

The Backcast

Fall 2016



*The
essentials of
a good fly
hook: the
temper of an
angel and
the
penetration
of a prophet;
fine enough
to be
invisible and
strong
enough to
kill a bull in
a ten-acre
field.*

G.S. Marryat

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This issue of the Backcast is coming to you electronically. The "copy and mail" routine was becoming too expensive and far too time-consuming. If you have fellow members who don't use computers, let them know they can still get copies mailed to them upon special request. Let anyone on the board know and I'll make it happen.

The newsletter will also be available on the chapter website: taconictROUTunlimited.org.

Speaking of the website, be sure to go there and check it out. Jim Maselli has started a revival of the site and it's great. While a "work-in-progress," it is really shaping up nicely. Any contributions you might like to offer will be appreciated. Our thanks to Ron Wojcik and his students for all their hard work on the site over the past many years.

If you are reading this on the website or in hard-copy and wish to join the ranks of the "connected," simply provide your email address to TU and we'll do the rest. You can do this on-line through TU National or just let one of us on the board know.

We've had a very strong and active year. The introduction to fly fishing course at BCC put on through OLLI was a great success (see more on this inside), we enjoyed some Sunday afternoon group fly tying and we joined with HVA and BEAT for two river clean-ups. Additionally, the fly fishing film festival at Wahconah Country Club was well attended and thoroughly enjoyable.

TU was an active participant in the review, and commenting upon, the proposed Kinder Morgan natural gas pipe line through the state. Hopefully, we were instrumental in the final decision. The path of the proposed pipeline had a serious impact on a number of cold water fisheries and a significant amount of hard work was required to define these locations for reconsideration.

The chapter wrote a letter on behalf of the membership in support of "Bring Back the Natives" grant funding to replace two culverts on Churchill Brook in Pittsfield. The Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) is attempting to secure the grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Our special thanks to Bill Travis for his efforts on the film festival and the OLLI course and to John Burns for his help in understanding and monitoring the KM gas line proposal.

Allen Gray

Date for Annual Meeting Set

Mark your calendars
and join us!

Thursday October 13, 2016

5:30

Bass Water Grill

The Taconic Chapter of Trout Unlimited will hold its annual meeting on Thursday, October 13, 2016. We will be meeting again this year at the Bass Water Grill on Rt.8 in Cheshire. Please let me know if you need directions.

There will be a social hour from 5:30 until 6:30, followed by a short business meeting from 6:30 until 6:45, which will constitute our annual meeting in accordance with the chapter by-laws. The only item on the agenda at this time is election

of officers and board members. Let me know if you would like to have your name considered for a chapter position.

From 6:45 until 7:30, our own Jim Maselli will give a presentation on building a bamboo fly rod. Nothing is more time-honored to fly fishing than bamboo and the art which goes into building this classic is fascinating. "The climax in the poem of trouting is split bamboo." - Lewis French (1884)

Following Jim's presentation, at approximately 7:30, everyone is invited to stay for dinner. We will be ordering off the menu to accommodate all personal choices.

If there is other business to come before the membership, please let me know in advance.

Mark your calendars and join us!



Fall Fish Stocking

The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife is scheduled to begin Fall stocking during the last week of September and continue until approximately the second week of October.

The abnormally dry conditions in much of the state should not affect the operation, which is reported to include 60,000 trout over 12 inches.



Daily stocking reports are available at Mass.gov/Trou either from the name list or specific bodies of water or by use of the site map. This is a great tool. It's nice to see our license fees put to good use.

For additional information contact mass.wildlife@state.ma.us.

Fall Flies

As we move into Autumn and our rivers recover from their Summer doldrums, both man and trout feel a new sense of urgency as the days get shorter. Winter is coming! Better get busy.

What I read from the experts is that the diet of local trout grows more focused in the late months of the year. There are fewer significant hatches to be sure and yet that "urgency" encourages the need to fatten up for the long cold spell ahead.

So, what's on the menu? The fish know and anglers need to find out.

I checked a number of Northeast fly shop web sites for their suggestions on choosing flies for September, October and November and this is what I found.

Regarding dry flies, tiny Blue Winged Olives rule. Sizes #16 - #20 are most recommended. Miscellaneous caddis (especially spotted, tan and mahogany) are still around, most likely in smaller sizes also. There is no substitute, of course, for seeing what's in the air. This should dictate both size and color.

For those with good eyesight, midges in sizes #18 - #32 (!) are always effective. Trail one or two behind a larger, more visible fly to help in tracking them on the water.

Even as hopper numbers drop back with cooler nights, terrestrials of other types work well into the Fall. Flying ants, gnats, crickets, black flies and beetles are offered as still effective and a few sites suggested throwing an occasional grasshopper just to test the memories of a few weeks ago.

