

Jan 2001 Newsletter

Potomac-Pautxent Chapter



Fy Tying Demonstration

The January 17th

meeting is devoted to providing our members and guests with some tips and help on fly tying. The gathering is very informal and allows everyone to wander around and pick the brains of our talented panel of fly tiers. This is a presentation for novice tiers, as well as those fly fishers who have been tying for a number of years. Everybody will gain new perspectives on this art form.

Except for a few minutes for a quick business meeting and of course the raffle, the entire evening will be available to visit the tiers of your choice. Each of the tiers on our panel is a real expert. In alphabetical order, we have the following tiers along with what they will be demonstrating:

Larry Coburn-- Nymphs we should use more often

David Feldman-- Blue Wing Olives-Duns and Emerg-ers

Mike Fisher -- Spinners

Charlie Gelso -- Hairwing Caddis & Henryville Specials

Jim Greco -- Little Winter Stoneflies Nymphs & Adults

Andy Shaffer -- Spinning Deer Hair

Mike Stephens -- Cal Birds' Stonefly Nymph

Pete Yarrington -- Muddlers and Crickets

We are truly fortunate in having so many fly tying gurus in our chapter and/or immediate vicinity and are deeply grateful for their willingness to demon-strate tying some of the most important flies we need in this area. Bring a friend and your

notebook to the meeting. Plan to circulate among all the tiers so that you can gain the maximum benefit of this type of gathering. You are sure to learn about new techniques and materials, as well as what patterns work in our area. The raffle will include many fly tying materials and equipment. Please leave your thanks with each of the demonstrators. Tie some flies and try them the next time you go fishing. The final exam will be given by the fish.



January PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Jim Keil

I trust you all had productive and relaxing holidays, maybe even a little powder to track the wildlife or just remind you of the newfallen splendor of the natural world. Today as I write this column, however, it is early December, and I am irritated by the horizontal slant of sunlight at this time of year. The leaves are down, the squirrel's frantic pace is slowing, the temperature is dropping, and the wind, well, the wind is picking up (so, too, the ill wind that brings news of attempts by a Montgomery County Council member and the County Executive to encourage study of yet another "environmentally sensitive" Inter-County Connector).

On such a day, having found himself pausing before coffin warehouses, Melville's Ishmael took to the sea. Following his advice, I usually take to some favorite stretch of local water, frequently a lightly fished and favorite section of the Upper Patuxent watershed. Here I can be quiet and alone (and the ICC seems a million miles away). On such December forays, I invariably come across the carcasses of dead deer, raccoon, or squirrel, as if nature is feeling the same heft that I am.

Yet there is something renewing in visiting old familiar water: that hole there is where I tagged and then lost that big birthday rainbow three Decembers ago, maybe more. Remember standing over there taking that fly out of the honeysuckle and that deer hunter cut loose and scared you all the way home? This hole's where I got stuck in the silt, a hypothermic half-hour hike from the car, and scared the bejeezus out of James (how old was he then? what a sweet boy he's become). Now where's that pool where you slid down the bank in hip-pers? Man, that water was cold. Wading upstream across these memories, the water near freezing and my thumb tips the same, I almost always leave the stream somehow refreshed. Maybe it's the realization that I've lived to make it back to these spots of time and mind yet again; maybe it's the old comfort of ritualistic behavior. I don't know. But it certainly has to do with fishing, with all the reasons why we fish, with the realization that we'll be fishing for the rest of our lives because fishing sustains us--even when, as Ishmael says, life requires from us a strong moral principle to prevent us from deliberately stepping into the street and methodically knocking people's hats off.

So some time this winter if you can't go fishing because the streams are frozen over, the cabin fever is high, and you're looking for a substitute for pistol and ball, revisit these places in the riverbed of your mind and remind yourself of why you keep fishing.

If you have moved or see any error in your label on this copy of the newsletter (ZIP, misspelling of names, wrong street numbers, etc.), please notify both the National TU office and this chapter with separate notices. Our mailing list is maintained apart from the National list; we do eventually get the notice of address change from National TU, but it is often a few months before it affects your newsletter and other mailings. Please help us help you.

Thank you.

