



April 2005

The Conservationist

Potomac-Patuxent Chapter

www.pptu.org

Wednesday, April 20

The Annual Spring Raffle and Silent Auction

With Guest Speakers Charlie Gelso and Larry Coburn

Spring has sprung and what better way to inaugurate a season of fine fishing than by coming out for a fun-filled evening at our Annual raffle, silent auction and presentation on fishing Maryland streams by two of the area's finest trout fishermen.

With all kinds of enticements around every corner, the raffle and silent auction is a veritable candy store for you trout nuts. We will be asking everyone attending to purchase one \$5 raffle ticket at the door which will provide you with an opportunity to win our door prize, an Orvis 5 weight 9 foot fly rod.

But that is just the beginning. You'll have the chance to bid on and win quality prizes, tackle and gear. Rods, reels, waders, wading boots, landing nets, vests, guided trips on local and out of state streams and loads of other equipment and gadgets — all at bargain prices. As if that weren't enough our famed Bucket Raffle gives you the chance to score lots of other fine prizes, too.

And then there is the Grand Raffle where your odds at winning are so high, Vegas and Atlantic City tourism officials are quaking in their hip boots. Seriously folks, fewer than 200 tickets will be sold which means that if you buy just a few you are sitting pretty. Check out these prizes: ►

1st Prize — A fly-fishing package for two to West Branch Angler and Sportsman's Resort. This package consists of two days of guided drift boat fishing or one day of drift boat fishing and one day of flyfishing school. It includes all meals, guide tips and 3 nights stay in a deluxe cabin on the West Branch of the Delaware River in Deposit, New York.

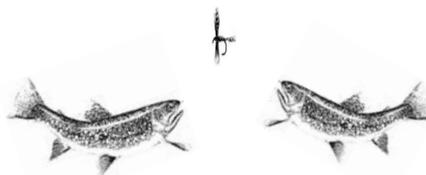
2nd Prize — A float trip for two on the Potomac River provided by Mark Kovach's expert guide services and includes lunch and tip.

3rd Prize — A top of the line digital camera. The Pentax Optio 43 WR, 4 megapixel, water resistant digital camera, 2.8 X optical zoom, 4 X digital zoom.

Perhaps the biggest catch all night will be the insightful and engaging commentaries by Charlie Gelso and Larry Coburn on trout fishing in Maryland.

So grab a friend or neighbor and come on out to the show. This is always a great opportunity to introduce newcomers to the sport and it is a great way to get started in fly-fishing with very little damage done to the wallet.

Please join us on Wednesday, April 20 at 7 PM at the Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center, 100 Forest Glen Road Silver Spring, MD.



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

is published monthly, except Dec., Jun., Jul., and Aug., by the Potomac-Patuxent Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

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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Patuxent:	Jay Sheppard	301-725-5559

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

EDITOR: Matt Baun
Phone: 301-937-8015
mattbaun@yahoo.com

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

The Chapter's fiscal year is rapidly passing. It is time again to nominate a slate of potential Chapter officers and Directors to serve in the next fiscal year. Expression of interest by our members or the suggestion of a potential nominee should be made to the nominating committee comprised of the resident Chapter Past Presidents (Jim Keil, Jay Sheppard and Robert Simpson). The nominating committee will compile a list of names from their own knowledge and from member suggestions and will have a discussion with each possible candidate to ensure they are interested and willing to serve. The slate of nominees will be announced at our April meeting and the Chapter members will vote on the slate, or any other last minute candidates nominated from the floor, during the May meeting. This is a significant opportunity to make a contribution to the Chapter's continued active involvement in cold water fisheries.

In last month's newsletter we gave a brief synopsis of the status of the ICC project in Montgomery County. Since then the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) completed its review and submitted comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and the Montgomery County Council voted in favor of the Corridor 1 alignment. In short, the EPA rated the environmental impacts of the Corridor 1 alignment as "Environmental Objections" because of the serious impacts on the wetlands, parklands and the spawning and nursing grounds of the Upper Paint Branch. They rated the environmental impacts of the Corridor 2 alignment as "Environmental Concerns" (meaning there are potential solutions to mitigate the issues associated with that alignment).

