver Creek.

We expect to stock the local special regulation trout waters in late February. If you have not volunteered in the past, please email me to get on the list: jaymsheppard95@gmail.com. I will let you know of the stocking dates as soon as I learn of them from DNR in early February. The only requirements are chest waders and being able to walk up or down the middle of a stream for a mile or two. All stockings are only on Tuesdays through Fridays.

If you spot poaching please place a call to the:

**Catch a Poacher Hotline At
1-800-635-6124**



Add this number to your cell phone contact list!



This Happened to Me While Fishing! - Bob O'Donnell

Technically, this happened to one of my good fishing buddies from high school, but I was there to enjoy the moment and razz him forever afterwards.

As kids, we often spent many a summer day down at the local creek fishing. A long portion of Pennsylvania's Swatara Creek just happened to run behind our homes and presented a flowing playground filled with various types of fish and critters that could keep a kid busy all day.

My buddy George and I had propped our poles up on "Y" sticks and were laying down, chilling in the sunshine when George got a bite. He played the fish for a bit before hauling it up over the bank. It was a pretty decent size sucker. After unhooking it, and George being a goof off, he held the sucker up to his mouth pretending to kiss it's big lips. Right at the opportune moment when George closed his eyes pretending to smooch the fish, the sucker spit up a large amount of water in George's face.

"Wow, she likes you!" I don't know who was surprised more. George about had a fit. I was rolling on the ground laughing so hard my sides hurt. George cursed several expletives while returning the poor sucker to the water in a somewhat acrobatic manner.

Oh how I wish those were the days of cell phones with cameras! To this day it remains a warm memory of fishing with my good buddy, god rest his soul.

PPTU Members & Friends: If you have a great fish story to share with, send it the editor!

TroutWrangler@Yahoo.com



"There is no greater fan of fly fishing than the worm."

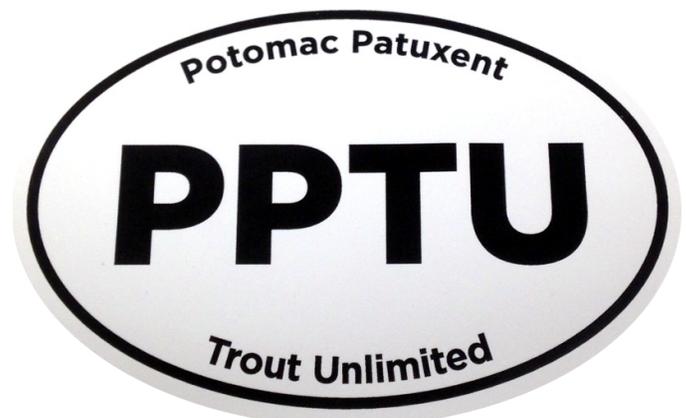
~ Patrick McManus

Annual Supporting Contribution (ASC) - Jay Sheppard

The New Year is a good time to start checking things off your resolution list. How about checking off "Contribute to PPTU"? You can pay the Annual Supporting Contribution (ASC) in several ways:

- At the next chapter meeting (whenever that might be) by cash or check.
- Use our PayPal portal:
<https://pptu.org/j-d/donate>
- Mail a check payable to PPTU to our PO Box (see last page for address).

Your contributions are most appreciated! Help support PPTU in the New Year!!!



Three Cheers for A.J. McClane - Pete Yarrington

Al “A.J.” (Albert Jules) McClane was a prolific writer on fishing, often fly fishing, from the late 1940s into the 1980s. He was the fishing editor for *Field & Stream*, and the author of a number of books, including the exhaustive McClane’s *New Standard Fishing Encyclopedia*. It’s hard to overstate McClane’s contributions to fishing literature, and for me, equally hard to figure why he is not more remembered today. Arnold Gingrich, in his 1959 *The Well-Tempered Angler* (still one of my favorite books for the simple joy of reading), lists McClane’s *The Practical Fly Fisherman* as a necessary book for a comprehensive course in angling literature. Gingrich then characterizes McClane’s *Encyclopedia* as towering like a cathedral over American angling literature. Pretty strong praise!

To discuss McClane’s writing, you have to either start or end with the *Encyclopedia*. There really is not any other fishing volume like it. Yet there are used copies on the web and in local used bookstores starting at about \$20. My 1974 copy of the second edition has over 1,100 pages, containing north of 3,500 entries. There are descriptions and illustrations of hundreds of fish species, with info on the identification, distribution, life history, and sport fishing value of each. Species described range from Bluefin Tuna (with a table of length and weight at each year of life), to dozens of minnows (with illustrations good enough to help you design imitations), to Coelacanth.

