

The Conservationist



PPTU.org

Potomac-Patuxent Chapter Trout Unlimited

Nov 2024 • Published monthly except June, July, August and December

“Lords of the Fly: Madness, Obsession and the Hunt for the World-Record Tarpon”

Monte Burke

November 20th, 2024

We’re happy to have as our November speaker Monte Burke, author of *Lords of the Fly: Madness, Obsession and the Hunt for the World-Record Tarpon*, was described by the Wall Street Journal as “wonderful...a lush, panoramic book.”

Monte Burke is also the author of the New York Times bestseller, *Saban: The Making of a Coach*, a biography of Alabama head coach, Nick Saban, *4TH And Goal: One Man’s Quest to Recapture His Dream*, which won an Axiom Award and has been optioned for a feature film, and *Sowbelly: The Obsessive Quest for the World Record Largemouth Bass*, which was named one of the best books of the year by Sports Illustrated and Amazon, and was chosen for Barnes & Noble’s “Discover Great New Writers” program.



After a 14-year stint as a reporter, staff writer and editor at Forbes, he is now a contributing editor at the magazine. He is also a contributing editor at Garden & Gun and The Drake. He has also written for The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Outside, Esquire, Sports Illustrated, Field & Stream, and Golf Digest.

Burke grew up in New Hampshire, Vermont, North Carolina, Virginia and Alabama, and graduated from Middlebury College with a B.A. in Religion. He lives in Brooklyn with his wife and daughters. MonteBurke.com

Monte’s talk will be virtual via Zoom.

– *Scott Cernich*

Nov 20th Chapter Meeting

Laurel Volunteer Fire Department

7588 Van Dusen Road, Laurel, MD 20707

Time and Day: 7:00 PM, Third Wednesday of the month except June, July, August and December

[Chapter Meeting Link](#)

Visit our website: PPTU.org

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Presidents' Column - Craig VanderKolk



I've always wanted to be a writer, but my college freshman English Composition professor suggested that I sue my high school English teachers. Since I don't write a lot, I'm drawn to reading and to writers that make me think about life and it's especially good when it's about fishing. John Gierach is one of those writers and as many of you know, he recently passed away. I think I've read all of his books and I'm now re-reading them. Sometimes it's the next best thing to fishing and I almost always learn something new about fishing for trout.

Throughout my reading experience, I've been interested in the often seemingly opposing forces in the fly fishing world. Fishing competitively (want to catch the most fish, the biggest fish or using the lightest tippet) and fishing for the more existential reasons (being outdoors, communing with nature). Usually the former is looked down upon and the latter exalted, and I've asked myself if there isn't a middle ground. Every time I'm out (and in between), I'm really just trying to be better. Can't we want to catch fish AND enjoy the wonders of the outdoors.

In John Gierach's book, *All the Time in the World*, he makes one of his basic observations of fly fishing and anglers, "Fishing is no longer about success, but catching fish is somehow right at the heart of the game". I think he's referring to all those articles that exalt the virtues of fly fishing beyond catching fish (communism with nature, seeking a higher plane of knowledge of the important things in life, getting away from work, comradery or solitary reflection. I'm in total agreement with all of those things and love that part of fishing, but who doesn't want to catch more fish. Not because we're in search of higher numbers or the largest fish but just want to get better at the sport we love.

I think we all read about new techniques and better gear (it may not be better just because it costs more or is new) and now we have video's and the internet to get more information on how to tie a fly, cast a rod, analyze the water and get a natural drift or tight lining a sparse looking nymph. Fly shops are still an important part of fly fishing and who doesn't stop at the local shop to get advice on a place to fish, what's the best fly to use in the current conditions or to pick up a new leader or tippet.

I think we all want to get better, to catch a few more fish or have good enough technique to catch the 16” brown trout sipping duns in a small pool on the other side of the stream. The goal is not size or the highest number but relishing the whole act of fly fishing. Enjoying the environment with friends or alone and catch a few fish. As John Gierach points out the traditional measure of success is “more than enough fish for a meal if you kept them”.

I hope you all get a chance to get out on these beautiful fall days and have a great day fly fishing and get a few tugs on your line and in the process get a little better.