Between both those options the EPA favored the Corridor 2 alternative. [The preferred option of the EPA is the "No Build" option which would have the least environmental impacts]. Both options 1 & 2 inflict serious environmental damages as a direct result of the highway construction and as yet untold damages resulting from the secondary construction (housing developments, shopping centers and other commercial establishments) accompanying the ICC build. It is hard to explain how, given the decades of support to protect the Paint Branch watershed, the County Council would vote for the worst possible build option that would essential destroy the only naturally reproducing trout stream ►

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

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in the county and wreak havoc with wetlands and parklands used by resident.

This month we will hold our annual fundraising event featuring door prizes, silent auctions, barrel raffles and three grand prizes that most fishers "would die for." We also are having Larry Coburn and Charlie Gelso as our guest speakers- WOW! Plan on arriving early so you can look over the prizes, place bids and get your tickets and a seat for the evenings' lecture.

Our late winter weather was not the best for fishing. We got our streams stocked without anyone getting lost, or too wet, and the fish are plentiful and playful. Be sure to get on the water and enjoy the spring. ■

--Lou Boezi

Tackle and Tactic Tips

There is a persistent rumor among many fishers that rods seem to break when they are within one rod length of a car. Such accidents do happen, but I think as many are broken during the fall of the fisher while hiking down a trail or going up or down a hill side. The typical fisher carries his rod with the tip pointed in the direction of travel and with the grip of the rod in the palm of the hand so that the rod is hanging under the hand. Both positions are asking for potential damage to a rod. The tip may snag on a tiny branch and the forward momentum of the fisher will snap the tip before he realizes the problem. Carry the rod with the tip following the angler as you walk the trail. The only exception would be on a roadway or bike path where vehicles or bikes may come up behind you and not see the tip of your rod behind you.

To carry the rod so that the chances of breakage are greatly reduced, do the following: take the hand that is going to carry the rod and face it palm-down (toward the ground). Lay the rod on top of the hand so that the grip rests between the thumb and the forefinger. If you start to fall with the rod carried in this position, your hand will land on the ground palm-first, and the rod will land on top of your hand with no weight bearing down upon it. When climbing up or down a steep slope, most times we have one side toward the hill. In such ►

cases, carry the rod in the hand farthest from the side of the hill; most falls are slips, and the hand closest to the hillside will usually brace the fall—if there is no rod in the way. A broken rod some distance from a spare will not make the day very enjoyable.

Speaking of breaking, think about your leaders and tippets more often. A simple overhand knot is called a 'wind knot' in our leaders. In monofilament this knot causes a 50% reduction in the strength of the line at that point. You may have a 5-lb tippet attached to the fly, but a 'wind knot' well above the tippet section may reduce the main leader section to less than that of the tippet.

Practice setting hooks and playing all fish for the first few seconds as though the fish might be very large and on a light tippet. Trying to turn the fish inside out with the set of the hook is going to cost you that really nice trout in the future, especially if you have a wind knot or an abrasion in a critical portion of the leader system. If your leader wraps around the rod during a cast or is dragged across a tree trunk or other vegetation, you may have weakened the connection to the fly. Bring the leader system in immediately and inspect it for unwanted knots and abrasions. You can make the perfect cast with the perfect fly, but it will all go for naught if the connection to the fly breaks when you strike the fish too hard. Do not bring the south end of the fish to its south end with the rod strike. Also, to paraphrase the TV commercial, check your leader and check it often. ■