Maryland License Fees



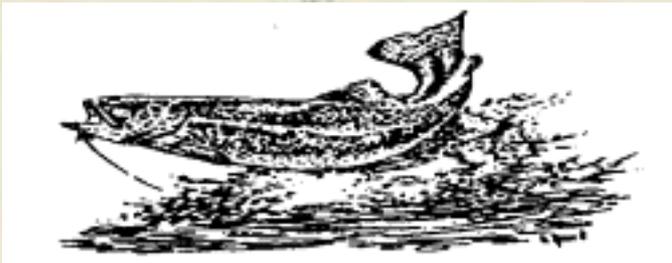
Jay Sheppard

A Maryland License fees for Nonresidents Jay Sheppard In case some of you who live outside Maryland may not have heard: MD has gone to a reciprocal non-resident fee for fishing licenses. That is, when a nonresident asks for a license, the clerk asks what state he is from and the screen only gives him the choices that a MD resident would have when in that other state.

Real example: I took a fellow out for a few days of fishing in early November. He was from Ohio. Nonresidents getting licenses in Ohio pay either a \$24 annual fee or \$5/day to fish. Since MD only offers a 5?day or an annual non?resident license, the comparable 5?day license would be \$25, so MD charges the Ohio resident its annual rate of \$24, plus the MD trout stamp of \$5 to fish ONE or all 365 days.

This will have a really big impact on our members and friends who live in the neighboring states of VA, WV, and PA. I think they will have to pay some-thing like \$60 (VA & WV) and \$40 (PA) for an annual MD freshwater license with trout stamp. Previously, MD had one of the very lowest nonresident annual fishing licenses in the country: \$20 for a non?tidal license without trout stamp.

This whole pricing structure currently applies only to the non-tidal licenses; the legislature is being asked in the next session to allow tidal fishing licenses to also be reciprocal. Welcome to Maryland and the 21st Century! Great place to fish, especially if you live here.



PATUXENT REPORT

By Jay Sheppard

Hunting season will continue through most of February in some sections of the Park, so be careful. In February, I intend to replace some of the signs, particularly around all the major access points. If you want to help, contact me at the January meeting. Hip waders will do fine, and we may cover a couple of large sections of the stream. If it is a pleasant day, we could catch a few holdover or wild trout!

If you have not helped in the past and want to help float stock the brown trout this year, call me (301-725-5559) BEFORE the February meeting (this will be announced again in the FEBRUARY issue) or sign up at the January or February meetings. If you have not helped on this activity, you must have chest waders and be able to help on a weekday. Although this is strenuous work, it is very rewarding, as you typically get to see 1.5-2.5 miles of stream. Those already on my E-mail list need not contact me, unless they have a new E-mail

WINTER TYING AND TACKLE TIPS

Jay Sheppard

With snows and below freezing temperatures keeping most of us inside for the next month or two, I thought a few suggestions for some important activities might be welcomed. You always read that this is the time for tying and checking your gear, but let's get a few specifics onto paper. This is a slight revision of a note in the January 1997 CONSERVATIONIST. As far as equipment, a good rinse of your reels and rod handles in a very mild liquid detergent might help. Cleaning or replacing the fly line OR the mono on a spinning reel are important considerations, too.

Check the fly lines: Are they heavily cracked or with nicks and cuts for the first 5-10'? Was the tip sinking (on a floating line) after a short time? Maybe it is time to consider a new line. Otherwise a good cleaner, like ArmorAll or a mild detergent can help a line. When finished cleaning your reel, don't forget to lubricate it with a light grease made for reels, keeping the lubricant from getting to any disk pads for the drag system.

I find a lot of "fly trees" along our more popular streams each year where I sometimes have recovered 5-8 flies in a day. What I find are a lot of home-tied flies that need a little help. The most frequent problem is that the tying thread is coming undone. No matter what kind of head cement is used, the fly MUST be completed with a whip finish-half-hitches are an absolute waste of effort. Some flies also did not have any tying cement on the head. Another common problem with these flies is that the thread was not kept tight or always wrapped in the same direction: The materials easily rotate around the shank of the hook. Go over your fly boxes.

I have to re-sort the contents so that I will be able to find all my flies next season. A pair of fine tweezers help on the smaller flies. While you are sorting, you might discover a few that could use a few simple repairs, mostly in the aforementioned head region—a few winds of fresh tying thread over the old head and/or some fresh cement are often all that are needed to make it serviceable for at least a few more trout next season.