Craig VanderKolk
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. all 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: mentor@pptu.org



Chapter Meeting Location:

Laurel Volunteer Fire Department
7588 Van Dusen Road
Laurel, MD 20707

Fall Trout Stocking - MD DNR

Maryland DNR crews stocked over 6,000 trout in October. This list should help you go find some of them and introduce yourself.

Baltimore County

Gunpowder Falls, Upper: golden & rainbow trout

Calvert County

Hutchins Pond: golden and rainbow trout

Carroll County

Morgan Run (catch and return, artificial lures only): golden and rainbow trout

Cecil County

Big Elk Creek: golden and rainbow trout

Howards Pond: golden and rainbow trout

Charles County

Wheatley Lake: golden and rainbow trout

Garrett County

North Branch Potomac: golden & rainbow trout

Frederick County

Rainbow Lake: golden and rainbow trout

Cunningham Falls: rainbow trout

Howard County

Warfield Park Pond: golden and rainbow trout

Montgomery County

Great Seneca Creek: brown trout

Prince George's County

Allen's Pond: golden and rainbow trout

Washington County

Greenbrier Lake: golden and rainbow trout

Upcoming PPTU Outings - Lou Reichel & Ron Kerrick

Our November outing will be at Conewago Creek, PA. This is a freestone stream just north of Gettysburg. The Adams County Trout Unlimited Chapter float stocked this stream on Oct 2nd, from the Russell Tavern Road bridge to State Route 34 (Biglerville Road) and they usually stock larger fish here. Conewago Creek is a catch and release, fly fishing only stream in this section, so there should still be plenty of trout in the stream for us to play with. More outing info is on our website.

Nov 9th - Conewago Creek, PA.

Dec 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th – Erie, PA for Steelhead

If you spot poaching please call or text:



Maryland Wildlife Crime Stoppers
At 443-433-4112



Add this number to your cell phone contact list!

FREE Trout Unlimited Membership! **- PPTU**

If you have ever wanted to join Trout Unlimited, let PPTU cover your first year's membership! FREE! No cost except your time to send an email to membership.pptu@gmail.com. You will become an active TU member almost in the blink of an eye. The only requirement is that you have never been a member of TU. Optionally, you can sign up on line directly at Trout Unlimited's web site for half price - \$17.50. Scan the QR code below. Join now!



Clouser's Flyfishing School **- Bob & Jackie Clouser**

We have officially kicked off our Clouser's Flyfishing Schools and have had an overwhelming response! So with that being said, we have added 4 more schools to the schedule. We have openings for:

December 7th Clouser's Flyfishing School for Women Only in Live Oak, FL
[Registration Information](#)

December 21 Clouser's Flyfishing School in Live Oak, FL - [Registration Information](#)

January 11, 2025 Clouser's Flyfishing School at Bass Pro in Orlando, FL - [Registration Information](#)

All Schools are from 9:00 am - 4:00 pm. Social hour will be from 4:00-5:00 pm. We cover casting in the morning, then Knots & Leaders and Fly Tying in the afternoon. Space is limited so please sign up early! For more information you can text or call Jackie Clouser at 321-890-4876

Email: sales@clousersflyshop.com

Just for Fun **- Bob Kaiser**

Lou would be pleased if we all did thus for the PPTU 1 fly contest. Ya have to wade wet, but you can't lose it in the stream.



" There are people in my life who sometimes worry about me when I go off into the fields and streams, not realizing that the country is a calm, gracious, forgiving place and that the real dangers are found in the civilization you have to pass through to get there."

~ John Gierach

TU Redd Survey Tool - Ron Kerrick

TU launched a [Spawning Redd Survey Tool](#) for smartphones (through the Survey 123 tool for iPhones or Androids), which will help inform management and steer restoration efforts. This can help identify critical habitat areas to understand the health of a stream reach. This can be easily sent in to TU via your smartphone, but if you don't have one, don't worry. We also have printed redd data sheets, and a camera and GPS unit are also helpful. For more information, check out our [YouTube video](#) for detailed instructions on how to use it.