— Jay Sheppard

CAUTION TO ANGLERS

Over the past several years a small number of break-ins of vehicles at public parking lots used by anglers have occurred. Valuables have been lost. A number of cars have been seen at parking lots where the angler was clearly in a hurry and left a door unlocked or even a window down. We must not only secure our vehicles but also remember to not leave any valuables in the car. Take only the rod and tackle you plan to use on your drive to the stream. Do not leave any valuables in plain sight; if the rod case must remain visible, leave the end cap off to show it is empty. Take your wallet and cell phone with you at all times; if concerned about getting them wet, drop them into a zip-lock bag. Do not leave any keys in or under the vehicle for a buddy—bring spares for them. Watch for unusual activity and immediately report it. Get the tag number! Overall, the number of cases has been low, but those suffering the loss had no fun that day. We must all look out for each other. ■

ICC Update

The responses to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed Intercounty Connector from the reviewing agencies are in. It should come as no surprise that the environmental impacts associated with Corridor 1, the route through Paint Branch and Northwest Branch trout fisheries, continues to be a problem

The Army Corps of Engineers took a conservative approach, probably because they had to release their comments first, and they have been criticized in the past for their strong opposition to environmental impacts. The Corps stated a need for further analysis or clarification of 35 specific issues across many subject areas.

The Environmental Protection Agency stated “Corridor 1 bisects major stream valley parks, crosses high quality wetlands embedded in interior forest complex, and crosses tributary streams which contain the only reproducing trout in the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area.” The EPA concluded that that Corridor 1 was the most damaging route, gave Corridor 2 the next better rating, and gave the “no build” option an even better rating.

The Department of the Interior combined the comments from the Fish & Wildlife Service and the National Park Service. They stated “The Department prefers the Corridor 2 alternative since it will cause the fewest impacts to high-quality aquatic resources, parklands, and wildlife habitat of the “build” alternatives.” They submitted 29 pages of comments, including a table summarizing the impacts to interior forest habitat indicating a maximum of 511 acres impacted by Corridor 1 and 249 acres impacted by Corridor 2. If you would like to read the comments from these agencies in full, send me an e-mail and I’ll forward the material to you.

The next step in the process is for State Highway Administration to present their “preferred alternative” to the reviewing agencies by March 16. The participating agencies have until April 1 to discuss the issues and resolve disputes. They then prepare a Final Environmental Impact Statement, which leads to an official Record of Decision by July 29 as to whether or not to build the ICC and if so where. The fateful permit decision by the Army Corps of

Engineers is scheduled for August 19.

Meanwhile, funding for the ICC remains a significant issue in the Maryland General Assembly. House and Senate budget leaders are drafting alternative plans to pay for the Intercounty Connector, a move that Maryland Transportation Secretary Robert L. Flanagan said could jeopardize the \$2.4 billion highway. Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller Jr. and House Speaker Michael E. Busch said that budget leaders are convinced that the current plan borrows too much money, issuing \$1 billion in bonds against future federal funds. Concern about the fiscal viability of the ICC plan is also growing in the House Appropriations Committee, which recently held a hearing on the governor’s plan. Members are openly skeptical of the project’s costs and are worried that the ICC could take state dollars that are slated for local road projects across the state.

Just how SHA is going to address *The Intercounty Connector: Performance and Alternatives* study conducted by Smart Mobility, Inc., a nationally recognized traffic modeling firm, remains to be seen. Their report found four practical, cost-effective alternatives that actually perform better than the Intercounty Connector (ICC) on most measures, including reducing traffic, air pollution and overall cost. ■

— Dave Dunmire
Paint Branch Chair

Shad Fishing at its Best

EDITOR’S NOTE: *In case you missed last month’s chapter meeting, I thought it would be nice to publish this little gem on shad fishing in our region. Chapter member Sebastian O’Kelly put it together and for those who wish to see why shad on the fly rod is so exciting, this primer will be extremely helpful.*— Matt Baun

Where to Fish’em

Potomac River — Chain Bridge and Fletcher’s Boathouse are good spots with a big run of hickory shad and fair run of American shad.

