



Wisconsin Trout

Fall 2023



Gillian Pomplun

GIRL SCOUTS WERE ABSORBED WITH CRAYFISH AND OTHER CRITTERS
Girls Scouts taking a stream walk at the STREAM Girls event in the West Fork Kickapoo River in Avalanche. For more details, see the article on page 8.



HAPPY 2023 STATE COUNCIL YOUTH CAMP STUDENTS
For more details on this year's camp, see the article by Linn Beck inside.

Watershed Access Fund steps in again

By Kim McCarthy

We are pleased to announce another successful use of the State Council's Watershed Access Fund to add fishing opportunities for Wisconsin trout anglers.

The latest parcel to be purchased lies along the Kickapoo River southwest of Wildcat Mountain State Park and west of the Kickapoo Reserve. It includes frontage along the Kickapoo River and along a small tributary named Hay Valley Creek. The Watershed Access Fund was able to join a partnership to make this purchase possible. Among the partners are the Mississippi Valley Conservancy, Coulee Region Chapter and the Kickapoo Reserve. The land being purchased will ultimately be added to the holdings of the Kickapoo Reserve.

The Kickapoo River is classified category II trout water through the purchase area. Hay Valley Creek, because of its small size, provides very little fishing opportunity, but it

provides cold water input for the Kickapoo River and most likely provides spawning opportunities for fish moving up from the Kickapoo River.

The parcel about to become public will connect Kickapoo Reserve lands both above and below the new parcel. The purchase will create a publicly owned stretch on the Kickapoo that will measure approximately 18 miles in length.

Those who fish the Driftless Area know that almost all of the fishing there is regarded as "walk and wade." The new parcel will give those who enjoy floating and fishing several floats to choose from. Boat landings are already in place on the Kickapoo River within the reserve. Watch for more details in future issues of *Wisconsin Trout*.

Thanks again to all who contribute to our Watershed Access Fund, which allows the State Council to participate in these types of acquisition opportunities. We couldn't do this without you.

Council meeting October 14 via Zoom

The next Wisconsin State Council meeting will be Saturday, Oct. 14 via Zoom. The meeting will begin at 9 a.m. and should adjourn by 1 p.m. or sooner. Let me know about any agenda items you'd like to include. I will send out a zoom invitation link to chapter leaders and anyone else who'd like to join us, so let me know if you're interested.

Please encourage your fellow chapter leaders and members to join in, and have them contact me to request an invitation.

Thank you so much for all you do for Trout Unlimited and our coldwater resources. We look forward to an enjoyable and productive meeting.

—Scott Allen, State Council Chair

Wolf River Chapter tackles old rock ford

By John Carbonari

A little more than a half mile upstream from where the Hunting River flows under County Road T, in the Township of Ainsworth in Langlade County, Wisconsin, there was an old rock ford. While no one seems to be sure when it was constructed, the best estimates say it was in the late 1930's to the early 40's, or possibly earlier. In fact, a tire from Racine Rubber that be-

came Ajax rubber in the 1920's was found under some of the rocks close to the east shore. The rock ford's construction was very basic. Sometime after the stones and rocks had been removed from the surrounding fields and pastures, they were deposited into the river to create the ford to allow people, cattle and machinery to reach fields on the west side of the river.

My first encounter with the old rock ford was either in the fall of

1975, or perhaps 1976. Grandpa dropped me off upstream so I could float down hunting ducks along the way. When the trip took longer than planned, I found myself floating downstream in the dark. With the unmistakable grate of an aluminum canoe on rocks and the sudden stop of downstream progression, I was introduced to the ford. While I have seen it many times after, it was not until after my work with USDA Wildlife Services that I started to

look at it differently.

How could this impediment to flow and impoundment of water be allowed to exist in the Hunting River? Just like the "old pilings" at Pearson, the ford bothered me. When I joined the Wolf River Chapter of TU, (WRC) I thought surely something could be done about both.

See **ROCK FORD**, page 12

ONE ROCK AT A TIME!

Boy Scouts were among the many volunteers who, during the course of summer, helped the Wolf River Chapter remove the old rock ford on the Hunting River...one rock at a time. The rock ford's construction was very basic. Stones and rocks from surrounding fields and pastures were deposited into the river to create the ford to allow people, cattle and machinery to reach fields on the west side of the river.



