

January 2009

The *Conservationist*

Potomac-Patuxent Chapter

Annual Fly Tying Demonstration

January 21, 2009

Enjoy the beginning of 2009 with a glimpse of how to tie flies and maybe even pick up a new hobby. Join us at this chapter meeting beginning at 7:00 PM to see our most talented local tiers show off their skills and favorite patterns. Come learn how to make it easier to succeed at this intriguing sport of fly fishing.

Once again, Robert Simpson will be sharing his rigging and knot tying expertise for anyone who has an interest in learning better and faster ways to rig your flies. Paul Vicenzi and son Peter will be presenting at the kids table. John Colburn (and hopefully, a couple of Project Healing Waters Warriors) will be tying the delicate soft hackle patterns he likes so well. George Vincent will be tying parachute patterns. Bob Dietz will demonstrate a couple of Catskill-style wet flies, while Carl Smolka shows how to tie Suspended Caddis. Ken Bowyer will be tying the Bead Head Brassie, and Dennis Covert will show how to tie Coburn's Deer Hair Cress Bug. Finally, Dick Friis will present his best steelhead flies.

Come to this meeting, and share with us one of the season's most popular presentations. Hope to see you all there. – by *Ken Bowyer*

DON'T FORGET — PPTU Grand Prize Raffle drawing will be held at the January 21 meeting

PPTU's Grand Prize Raffle this year includes a **First Prize** of a trip for two on the Delaware River at the West Branch Angler. The winner will have a three night stay, with two days of guided drift boat fishing (a day of fly-fishing school may be substituted for a day of fishing), meals (if the restaurant is open at the time of your stay), and a tip for the guides.

The **Second Prize** is an Orvis TLS Matrix 9', 6 weight rod and Orvis Mid-Arbor Battenkill reel.

The **Third Prize** is a Pentax Optio waterproof digital camera, 7 MP, 3x optical zoom.

Tickets are on sale at one for \$15; two (2) for \$25 or four (4) for \$40.

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Monthly Chapter 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, then go past Holy Cross Hospital and across Sligo Creek Parkway. The Center is on the right.

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President's Column

Fly Tying – Why Bother?

You're probably aware by now that our meeting this month is our annual fly tying extravaganza. For those of you who, like me, "roll your own," it's an anticipated event.

If you don't tie, you may wonder if it's even worth going. Let me assure you that it is. Even if you never tie a fly, it's worth your time to be familiar with the process. At the very minimum, it will help guide your purchases of flies. If you know *why* a fly is tied the way it is, you'll have a better idea of whether it fits your needs.

Why do we tie at all when we can just buy flies? I must admit that I don't tie all my own, even though I tie hundreds of flies a year. What flies do I buy rather than tie? That's easier to answer by flipping it around: "what flies do I tie?" Those fall into two categories: those that I won't buy, and those that I can't buy.

The first category includes flies that are just too easy and inexpensive to tie to waste good money on. You've probably heard that you'll never save money by tying, and although this is true enough in general, there are flies where it's definitely cheaper to tie. Take the Green Weenie, for example. I just can't see shelling out a couple of bucks for a ten cent hook, a nickel's worth of chenille and a minute of my time. Wooly Buggers, Sparkle Grubs, San Juan Worms, etc all fall into this category as well.

The other category includes most of the flies I fish. I've never seen my favorite bucktail (the Warden's Worry, if you must know) for sale in a fly shop. Nor have I seen many Dark Hendrickson wets with a bit of CDC in the hackle. If I want to fish them, I have to tie them.

Many of the flies I fish fall into both categories. Soft hackle wet flies are easy and inexpensive to tie, and not many shops carry them. Yeah, you might find a Partridge and Orange or Partridge and Green, but again, I'm not going to pay good money for them when they're so simple to tie. And others, like say, a Starling and Claret just aren't available anywhere.

Then there's the flies I do buy. I can tie an all right Bead Head Pheasant Tail, or a Parachute Adams, but I get no satisfaction from doing so, and they're available everywhere. Why bother?

Take note of that word in the previous paragraph, "satisfaction." It's the best reason of all for tying your own.

Tying is a way to think about fishing when you're not fishing or pay a bit more attention to the bugs you're trying to imitate, to give yourself a reason to be proud of your handiwork (or to keep going until you are), and to generally be a more well-rounded angler. It's satisfying.

I hope you can make it to the meeting.