Check some of your accessories, too. Are those nippers still sharp? Is the pull chord on the small retrievers unfrayed? Are your tippet spools about empty? Are your polarized sunglasses still unscratched? Maybe the vest or the net is showing too much age from being pushed and pulled through the jungles along the Patuxent and other streams. And most of all, how are your waders doing? You might fill them with a gallon or two of water and discover where all the leaks are now and not wait until you go out that first time after the ice goes out!

For rubberized waders, be sure to hang them carefully in a cool, dark place away from any electrical motors; the latter produces ozone, which speeds their deterioration. In the next month or two you will have the chance to visit a number of fishing shows. Ask the various dealers and some of our local experienced fishers on suggested replacements for some of these tackle items.

Don't wait until the first warm weekend in March to discover these problems!



HATCH TALK

Jay Sheppard

I regret that since I was unexpectedly away from Maryland for much of November and early December, I did not have time to get as an in-depth article together as I had planned. However, we can leap right into the fray and get to some of the typical questions we face when we get to a stream: fly selection during a hatch. I see many fishers arrive at a stream and immediately tie on a pattern without checking what is actually happening on the water.

Obviously, if they have some information as to what was working in the previous several days at that hour on that section of the stream, they may do perfectly fine. However, most of us arrive with little prior knowledge. Others arrive and start beating the water with a pattern that may have worked many weeks before. We must be patient and observe before we fish. Hatches are fairly reliable once they start each season, at least as to the time of day. So one must pay close attention to what is happening at that moment and anticipate what will follow.

Early spring hatches tend to concentrate in the middle of the day, while hatches in June through early September are often concentrated in the cooler hours of morning or late evening. Take a position where one can watch a fair length of the stream: riffles, glide, main pool, and tail. If any fish are rising, are they concentrated in one type of water or not? Are the rises the same type? Are the fish rising regularly or only sporadically?

Some hatches occur mainly in the faster water, others may happen in the slower water, and some in all types of water. Trout take different insects in different manners, depending on the prey. A dainty sip that may be nearly imperceptible usually indicates something that is small, barely moving and is in or just below the surface film. A slightly more visible rise with no audible gulp may indicate something being taken just under the surface that is actively trying to reach the surface. Audible gulps are when the trout must engulf an item that is extending above the surface and potentially about to move out of range of the fish.

Very splashy rises where the trout may at times leap out of the water indicate the fish has followed an insect that is rapidly swimming to the surface and is not pausing there before continuing away from the water. The rise forms give an excellent clue as to what the insect might be. But we should confirm this with direct observation. By far the best way is to actually watch a trout or two and see what they are taking. I often use a small pair of waterproof binoculars to watch a trout. If one can see various insects on the water and some are being taken by the trout while other kinds are not, then we have really good clues as to what we want to imitate. We must also recognize that when there are multiple species of insects and multiple stages of each species present in the stream, we may find different trout taking different things. So we must remain flexible and constantly observant.

Another piece of information that we need is exactly what type of insect is being taken. We do not have to have degrees in entomology to make this determination. In the previous three issues we discussed how to separate the various groups of insects, such as mayflies, stoneflies, and caddis. Now we must catch one of

these. I find a small aquarium net or even my fine-mesh catch-and-release net to work well. We need to get a close view of the insect we suspect is being taken by the trout. When we capture one of these, we must note several important points. What type of insect is it? If a mayfly, for example, what stage (dun, spinner, or stillborn)? What size is it from the tips of head to abdomen? What is the coloration of the main features: wings, underbody, and, in some case, different sections of the body?

Our goal is to select a fly pattern that is no larger than the captured insect that also matches it in type (caddis, midge, grasshopper, stonefly, etc.) and general coloration. If given a choice, take a slightly smaller pattern than the live insect's size, and match it with the underside and wing coloration, which is what the fish see most. Use a suitable tippet and see if that pattern gets the attention of any of the rising trout within casting range.

Do not forget that in dry fly fishing a bad cast must be allowed to float past the trout before being lifted off the water. All too many fishers take the fly right off the surface in front of the fish when they realize it will not pass directly over it. That is akin to tossing a hand grenade at the wary trout: HELLO, WAKE UP, I AM TRYING TO CATCH YOU!