Chair's Column

"Sunk Cost Fallacy"

And who doesn't love summer? Wet wading, campfires, laughter and the smell of DEET. Fishing until sunset means peeling off the waders at 9:30 p.m. Trout fishing for me is a spring and fall pursuit, I can stand straight with the virtue of allowing the trout to have break during the dog days.

But I must share that what summer really holds for me is Centrarchidae, the bass family. Entirely native, no stocking needed, thank you very much. For myself, and likely many other fishers, when the bluegill bite is on, I am 10 years old again without a worry in the world.

Catch and release among the centrarchs is no mantra. It's the specter of cleaning fish until the early hours of tomorrow that lets those crappies swim for another day. "Um, whadaya say we go find a fish fry tonight?" I know the clock has run out on summer with the arrival of the goldenrod and crickets. The bass waters begin to cool to a tepid sixty degrees and the centrarchs hang it up for the season. Labor Day weekend is my second trout opener.

So here I am on Labor Day weekend, trout stream itinerary in hand, and staring at a weather report emblazoned with 96 degrees. A few days earlier, resolute to not ignore tackle until the 11th hour, I

had my quiver of rods and waders readied for the "opener." I'll then think through stream locations and tell no one but for the dear missus so she knows "where to find [me] floating face down."

Scholars of behavioral economics will reference what's called the "sunk cost fallacy" when studying scenarios of invested time and money facing a likelihood of diminished, or even no return on the investment.

I was all set to go with a sunk cost of investment of time, "so what if it's 100 degrees and chin high canary grass?" I asked myself. But the prospect of clawing through infernal thickets was no fallacy for me. Sunk costs are irrelevant to rational decisions. The trout will wait, I'm hitching up the boat and going bass fishing once more.

Winter is the planning season. As winter approaches, it is time to begin thinking about the safeguards our 21 chapters have worked so hard to establish: habitat work, stream access, education, youth camp and fundraising to make it all a possibility. I see no evidence of the sunk cost fallacy in the investment of time and money we devote to safeguarding our ground waters and sport fishing. Wisconsin is a state of water. Cold ground water and surface waters. Water equals life. Water



Todd Franklin

FEELING LIKE A 10-YEAR-OLD. SCOTT ALLEN WITH A STRINGER OF GILLS
"For myself, and likely many other fishers, when the bluegill bite is on, I am 10 years old again without a worry in the world." — Scott Allen, Council Chair

provides myriad opportunities. Give some thought this winter to lending a hand with your chapter, attend an event, or contribute some time to

any of the state council programs. If we all do a little, then no one has to do a lot. And who doesn't love winter?

TU Driftless Area Restoration Effort update

Stream projects, growing out trees, road-crossing inventories among the many activities.



A TECHNICIAN MEASURES A DRIFTLESS AREA CULVERT

By Sara Strassman, TU Driftless Area Program Manager

Nohr Chapter project in Snow Bottom SNA

The Harry & Laura Nohr Chapter is continuing stream improvement projects on the Blue River. Working with the DNR and TUDARE, the chapter plans to improve nearly a mile of the river in 2024. Partial funding is through a DNR Surface Water Grant, \$10,000 from the chapter and donations from other TU chapters and conservation organizations. Streambanks will be shaped, stabilized with rock and seeded to native vegetation. The DNR will manage the native vegetation establishment. Woody and rock fish habitat structures will be placed throughout the project site.

Sycamore trees

This spring Jerry Sapp of the Lee Wulff Chapter spearheaded an effort to collect sycamore tree seeds. Sycamore tree can grow 3-6 feet per year so have a good chance of getting above grassy vegetation and surviving.

The collected seeds are being grown out at the Boscobel State Tree Nursery and will be ready for planting in 2024. The Wisconsin DNR has recommended planting the trees in Wisconsin's southern Driftless Area, from the state line to about La Crosse.

Planting trees along streams to provide shade will help keep the water in the streams cool and provide twig and leaf inputs to streams. We're utilizing this species as part of an adaptive management tool for climate change.

If you are interested in getting

involved with future plantings, contact Paul Krahn at TUDARE. The Mississippi Valley Conservancy has expressed interest in some joint workdays, so we expect more details to develop as we plan for 2024 plantings.