Stream Cleanup – Your Chance to Volunteer - Randy Dwyer

Here's your chance to participate in a stream cleanup at Gunpowder Falls State Park. Sunday November 10th from 12 PM - 4 PM. [Details Here](#)



The poster features the Gunpowder Valley Conservancy logo at the top. The main text reads: "Join us for a Stream Cleanup! Sunday, November 10 12 PM - 4 PM Gunpowder Falls State Park 10691 Harford Rd, Glen Arm, MD". A QR code is on the left with an arrow pointing to it and the text "Scan here to register!". To the right of the QR code is a blue fish icon. Below the QR code, it says "Please note: there must be at least one adult chaperone for every four minors". At the bottom right, it lists contact information: "Questions? Contact: Rich Dennison at richdennisonflyfishing@gmail.com or Elizabeth Eakes at eeakes@gunpowdervc.org".

Maryland Power Line Project - Katarina Hein - WBAL NewsRadio

The Public Service Enterprise Group (PSEG) has announced the proposed route for the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP), a new 500,000-volt transmission line aimed at addressing growing electricity needs in Maryland.

The project, expected to help meet increased demand from data centers and other industries, was ordered by PJM, an independent Regional Transmission Organization responsible for operating

and planning the electric grids in 13 states, including Maryland.

PJM awarded the project to PSEG in December 2023, with the project slated for completion and operational use by June 2027.

The transmission line is planned to begin in northern Baltimore County, pass through Carroll County, and terminate in Frederick County, covering approximately 70 miles. This marks the final selection from 10 potential routes that were previously under consideration. PSEG's proposal includes a 150-foot-wide right-of-way (ROW) for the line, which will connect with existing infrastructure. [Click here for more information.](#)

Gear Advice for the Novice - Sean Beck

A new member reached out to the group regarding gear advice, trying to figure out what's needed, what works, etc. A pretty open question with lots of answers. Here's a few on the basics:

Sunglasses: I learned this lesson the hard way a few years ago fishing with Bob O'Donnell on a local river when I lost my Costas to the current. Get a cheap pair of sunglasses keepers to hold them on you. Even better get ones that float. \$10-15 to keep your nice pair of polarized glasses on you is worth it.

Water bottle: I haven't found an optimal solution for this that I like. If I'm using my lumbar pack that has a bottle holder pocket then I carry one, otherwise I'm just thirsty for however long my outing lasts.

Nippers: I'm naughty and use my teeth most of the time, but it's getting hard to do that with 20lb mono. Last year I got myself [one of these](#) at Anglers Sports Center and haven't looked back. Works great, clip it to a loop on your bag and forget about it until you need it.

Tippet: When I spent all my time euro nymphing I kept all my Cortland fluoro spools on the classic tippet holder dangling in front of me on my chest pack. It's been around forever because it works. Now I just carry small spools of Maxima in my bag and that works fine for me. They would fit on the tippet holder but the thing bounces around a lot so I just keep the spools in my bag now. I'm not a competition guy so immediate access to tippet is hardly a necessity.

Bobbers: Hard to beat a snack sized ziploc inside your bag. Don't hyper-organize your gear with small bobbers in one pocket, medium in another, etc. Just toss them in a baggy to keep them together and keep that baggy in the same pocket of your bag always so you know where they are.

Flies: Depends on the flies. I'm in love with the Tacky boxes. They're slim, hold a lot of bugs, and keep my bugs where I put them. I also really like Plano D boxes for bigger offerings. They are expensive but I plan on using them until I die, which is ideally many years away. I've probably got thousands of flies at this point, and the most economical method for storage is a Plano 3700 box. You can get them from Walmart for \$4 (or Bass Pro for \$12 if you're a masochist). You can stack them on a shelf or in a corner and they will dutifully hold your flies until you need them. They aren't waterproof though so maybe keep them off the floor if you're worried about flooding from a storm or an over-filled sink. Have your few working boxes with bugs you'll take on your outings and opt for the lowly Plano to hold the rest. You can also just use ziplocs to hold flies, but it's definitely not a good option. Remember to not put wet flies back into your box until they are dry!