The consensus of opinion is that success can best be tempted with streamers and buggers. Fewer hatches mean increased predation among hungry fish and anglers should fulfill the need with any number of patterns in sizes #6 - #12. The Mickey Finn is always popular, as are the Little Brook Trout and the Grey Ghost. One reference recommended avoiding patterns with hints of orange or red around the throat since these mimic early-spring fry yolk sacs. Who knew? Anyway, patterns with 3 or 4 dark vertical strips imitate young trout well into the Fall.

A wooly bugger in olive or black with a little added flash is always a good choice this time of year, according to the experts, especially when fished deep around river bends, drop-offs and shoreline structures.

And remember the wisdom of John Gierach: "If you fish the wrong fly long enough, it will sooner or later become the right fly."



Vermont Repeals Ban on Felt Soles



In an apparent triumph of science over emotion, the State of Vermont has reversed its five-year ban on felt soled wading boots.

The ban was imposed in 2011 in an attempt to prevent the spread of didymo (aka "rock snot") algae blooming in trout streams throughout the state. It was thought that the infestation was an introduced invasive, when in reality the

spores are found in most streams and the blooms occur naturally under certain environmental conditions.

It was also thought that felt soles, due to their porous nature, were most likely the offending culprit in spreading the spores to streams where they might not be present. The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department ultimately determined that all aquatic

equipment such as boats, trailers and fishing gear of all types carry didymo to other streams just as they do invasive species.

The only sure way to protect the health of any new water is to thoroughly clean, dry and/or disinfect equipment after use and before moving to another body of water.

Homer Ouellette

Long-time chapter member Homer Ouellette passed away last month at the age of 90.

Homer was one of the earliest members of the chapter, an officer, director and supporter for many years. He was also a recipient of the Crooked Staff Award, representing the highest ideals of ethics and sportsmanship.

Besides fly fishing, Homer was an avid hunter and outdoorsman. I first met him at a chapter meeting in the late 90's when meetings were held at the Silver Screen or the old Mazzeos. I recall he told wonderful and enthusiastic stories about everything from ice fishing to primitive camping.

For a truly heartfelt remembrance of Homer, be sure to read Gene Chague's "Woods and Water" column in the September 4th Berkshire Eagle. If you missed it, I'm sure it's available on line.



OLLI Fly Fishing Course

From mid-April to Mid-May 2016, five TU Board members offered a fly-fishing course for senior adult beginners through the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. OLLI is affiliated with Berkshire Community College where seniors, 50 years old and up design and conduct courses, lectures, trips and special events to further the learning experience.

The fly-fishing course attracted 15 seniors ages 51 to 88 including 7 women. One 82-year-old widow said she either had to learn to fly fish with her husband's equipment or learn how to clean out his basement full of gear. Some participants had some previous fishing experience but only a handful had ever used a fly rod.

The course ran for six weeks covered the following topics:

Week 1:

- a. Video clips covering the excitement of hooking a fish on a fly line
- b. The basic gear-
- c. The cold watershed branches from brooks, streams, and rivers where trout are found
- d. Other species of fish to be found in ponds, lakes and rivers as these sources warm through the spring and summer

Week 2:

- a. Selecting a fly rod.... Size, weight, flex
- b. Selecting fly-line
- c. Leaders, tippet
- d. Rigging a rod and reel outfit

Week 3:

- a. Lifecycle of bugs and insects on, in and near the water
- b. The flies that imitate the insects and other aquatic life
- c. Practicing Casting techniques to get the fly into the water

Week 4:

- a. Casting techniques practiced in the gym
- b. Basic knot tying to connect line, leader, tippet and fly

OLLI Fly Fishing Course

Week 5:

- a. Visit to Canoe Meadows to put together rod/reel selection
- b. Fly selection
- c. Casting and catching fish [5 TU instructors were present to coach]

Week 6:

- a. 2nd visit to Canoe Meadows ,, ,, more independence to practice with the aid of a TU guides were present to coach]

Behind the scenes, the OLLI staff helped select appropriate classrooms with technology for showing slides and videos, large spaces for fly-casting and knot tying. The TU teaching staff put together a wide selection of pictures maps and loaned their personal gear for participants to handle and use. Our TU Chapter benefited from the gift of three fly rod, reel, and line outfits from LL Bean. Orvis donated leaders and spools of tippet materials. The City of Pittsfield opened the Wild Acres facilities and pond to our class members. This made it possible to park close to the pond and access the bathrooms and picnic tables.

Personal contacts made after the class indicates that several participants purchased and/ or upgraded their fly-fishing gear and got out fishing on their own. Three of the women were seen on the Deerfield River this summer and others indicated they had lined up float trips on one or more waterways in Berkshire County. OLLI staff has asked our TU Chapter to consider offering another fly-fishing course in the spring of 2017.

Story ideas? Comments? Thoughts? Criticisms?...

Keep them to yourself !
Or, if you must, send them to:
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