Susquehanna River — Goods runs of both hickories and Americans.

Deer Creek (off Susquehanna) — Lovely spot to wade and sight fish if clear, almost a trout stream experience.

▶
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Lies, Damn Lies and Releases

Five members from our Chapter and one member from the Rapidan Chapter of Trout Unlimited traveled to Beaver Creek on Saturday, February 19th. We fished the entire length of the special regulations stretch of this spring creek. Conditions were partly cloudy with an air temperature in the low forties and water temperature in the mid forties and good visibility.

Given the early season conditions and the temporary disturbance caused by the recent stream improvements between the beginning of the special regulations section and the Beaver Creek Church Road bridge, which were carried out by the Seneca Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited, the trout were not as cooperative as they have been in the past and only two were landed the entire day. Dave Pratt took the only trout observed surface feeding with an Adams and your outings' leader took a rainbow with a Patuxent Special.

The next outing will be for wild mountain brook trout on the Rapidan River in Virginia's Shenandoah National Park the third or fourth weekend of April. If you are interested in this outing, please see me at the April 20th Chapter meeting ■

—Joshua Forster
Outings Leader

Memorial Day Outing and New Outings Leader

Beginning with the Memorial Day Weekend Outing (May 27th through May 30th), Dennis Covert will take over as the new outings' leader. As in prior years, this outing will be to western Maryland where participants will stay at Casselman Hotel & Motor Inn in Grantsville, Maryland.

Participants will be provided with an opportunity to fish the Youghiogheny, Savage, the North Branch of the Potomac and the Casselman River. If you are interested in this outing, and for details about the rates, please contact Dennis Covert at dennis-covert@hotmail.com or 410-740-8337.

Patuxent Report

There have been three stockings of 1800 brown trout and 1350 rainbows on the Patuxent this year. The average stocking rate was about 16 browns per 100 yards, with more in the lower and deeper sections. Most of the rainbows were not float stocked any distance away from the bridges. As for the past 15 years or so, all stocked trout will be planted between Annapolis Rock (Rt. 94) and Howard Chapel Bridges.

The whole Patuxent above Rt. 97 is now largely devoid of the many very large and deep holes once present in the 1970s and early 80s. In those days there were more than a dozen pools from Mullinix Mill bridge to Rt. 97 where nobody could wade for a hundred yards or so with chest waders in the middle of the summer. All of those pools are now filled with large volumes of gravel allowing anyone with hip boots to walk up the middle of the stream bed for most of their lengths. The remaining reason we do not stock above Rt. 94 very far is the good population of wild browns remaining in these upper sections that we do not want to stress any further.

The stocked trout can be expected to scatter in all directions over the coming months as they compete for space among themselves and with other trout already there. In the past, I have caught rainbows about a mile below the lowest stocking point only 8 days after the stocking. So the trout can move quickly if the conditions suit them.

The overall holdover rate will depend largely upon two big factors: summer flows and poaching. More of the former and less of the latter mean more trout all summer and fall. Typical holdover rates for rainbows in average summers is less than 1% and for browns about 20%. There will be no further spring stockings on the upper Patuxent Special Area. Meanwhile, on the Middle Patuxent Delayed Harvest Section, about 1400 browns and rainbows will have been float stocked by the time this is mailed to our members. Go for it! ■

— Jay Sheppard



What Kind of Trout Are You Catching?

After many years of reports of “brook trout” being caught on the Patuxent and other nearby waters, it is obvious that many anglers do not know how to identify what they are catching. There are two basic identification issues for anglers: wild vs. stocked and species.

Stocked trout usually have several major clues as to their origin. Fins are frequently damaged. Tails are usually rounded. The pectoral, in particular, or other fins are often missing or misshapened. The pectorals are the pair at the lower front of the fish. All fins are also thick and cloudy; it would be very difficult to read any small printed material that was placed behind them. All of these features remain relatively unchanged for the life of the trout. The fins may re-grow their tattered edges, but they remain deformed and cloudy.