Bags: I've experimented with chest packs, slings, and lumber packs. I used a vest when I was younger. I found that a sling pack is very convenient for access when things are needed but it puts all the weight on one shoulder which gets uncomfortable after a few hours. Chest packs are even more convenient for quick access, but depending on the size of the pack I found it will get in your way either when casting or when stripping in line. You can work around that, but it became cumbersome for me once I stopped euro nymphing. I moved away from the lumbar pack for a long time to try out chest packs and slings but have since come back to it. It also suffers from putting the weight of the pack on one shoulder, but alleviates it with the waist strap. I use a now-discontinued pack from Fishpond called the Gunnison Guide Pack. It has a ton of storage space and has been durable for me as I bushwack into some spots. The downside to lumbar packs is that it sits low on your back and thus WILL get wet if you wade into too deep of water. If you're just wading knee deep or less or fishing from the bank then this isn't a problem. If you're ok with the contents getting wet it also isn't a problem. I have also tried using a backpack made by Aftco, [specifically this one](#). Ignoring the space limitations of the pack itself it works fine, but to access gear you

can't just swing it around the front of you. You mentioned that you have found a backpack to not be ideal, which I certainly agree with in a lot of situations, but it can be a functional option if you find the right pack and don't mind holding your rod between your legs while you get out gear. I still have my vest from my younger years and I've been meaning to try it out again. They're certainly functional and you can pack a lot of gear into them. Given that it is not a bag the pockets are limited in size and you will have to adjust fly boxes accordingly.



Nets: Make sure you get a net sized for your quarry. Some packs have a slot specifically for holding nets and that can work fine. I swear by this net-keeper. Your net will bounce around behind you, but you don't have to fiddle with your net behind your back trying to get it back into the special net slot. Reach back and grab the net when you need it then just let go of it when you don't. As a word of caution, if you use some sort of magnetic net holder rather than [this one](#) you may risk losing your net. My childhood net is buried somewhere in the leaves on a Patuxent forest hillside because I didn't notice when it came loose from the magnet holder as I made my way through some brush.

Remember the **K.I.S.S** principle: (**Keep It Simple Stupid!**). It's easy to over-complicate things in a hobby. A Redington 4wt rod combo is perfect for Maryland trout and other quarry. A small White River chest pack for \$25 can be sufficient, especially for short outings. As you fish more you'll decide just how much you enjoy it and commit further into gear from there. For summer wet wading I'll take a small Tacky Pescador fly box with some buggers or small poppers and shove it in my pocket with a spool of 6lb Maxima ultragreen and that's more than sufficient to hammer green sunfish all day.

Don't over-commit before you're in love with it!

Tips & Tricks – Drop Offs

- **Bob O'Donnell, with notes from Charlie Lukaszewicz**

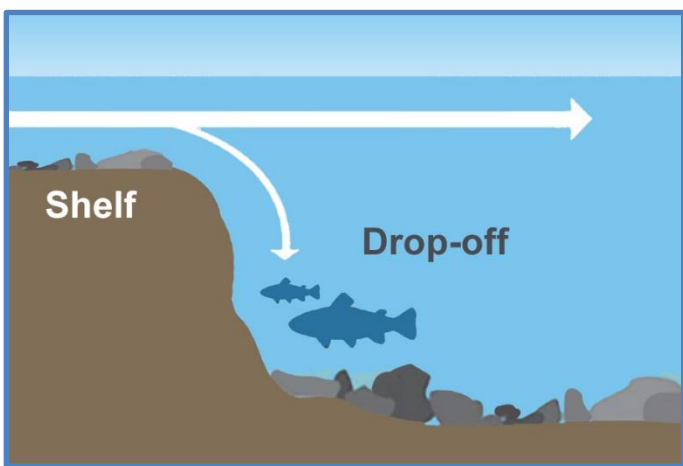
Drop-offs are trout magnets.

Consistently finding trout in your local water can be relatively easy if you pinpoint the right locations. Search out drop-offs, the area where shallow water transitions into deeper water. The slower moving water and cover provided by drop-offs are the two main reasons trout hang out.

When fishing the Fall through the Spring, being able to identify and effectively target shelves and drop-offs in a stream will give you the best chance of locating fish and hopefully some hot action. When the waters are low and food in the river thin, shelves and drop-offs provide trout with vital cover and easier access to what food is available in the river.