Bob Dietz

My New Favorite River

By: Timothy J. Pawlowitz

The trout rivers of Maryland are beautiful. The waters vary from slow meandering streams to fast flowing "big" waters that have been compared to western rivers. Not having ever fished out west I have had to take the word of the people and literature that have made this analogy—until this year.

This year I was afforded the opportunity to not only fish the western side of the continental divide once, but twice. One trip took me to Park City, Utah for work; the other trip was to Big Fork, Montana to visit my father-in-law.

Both trips were fantastic and afforded me the opportunity to fish several different bodies of water. In Montana, I did a float trip down the North Fork of the Flathead River, a guided trip on Lake Kookanusa, and wade fished the South Fork of the Flathead and Swan rivers. In Utah I fished the lower and upper sections of the Provo River and the Weber River. The scenery of Montana and the quality of fishing there was awesome; however, what I found was that my favorite river ended up being the underrated Weber in Utah.

This particular trip was during the last days of August and first days of September of 2008. I was fortunate to have the company of my co-worker and friend, John Cabala, on the Utah trip who is not only quite the fly fisherman, but also a PPTU member.

As for the fishing, I experienced enough "oh @#%*" fish that I almost felt the need to wash my mouth out with soap. Well, for that and the other creative combination of words I put together every time one those submarines would snap off my light tippet.

The most memorable would have been what appeared to be a beautifully fat brown trout of at least 24". As I chased this fish down river while he ripped into the backing of my reel, I was left feeling like Brad Pitt in "The River Runs Thought It". I got this fish in close twice before he would take off down river again. On my third attempt he ran off as I was trying to

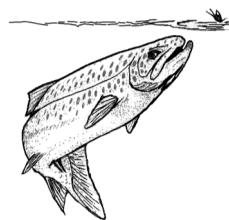
net him, but this time only went about 20 feet downstream. This is when John decided to help out. John, waded out into the river in quite an unsteady manner, and as he cur-splashed through the current toward my fish of a lifetime, he missed netting the fish and sent my trophy sized trout into a panic that finally snapped my 5X tippet--the bastard (I mean John, not the fish)!

I had at least 5 similar occurrences while fishing the Weber where I had fish in excess of 20" peel into the reel's backing while I pursued the fish down river, only to experience that heart breaking line snap. It was GREAT!

The largest fish that I landed was a 19" brown trout (measured) that had to weigh at least 4 pounds. I don't recall any fish being caught that was less than twelve inches, with the majority being 14" to 16"—all brown trout with the exception of a couple of white fish that inhabit the river. The fish in the Weber were exceptionally healthy and voracious fighters due to the super conditions of the river which only made the fishing that much more enjoyable.

I landed 24 trout during my Weber fishing experience and John landed close, if not at least that many. The only time I went swimming was when I tried to chase my landing net as it got washed down river (I'll save the details of this experience for another story), but I got lucky and caught hold of a tree stump. As the current had my legs and feet literally bouncing horizontally behind me on top of the water, I managed to pull myself ashore. And yes, I did eventually recover my net...in case you were wondering.

Overall, the Weber River is now my favorite river that I have ever fished. I think if I was able to fish it often the Weber would lose that special, bigger than life status that the river currently holds for me. For that reason, I will continue to pursue the fishing experiences that I so much enjoy here in Maryland. The fish may not be as numerous or as large—at least in my experience so far—but when you do manage to hook a nice 16" or larger fish, it makes you appreciate the challenge all that much more.



Patuxent Report

'Spring' stocking will start in the latter half of February. If you are not currently on my email list and wish to possibly help float stock a couple of thousand trout on local streams, please let me know (jmsheppar@aol.com). Chest waders are required to pull the boxes a mile or more up or down a stream. This is a weekday activity. Sorry, no weekends are involved. Participants do get to see the stream up close and personal, as well as where the trout are placed.

If we get a warm spell in late January or in February, one can sometimes find trout sipping on midges and even an occasional black stonefly. The latter are actually quite active on all our streams from October into early April, with larger species involved in the warming days of March and early April. Remember, hunting in Patuxent River State Park continues until mid-February or so, be careful and stay alert., You may even want to wear a bright-colored hat on Saturdays, in particular. Sunday hunting for deer does not apply on public hunting zones, such as the Patuxent River State Park.