North Bear Creek in Iowa

Trout Unlimited chapters, TUDARE, the Iowa DNR and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) are working with four landowners to improve more than a mile of North Bear Creek in Iowa. This portion of the stream holds, brook, brown and stocked rainbow trout. The plans for these projects were designed by NRCS, with input from Iowa DNR and TUDARE. This project will receive funds from NRCS, but has also received pledges from chapters, the North & South Bear Endowment Fund and the Iowa DNR 319 State Land Water Quality Grant.

Culvert inventory

This summer a bridge and culvert inventory was performed by four dedicated technicians in Jackson, Trempealeau, Richland and Crawford counties. The purpose was to evaluate these structures for aquatic organism passage, flood resilience and structural integrity. Streams containing brook trout were the priority targets for this year, working out from DNR's brook trout reserve waters to classed waters in each county. The technicians visited an

astonishing 2,852 structures and conducted full assessments on 1,086 crossings.

The information gathered will be provided to local town and county highway departments to help them prioritize repairs and replacement. Having a plan for repairs and replacement allows them to also be in a better position to obtain funding for repairs and replacement. Addressing any perched culverts that don't allow fish to move upstream to cooler water or spawning areas is a priority. We plan to continue inventory work in Wisconsin in the summer of 2024 to support conservation portfolio work late next year.

Fancy Creek

We have been working with engineers and biologists at Emmons & Olivier Resources, Inc. to develop design plans for restoration of a large wetland complex in the lower end of Fancy Creek in Richland County.

The project involves the Wisconsin Wetlands Association, Mississippi Valley Conservancy, NRCS, UW-Madison, Pheasants Forever, the DNR and others. The

goal is to restore hydrology to a sedge meadow complex while removing a ditch and restoring a natural stream channel.

The project requires a blend of engineering, geomorphology and biology, but is an approach that TUDARE expects to utilize more often to pair stream restoration with larger hydrologic restoration goals that achieve both ecosystem and flood damage reduction goals.

"The project involves the Wisconsin Wetlands Association, Mississippi Valley Conservancy, NRCS, UW-Madison, Pheasants Forever, the DNR and others."

2024 Wisconsin TU State Council Banquet

Saturday, Feb. 3, 2024

Best Western Premier Waterfront Hotel and Convention Center
1 North Main St., Oshkosh, WI 54901
Doors Open, with Cash Bar @ 4:30 p.m.
Dinner Seating @ 6:30 p.m.

For more info or to purchase tickets visit:
<http://wicouncil.tu.org/chapter/events>

Be an "Early Bird" - Purchase tickets (\$40 each) on or before Dec. 31 to receive complimentary bucket raffle tickets!
To purchase by mail: send payment (payable to "Wisconsin TU") and names of attendees to
Jen Kuhr 6103 Queens Way Monona, WI 53716

Wisconsin TU needs your support

We're seeking individuals, organizations, and businesses to Sponsor our 2024 State Council Banquet to be held on Sat. Feb. 3 in Oshkosh

Levels of Sponsorship:
Headwaters = \$100
Tributary = \$250
River = \$500
Watershed = \$1,000
all levels include tickets to the event!

For more info visit:
<http://wicouncil.tu.org/chapter/events>
or contact Jen Kuhr at jkuhr101@gmail.com

Kinni Dam removal feasibility study moves forward

By Gary Horvath

In August the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the City of River Falls hosted an open house to discuss Kinnickinnic River ecosystem restoration in River Falls, Wisconsin.

City and USACE officials provided a detailed overview of the feasibility study process, answered questions and responded to concerns.

Authority for this restoration project is provided under the Continuing Authorities Program (CAP) consisting of nine legislative authorities under which USACE can plan, design and implement certain types of water resources projects without additional project-specific congressional authorization.

Projects conducted are to be cost effective and in the public interest, while improving the quality of the environment. The CAP requires that the USACE conduct a feasibility study to evaluate costs, benefits and whether the project is in the federal interest before it can proceed. The open house was to obtain public input on the potential environmental restoration project on the 1.4-mile stretch of the Kinnickinnic River running through the city.

This project presents a unique opportunity for the USACE to restore a class 1 trout stream, the Kinnickinnic River, which is currently highly degraded because of two impoundments formed by the Junction Falls and Powell Falls dams.

Stated goals were to support coldwater habitats through restoration of the natural hydraulics similar to what existed before the impoundments were created and increasing the variety in aquatic topography within the riparian way.

A crowd of about 100 people turned out to learn more about the project and voice mostly support for a natural stream corridor through removal of both dams.