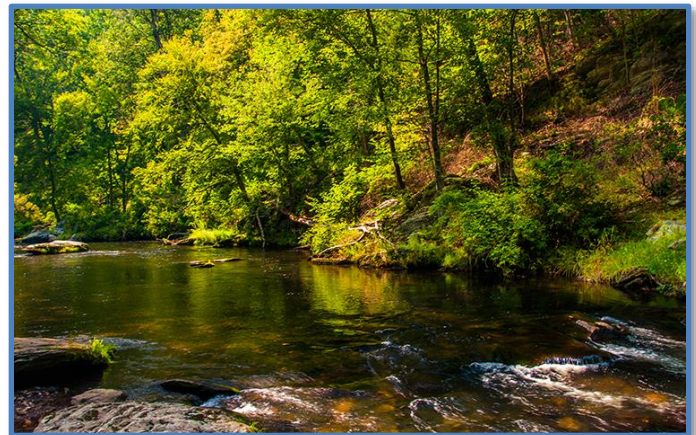
Finding Shelves & Drop-Offs

Shelves and drop-offs are created when fast-moving water erodes and carries away gravel and small rock from the riverbed, creating sharp, deep depressions or trenches that provide trout with greater depths to hide in and slower flows in which to conserve energy as they feed. These sweet little fishing collection spots will often be found at the river transitions from a steep, fast flowing riffle into a slow flat pool, or at bends in the river where the current comes up against a boulder or bedrock. With most of the aquatic insects in the river calling the fast-flowing riffles home, the position of the deep shelves and trenches immediately downstream of the riffle make them points of food collection as drifting nymphs and larva hit the deep, slow current and lazily drift in front of the schooling trout.



How to Fish Shelves & Drop-Offs

There are a couple of good techniques; one being a traditional tandem nymph rig and the other being a Czech or euro nymphing setup. Nymphs, larva, pupa, and wet flies are going to be your go-to patterns, especially when fishing in the fall through spring when hatches are few and far between. Whether you prefer to use lead split shot, tungsten putty, tungsten weighted nymphs, or a combination of all the above, weighting your rigs to ensure a quick descent is essential. It might take a little bit of time to find that sweet spot, using just enough weight to drop your flies into the feeding zone along the bottom of the shelf or trench without getting hung up. Arguably, the most effective rig for targeting shelves and drop-offs is Czech nymphing with a long 10' – 12' rod. This technique allows you to pinpoint and drop your heavily weighted nymphs right off the shelf while feeling every tip, tap, and take translated directly from fly to fingertip.



From the time the leaves start to fall until the trees bud again in the spring, shelves and drop-offs are going to offer you consistent action on the fly! Coldwater makes for slow fishing, but if you go deep and scrape the bottom of the river you can almost guarantee to pick up fish in these off-season hot spots!

Recent Tour of Stream Conservation and Restoration Projects in Western Maryland - Pete Yarrington

On Saturday, October 12, participants of the Potomac-Patuxent chapter's western Maryland camping trip toured several stream project sites that benefit native Brook Trout populations in the upper Potomac drainage with Ben Harris, Project Manager with TU's Western Maryland Initiative (WMI).

Because PPTU members fish western Maryland streams regularly, our PPTU's conservation committee will be looking at how the chapter might support WMI's work and then make recommendations to the chapter's board of directors.

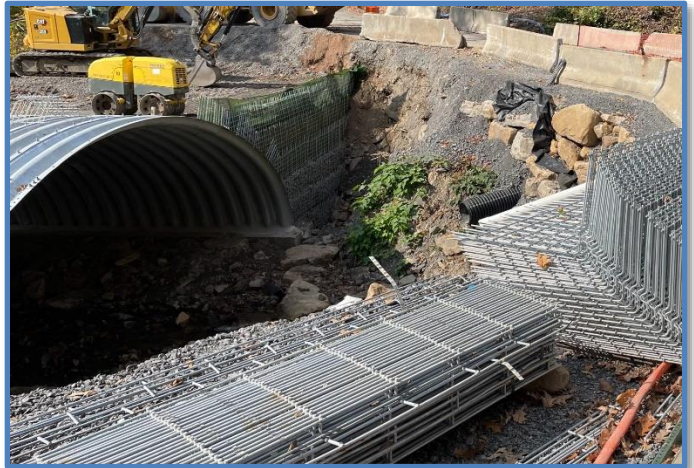
The first of several sites we visited was a tree planting project along Big Run, a tributary of Savage River. Ben explained that tree planting along upper tributaries helps to reduce erosion and sedimentation that can affect trout spawning. He indicated that this is a type of work, mostly accomplished in April and May, was something that TU chapters can readily help with. Part of the tree planting project along Big Run is shown below. Ben also indicated that there may be opportunities for helping with fish monitoring work in the area.