Be patient. Do not rush. Only when you have had several good drag-free floats over a trout that continues to rise, do you consider casting to another trout or changing flies. Feeding rhythm is important. Some trout may rise 3 times in a minute, others only every 100-150 seconds. The timing of the cast must be adjusted accordingly. If the trout clearly can be seen and it refuses the fly, you either cast to another fish or change the fly. For most trout you will only get one serious attempt by the fish to take the fly. There is no need to beat the water with the same fly over the same fish for many minutes on end. Move or change the fly. Remain flexible and continue to observe all the activity.



Paint Branch Report

By David Dunmire, Paint Branch Chair

Good Hope Mosque Update

Earlier this spring the Ahmadiyya Washington Mosque illegally cleared and graded approximately three acres of land at the corner of Briggs Chaney and Good Hope Roads. This is in the Upper Paint Branch Special Protection Area, and adjacent to the Left Fork Tributary of the Paint Branch. The Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services (DPS) issued 14 citations for Special Protection Area violations, erosion and sediment control violations, and forest conservation violations.

In October the County reached an out-of-court settlement on the erosion and sediment control fines and the Special Protection Area fines. The settlement amounted to about only a third of the erosion and sediment control fines. The Montgomery County Planning Board is responsible for setting the civil penalty for the forest conservation law violations. This is the biggest violation in the ten-year history of Montgomery County's forest conservation law.

In August the Planning Board declined to set the penalty for the forest conservation law violations, and instead directed their staff to attempt to reach an agreement. The MNCPPC staff defined three proposed options for settling this issue. The mosque rejected all three. After several rounds of negotiations, MNCPPC staff has proposed yet another offer and is waiting for the mosque's response. If they are not able to reach an agreement, the matter will go back to the Planning Board. Army Corps Problems Persist The long saga of problems with the Army Corps of Engineers (COE) projects on the Paint Branch continues.

The long list of problems on the Gum Springs Parallel Pipe projects has just begun to fade from memory. Then in October the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection revealed major problems with the COE projects at the Snowden's Mill stormwater management ponds (I and II). The embankments at both ponds are sagging, failed to pass inspection, and must be rebuilt. This work was done by Golden Eagle Construction, the same contractor as the Gum Springs project. Thus far we have been working through channels with the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection to deal with these problems.

This process has failed and we must now deal directly with the COE. We have written to the COE and asked for a meeting with the Paint Branch Technical Team, to express our concerns first-hand, as well as to hear their plans for resolving these problems and minimizing the sedimentation threat to the Paint Branch. So far one week with no response.

Flytying Lessons

Cold got you down? Been wondering if the sun is ever going to rise any higher in the sky? We have just what the doctor ordered: chapter veteran David Feldman is offering once again a series of six winter flytying classes. Sign up for David's class and learn to tie flies. This class is for beginners, anglers without significant experience tying flies.

So this is the chance you've been waiting for to learn from an expert while surrounded by rookies who are tying, at first, the ugliest nymphs or woolly buggers you've ever seen. A half dozen lessons and some weekly homework later, you'll still be tying some ugly flies but many of them will catch fish. Men and women have benefited from this class, and some of them have gone on to demonstrate their flytying at the January flytying meetings.

Cost is \$80, which pays for the room and some of the materials you will need. Class meets every Tuesday evening from February 6th thru March 13th at the Schweinhaut Center from 7-9. If you have questions, please contact David Feldman at 301-946-5663 or dfeldman74@hotmail.com.

Over 30 Hours of NEW Videos

On The Way

An order has been placed for twenty-five new videos to add to the chapter Video Library. Fly Tying from the vises of experts such as A. K. Best, Lefty Kreh, Bob Clouser, and Dave Whitlock. Casting from master casters the likes of Doug Swisher, Joe Humphreys, Mel Krieger, Joan Wulff, and the Becks (Barry and Cathy). A dollar donation will be collected when checking out each of the new videos (this will allow us to defray video costs and expand our holdings).

The same two-video maximum per member remains in effect but only one of these can be a new video. By limiting each member to one new video checkout, everyone should get an opportunity to view the new

tapes. Remember to return any of the chapter's videos you have checked out. Every video is due at the next chapter meeting. If you are not sure if you have a video due and want to check the chapter records, please contact the Video Librarian, Jack Dawson, 301.253.4092 or email at dawsonj@erols.com.

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