There seems to be an entry for every possible fishing location on earth, detailing everything from cultural considerations to rainfall. You’ll find entries for all 50 states, with descriptions of angling opportunities sometimes divided up by county. When you pry yourself loose from wherever you wound up after opening the book, and start to thumb towards Fly-Tying, you first have to get past 13 pages on First Aid (including a huge table of dangerous marine life and how to avoid/recover from it), 23 pages on Fish Cookery (McClane was an

accomplished cook; there are recipes for everything from deep-fried bluegills to eel vinaigrette) and 12 pages on Fish Culture (ranging from raising baitfish as a business to the history of hybrid trout). When you do get to Fly-Tying, you’ll stop at the color plates of fly patterns.

While slightly dated in image quality, the fly plates in the *Encyclopedia*, and the tying recipes, are reason enough to buy the book. It took me years to fully appreciate the snapshot in time that the fly plates provide. The dry flies, wet flies, and nymphs were tied by Elsie Darbee; the streamers and full-dress salmon flies by Harry Darbee; and the muddlers and muddler variants that fill two plates were tied by Dave Whitlock. If you want to know what a classic Catskill dry fly should look like, or a proper Mallard Quill wet fly, Hare’s Ear Nymph, or Muddler Minnow, well, it should look like this.



If you look up “Mayflies” you’ll find what you expect, plus 12 pages of textbook-quality keys to families and genera of the nymphal and adult forms. Stoneflies are given similar treatment. Some of the Latin names have changed since the *Encyclopedia* was published, but the vast majority have not. One of the only signs of the book’s age is its lesser treatment of caddisflies and midges.

You can count on the accuracy of what’s in the *Encyclopedia*. That’s not just because McClane was a perfectionist; it’s also because he had a lot of help. At the end of each entry, there are the initials of the subject matter expert who contributed it. In the front of the volume, there is a key to the 150 or so contributors and their specialties. It’s a Who’s Who of anything to do with fish and fishing at the time of writing.

Not every entry in the *Encyclopedia* is dry. Exhibit A: look at the entry for Curtis, Brian (American, 1893-1960), which begins by noting that Curtis’s book *The Life Story of the Fish, His Manners and Morals* is “a study in frustration, with a surprise ending like an O. Henry plot.” The entry’s author had some tongue-in-cheek fun, and it

continues in that vein for several pages. If you check the initials of Mr. Curtis's biographer against the list of contributors, you'll find it was written by Gingrich, the master of dry reporting.

McClane wrote 10 or so fishing books besides the Encyclopedia, that I can identify. Some are collections of his columns in Field & Stream. Of the six that I own, all have pieces on fly fishing, but only The Complete Fly Fisherman is fly-fishing specific. Fly tiers should note that it includes four plates of flies tied by Catskill legend Walter Dette, complete with recipes. Though all of these books are a few decades old now, they have solid writing and much of the information remains timeless. Discussions of bamboo rods and their lengths and tapers, rod-makers and history, and his articles on leaders, are as good as you'll find anywhere.



And then there are the characters that populate McClane's writing: he regularly fished with other famous anglers, and some interesting people you might not have known were anglers. In McClane's Angling World, A.J. recounts fishing with Bert Lahr, who played Oz's Cowardly Lion, in a boat on a Maine smallmouth lake. McClane brings in a good bass on a fly rod bass bug, but the fish escapes into the bottom of the boat and flips into Lahr's open tackle box filled with lures that imitate mice. Lahr slams the box shut on the fish and stutters, "These m-mice are fan-tastic!"



Fishing with McClane includes a classic Field & Stream article titled "Presenting the Muddler Minnow." It is one of my favorite McClane pieces, and not just because it chronicles McClane's involvement in the early popularity of my favorite fly. It's just fun to read. In the opening paragraph, A.J. tries to convey how suddenly the muddler became big news throughout the country. He recounts eating watermelon at the counter in Dud's Café in Tupelo, Mississippi, in the early '50s when a voice nearby drawled "muddler minnow" during a discussion of a local lake, causing McClane to almost fall off his stool.

So, there you have it. If you are looking for some good winter reading, you can't do much better than McClane. Just my opinion!