Ben also showed us several road culverts that pass streams under roadways, and he explained that many older culverts are “perched”, meaning that the pipes are above the level of the stream, blocking fish from moving upstream and downstream. Ben indicated that replacing such culverts with more fish-friendly designs is considered a priority by WMI and the agencies it partners with. The photo below shows an undersized, perched culvert we visited on Big Run.



Ben then showed us a large, open culvert that is being installed on Wolf Den Run, a tributary of the North Branch of the Potomac. The culvert will be large enough and low enough to allow Brook Trout to move upstream and downstream, reconnecting



trout populations that had been separated. This will help to maintain the genetic diversity of trout populations, helping increase their survival in the stream environment. Ben explained that larger projects like this are done in partnership with county, state and federal agencies, and mostly funded through grants from organizations such as the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. In the photo below, you can see the size and elevation of the open culvert being constructed, and how the elevation of stream bed will continue through it without interruption.

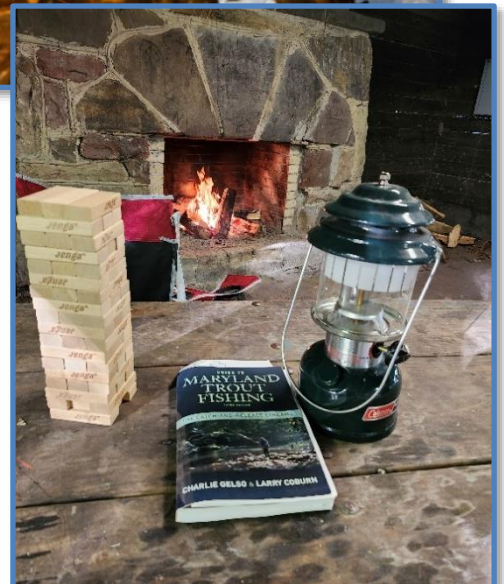


The last site we visited was a bridge over Wolf Den Run that replaced an aging culvert to allow upstream passage of Brook Trout. We really appreciate the time that Ben spent to show us around and tell us about the work being done by TU's WMI and its partners.



Members Catch - Bob O'Donnell

Great pics guys! Nice to see some variety from various locations. The camp fire shot is from our Campout in Western Maryland. Hope to see more folks take part next year! We always book ahead so get the date on your calendar and come relax with us.



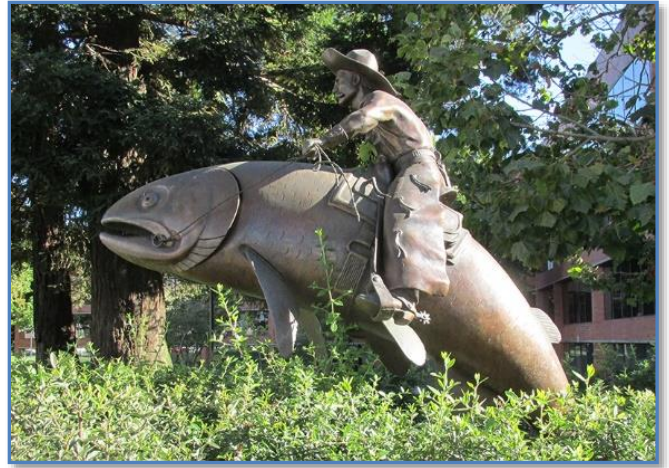
Contributions & Questions Welcome!

Send your contributions, article suggestions or fly fishing questions to the Editor in an email. Deadline for submissions is typically the twelfth (12th) day of the month prior to the month of publication.

This newsletter is available online at PPTU.org

Editor: Bob O'Donnell

Email: TroutWrangler@Yahoo.com



Rainbow Trout Clouser

It's fall and good time to toss streamers. In this video Jay Nicholas shows us how to tie a simple but very effective Rainbow Trout Clouser utilizing Pastel Bucktail. This fly will fish well on the swing or cast and stripped for Trout.

[Tying Video](#)



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