Jay Sheppard

Tackle and Tactic Tips

The care of tackle is really important when a fisher arrives on a stream and finds the waders leak, the floating line sinks immediately, or the reel seat will no longer accommodate a reel. Now that the economy has gone south, many more of us are going to want to pinch our pennies so we can afford a nice trip to Yellowstone or wherever later in 2009. Most of us have a little more time to look over our fly boxes and other tackle items at this time of the year—or at least those not headed for New Zealand or Argentina.

Care of our tackle is a concern at all times of the year. Leaving waders or vests inside a hot car trunk in the summer will definitely shorten their or their contents' useful life. Monofilament needs to be protected from both sun and heat. Rubber materials should not be exposed to ozone that comes from electric motors (e.g., furnace blowers). Petroleum-based solvents, including fumes such as gasoline may weaken all sorts of materials we depend upon when fishing.

I keep my waders hanging up and airing out for at least several days after any use. In my basement I have three pegs from which I can hang them so the insides can air out and the outsides, as well. If I have fallen into the water, I may reverse them for a day and then re-reverse them to dry the outsides. Dirt is an enemy of the Gortex materials. At least once a year or after a particularly muddy outing, I toss the waders, my rain jacket and often my vest into the washing machine with some Ivory Snow flakes. I hang them up to dry.

Ken Bowyer related a story of a fly fisher who arrived on the stream and found a serious problem with his rod. The wood reel seat insert had been left tightly sealed in the case after a serious dunking on a previous trip. The seat was now so swollen that a reel could not be made to fit onto the rod. I have seen rods packed away in wet rod bags inside their cases; what a mess sometimes results with permanent mildew stains on the rod and grip.

I often take a spill and my flies get dampened inside the boxes. I try to immediately pull the boxes out and lay them on the stream bank, my dashboard or some other place to dry as quickly as possible. Our hooks are rarely stainless steel. They rust! Leaving flies damp for any extended period allows them to rust—and where you cannot see: inside their bodies. Rusty hook shanks break very easily under any pressure. Rusty eyes cause tippets to break at the knot; rusty points are brittle and dull. So leave all wet gear and tackle dry thoroughly after every day on a stream. Do not seal them up inside a confined space. Keep them cool, too. Wash or clean floating fly lines regularly, especially the first 20–30 feet; check for cracking near the tip.

One last tip, carefully look over all your flies in your vest. Are they clean? Good hook points? Eyes gummed up? Taking an hour or two in the dead of winter to review your flies, see what need to be replaced or repaired, etc., will be time you can spend fishing when the weather warms up. If it has been a year or three or never since you washed your waders, rain jacket, or vest, think about doing so this month. Maybe even lubricate your reel (inside the spool, not the drag). We all need to get ready for those first warm days coming later this winter! We do not want any surprises when we get to our destination.

Jay Sheppard

Online Delivery of *The Conservationist*

We now have an improved method for joining the listserve that announces the URL for each issue as it becomes available. If you are not already on this listserve and able to access the current issue online, but would like to be, please visit *The Conservationist* page on our website at <http://www.pptu.org/conservationist/conservationist.shtml> and follow the simple instructions for how to make this happen for you



Remember to return your videos and books on time. Many fellow members would like the opportunity to rent the books, tapes and DVDs that you rented. Late fees will be applied if they are not returned by the next chapter meeting.

PPTU MENTOR PROGRAM

BEGINNERS AND BEYOND

One on one streamside fly fishing instruction is available to PPTU members. Participants must show commitment by having waders or hipper, a rod and reel outfit, and leader. Discussions will include equipment, knots, casting, flies, dry fly and nymphing techniques, entomology, reading water, conservation, etc. at nearby streams. Instruction will be tailored to individual needs.

Members who have not made their **Annual Supporting Contribution** will be asked to contribute \$20.

Contact Ken Bowyer at 301-627-7154 or e-mail kenbowyer@verizon.net.

ADDRESS CHANGE?

If you moved or if the information on the mailing label on *The Conservationist* is wrong, please email Arnie Strand at ArnzMail@Verizon.net.

You may also drop us a post card with the correction. PPTU maintains a mailing list separate from the national TU list.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Existing members should renew their TU membership using any of the following methods:

- Mail your Renewal Statement to TU National
- Call Customer Service at 1-800-834-2419
- Navigate to www.tu.org. Click on the **Join/Renew** tab at top, then click on the "Renew Membership" link on the left.

You will need your login name and password.



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