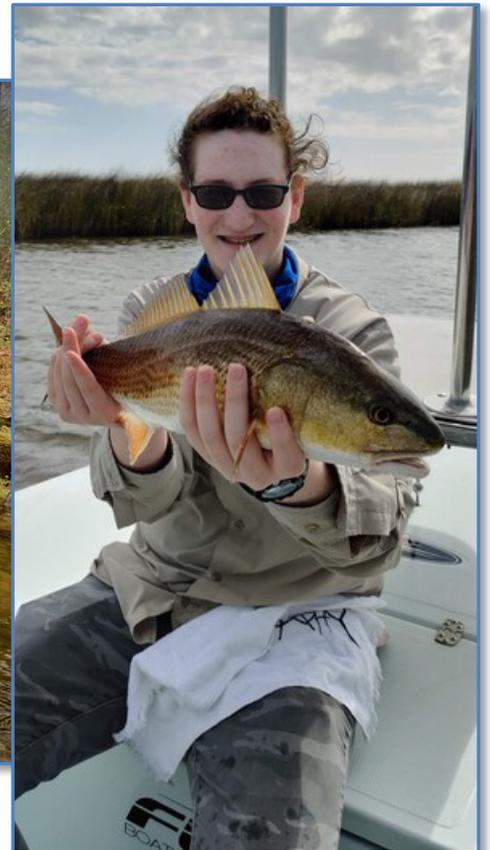
Cicadas are Coming!! **- Jay Sheppard**

Part III of the Cicadas by Jay Sheppard will appear in the February issue. We plan to have a virtual tying demo of the cicada pattern described in the November Conservationist at some point in the next month or so. Stay tuned. Several mentioned difficulty in finding the orange rubber legs. Skirts for bass lures often use orange mixed with other colors, so look for that material. Contact Jay if you are still having trouble finding materials listed in the earlier issues. The cicadas are coming!!



**Members Catch
- Bob O'Donnell**

Happy New Year to PPTU members and friends!
Make a resolution to post your photos in 2021!



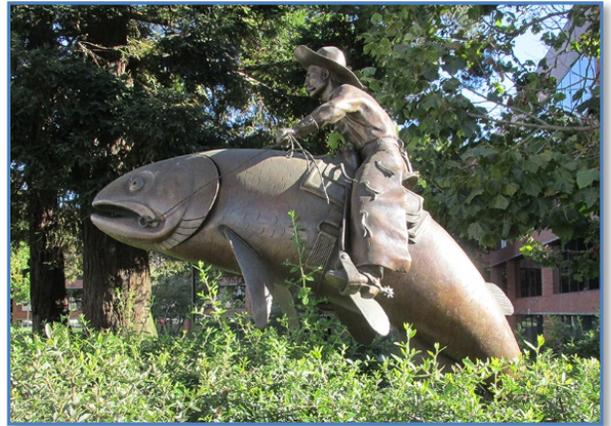
Contributions Welcome!

Send your contributions or article suggestions to the Editor in an email or as an MS Word.doc attachment. The deadline for submissions is the twelfth (12th) day of the month prior to the month of publication.

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Griffith's Gnat

Midges often provide the best trout fishing in winter. There are hundreds of styles, colors and patterns -- dry flies, emergers, pupae, larvae. The most dominant color in our area is black, but hatches of cream-colored midges appear on Beaver Creek and the Patapsco River. Sizes range from size 20 to as small as size 28.

The best bet for matching local midges is to visit one of the local fly shops. One good generic pattern to try out is a Griffith's Gnat in size 20 – 24.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFOTQU9UGWQ&feature=emb_logo



Happy New Year!!!

Many thanks to all our members for making PPTU a great chapter.

A hardy welcome to all our new members - Michael Ackerson, Avanti Foundation, Robert Bagley, Edwin Berkinshaw, Ingrid Braun, Thomas Calo, Kevin Carpenter-Driscoll, Mark Circo, Sarah Covey, Neil Cox, Alfred Craig, Frank Debord, Nick Demers, Jonathan Eyler, Deborah Fagan, Adam Forinash, Yon and Andy Frank, Michael Garceau, Michael Garman, Andrew Geffken, Jordan Gilbey, David Harding, Jeff Harkcom, Kenneth Harmon, Thomas Hastings, James Kehler, Jason Knobloch, Jason Knott, Michael LaClair, Dianne Lash, Raymond Lerch, Charles Morrison, Brian Mozer, Quang Nguyen, Jeffery Oliver, Austin Price, Nathan & Megan Proper, Colin Prosser, Greg Pugh, Nick Raymond, Ralph Riddle, Jerome Russell, Joseph Rutkoski, Thomas Slagle, Keaton Stavely, Scott Stroble, Craig Vande Kolle, S Vespoin, Timothy Wallace, Rob Wardell, Terrell Waters, Hunter Wathen, William Wiemers, and Matthew Wilkerson.

We hope to see everyone sometime in the New Year! Until then, stay safe and join us on line.