On the other hand, wild trout have nearly perfect fins that are sharp edged and clear. You could easily read newspaper print under the pectoral fins of any wild trout. The corners of the tail fin are relatively sharp and square. The dorsal fin can be raised easily above the top of the body.

The only real problem in determining the source of a trout occurs where 4–8" trout are stocked (e.g., N. Branch and Youghiogheny Rivers; rainbows in upper Gunpowder in recent years). They have had little physical damage to their appendages. They also tend to quickly acquire good body coloration. The only clues may only be their sudden appearance in high numbers, their eagerness to take a fly, and their location. After a year or more these may be indistinguishable from wild trout.

Brook trout are the easiest to identify to species as all members of the char group have light markings on a dark background. They are only stocked in Big Hunting Creek (a brookie over 10" is most likely one!) and in adjacent Pennsylvania waters where some may move into Maryland waters (e.g., Casselman River). Wild brookies, on the other hand, are relatively common in Baltimore Co. and downright abundant in the Catoctins and Garrett Co. Brown, cutthroat and rainbow trout all have dark markings on a lighter colored background. ▶

Browns usually have no spots in the tail fin (along the top edge, if any), and the spots on the body and head are a range of sizes. Rainbows have relatively uniform black spots covering the entire tail and most of the body. Always check the tail: the easiest way to verify the ID of browns or rainbows for these two commonly stocked trout. Most wild browns in Maryland will likely be less than 12", unless you are on the lower Savage River. Wild rainbows are a real rarity in this State. A few reproduce in the upper Gunpowder and occasionally in Big Hunting Creek and a few other local places in Maryland. Cutthroat (a few may still be in the N. Branch and lower Savage) have the orange slash marks under the jaw.

Never attempt to identify a stocked trout by its overall coloration. This is the single biggest mistake most anglers make. Recently stocked trout are usually a dull gray regardless of species. Only those that have survived for more than a few months acquire some of the coloration appropriate for that species. This is why their physical structures and marking patterns have to be examined when fishing in our stocked streams. Study any angling magazine, such as the *Pennsylvania Angler and Boater*, for trout pictures. Many were stocked, as can be seen by their rounded tails or other deformed fins. Holdover trout will have fins in better condition (smooth edges, tail nearly square) and with some color but still cloudy. Some holdover browns are hard to separate from wild trout; if in doubt, they are more likely stocked. Holdovers on the Patuxent typically get a dark straw yellow-brown. Stocked rainbows uncommonly survive our summers east of the Catoctins in freestone streams. ■

— Jay Sheppard



Dave Whitlock @ www.davewhitlock.com

Shad Fishing At its Best

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How To Fish'em

5 to 7 weights with 2X tippet. Sinking lines in the rivers, sink-tip or floating line with 3X on Deer Creek. Cast directly across or 45 degrees up-stream. Seams are good spots. Start stripping (short quick strips), rod low to water as line sweeps 45 degrees downstream. Prepare for hard strike but also be ready to make strong hook set as shad have tough mouths. Then the fun begins! Hickories typically run 10-16" but can go to 20." Americans average 12-20" but can go to 24-26."

When To Fish'em

Late March through early-to-mid-May. Peak of the hickory run is around Tax Day. The American shad come in a little later. Cloudier days are better. Moderately colored water fishes best. Big temperature swings (as we often have in April) will throw off the bite. But when it's on, prepare for sore wrists by the end of the day!

Tying Materials: #4 to #8 regular shank hook, any color 6/0 or stronger thread, yellow and red marabou, chartreuse and pink crystal chenille, pink and chartreuse crystal flash; small brass/Clouser dumbbell eyes.

Color Combinations: I like pink/red and chartreuse/yellow combinations. White is also a good color that can be mixed with any of the other colors.

Directions To Tie:

- 1) Secure hook. Tie in eyes on top of hook close to eye, closer than you would tying a traditional Clouser
- 2) Tie in small clump of marabou at the tail, then trim. Tie in several strands of crystal flash.
- 3) Tie in crystal chenille at tail. Wind thread up to eyes. Wind chenille up to eyes then tie off behind eyes. Whip finish thread there or wind thread back over eyes and tie off in front.
- 4) Voila! A an easy to tie and effective shad pattern now ready to be fished for a fun and underrated species. ■

— Sebastian O'Kelly

Local Tackle Shops & Guide Services

Below is an alphabetical list of the shops and independent guides in our immediate area that have supported the Chapter for the past year and for which **we thank them.**

SHOPS

Angler's Lie
2100 N. Glebe Rd
Arlington, VA 22207
703-527-2524

Bass Pro Outdoor World
White river Fly Shop
7000 Arundel Mills Circle
Hanover, MD 21046

Hudson's Trail Outfitters
4530 Wisconsin Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20016

Hudson's Trail Outfitters
401 Frederick Ave
Gaithersburg, MD 20879

Backwater Angler
538 Monkton Rd
Monkton, MD 21111
410-329-6821

Orvis-Tyson's Corner
8334 Leesburg Pike
Vienna, VA 22182
703-556-8634

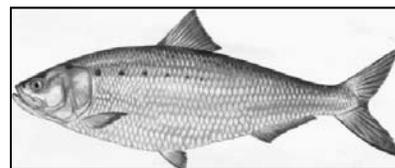
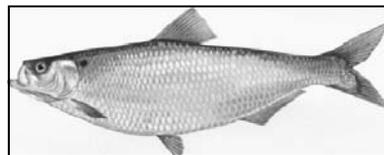
GUIDES

Capt. Norm Bartlett
(Chesapeake)
2617 Franklinville Rd
Joppa, MD 21085
410-679-8790

Capt. Brady Bounds
(Chesapeake)
RT 1 Box 87-B
Lexington Park, MD 20653
800-400-3790 or 301-862-3166

Larry Coburn
(Freshwater)
9929 Naylor Ave.
Laurel, MD 20723
301-490-7170

Mark Kovach
(Potomac smallmouth)
406 Pershing Dr
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-588-8742



**Hickory Shad (top)
and the American
Shad**

Courtesy of Maryland DNR.

ADDRESS CHANGED?

If you move, please take a moment and advise us with a post card as to your new address. Likewise, we would like to know of any changes to your email service. Last January we had to cancel the monthly meeting on very short notice due to the snow storm that day. We would like to use email to help alert our membership of such events. Email saves the chapter on postage and paper costs for other informational mailings, too. We can assure you that we will not be selling our modest list to any spam artists! Our membership database is totally separate from the National TU list; any address changes sent to the latter office may take a couple of months to be reflected in your mailing label for the Conservationist.

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-0905 or NTU-0905.



Return Address:
Potomac-Patuxent Chapter TU
P.O. Box 2865
Wheaton, MD 20915

North Branch Whitewater Release Schedule



There are 4 weekends this spring when there are scheduled to be whitewater releases on the North Branch at Barnum, WV: April 16–17, April 30–May 1, May 14–15, and May 28–29. The Savage is not scheduled for any whitewater releases this spring. Fishermen can fish the latter during the day and fish the former each evening after the water drops back to normal.

Some years ago on Memorial Day weekend, six PPTU members fishing after that day's release had subsided (about 5:00 PM) caught over 120 trout in one large pool, about two-thirds on dry flies, before dark. The next morning (no releases) we only caught 6 or 7! Call the tape at the Baltimore Office of the Army Corps of Engineers for current flow and future release schedules on these two rivers: 410-962-7687; also check the web sites page under "Links."

Flows above 450 cfs on the North Branch and 150 cfs on the Savage are basically unfishable; flows of 300 and 100 cfs or less on each respective stream are a lot more fun and not so dangerous.

FIRST CLASS MAIL