Kiap TU Wish and Twin Cities chapter members were out in good numbers, along with people active on this issue through the Kinni Corridor Collaborative and the Kinnickinnic River Land Trust. The overall consensus was that things are moving in a good direction.

The USACE hopes to have its alternative solution selected by early November and offer a public review of the draft report and solution this winter. Final engineering is targeted for 2024-25, with construction starting during the period of 2025 to 2027.



ONE OF THE INFORMATION STATIONS AVAILABLE AT THE OPEN HOUSE



A CROWD OF KINNI ADVOCATES TURNED OUT FOR THE OPEN HOUSE

Correction

As noted in the article entitled “Kinni Dam removal financial goal reached” on page 5 of the Summer 2023 issue of Wisconsin Trout, with strong support from TU chapters, councils and members, a \$175,000 commitment toward the Kinnickinnic River dam removal project in River Falls was reached in mid-June. Key to the success was a \$25,000 donation from the Kinnickinnic River Land Trust on behalf of the Art and Martha Kaemmer HRK Foundation. This donor was incorrectly identified in that article. We extend our sincerest apologies. Your generosity is truly extraordinary.

Chapters: Be sure to contact DNR about your TIC plans

We hope all Trout In the Classroom teachers have contacted the DNR's Ryen Kleiser before the school year started so he could begin the process of signing them up as a fish farm with the state and to let the Wisconsin hatcheries know how many additional eggs to produce. If your TIC teachers have not done this, then please have them reach out to Ryen at Ryen.Kleiser@wisconsin.gov as soon as possible. The DNR is graciously providing us with eggs for free and needs to know the amount that the schools will require.

Thank you.

—Greg Olson, State Council TIC Organizer

Letters

I read with sadness the front page article of the Summer, 2023, issue of Wisconsin Trout about the passing of Todd Hanson. Todd assumed the role of WisTrout editor after I retired from that position in spring of 1999. I was pleased that he not only continued with many of the things that I'd established for the paper during my (almost) 10 years as editor, but that he also expanded the number of individuals who produced informative articles for WisTrout.

I would like to make one small correction to the article, if I may. It stated that Todd began as WisTrout editor with the January, 2000 (Winter), issue. His editorial tenure actually started with the Summer, 1999, issue. Knowing what a thankless job the editor position often can be, I wanted to be sure that Todd Hanson got all the credit that is due him. He certainly deserved it, and then some!

—Mitchell Bent, Past Editor of Wisconsin Trout, Antigo

Book Review

“Trout Fishing in Southwest Wisconsin”

By Duke Welter

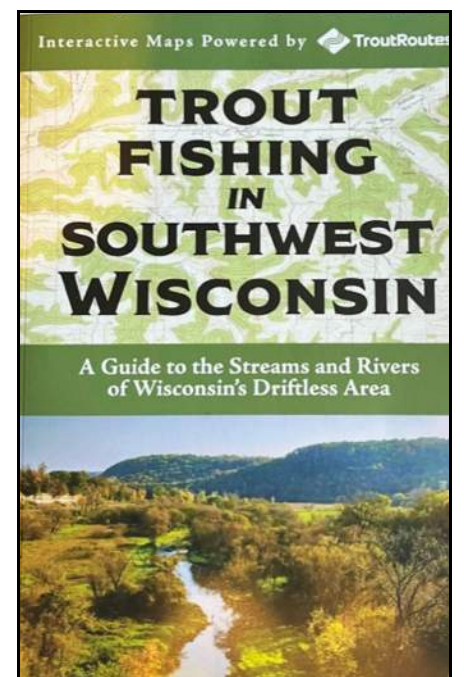
This new book on Wisconsin's Driftless Area trout streams is comprehensive in its coverage of both major and much more minor waters, with an interesting twist: It's cross-referenced to maps on TroutRoutes, the commercial app you can load on your phone or laptop. QR codes for most streams bring you right to maps showing roads and streams.

The author is clearly familiar with much of the region, and entries carry good information about their classification by the DNR and whether easements exist. He isn't afraid to venture an opinion here and there, many of which I earnestly endorse. For an example, take counties that replaced historic street names with alphabetical or numbered grids and turned their backs on history, biography and color. For instance, if you prefer “790th Avenue” crossing the Rush River in Pierce County to the traditional “Stonehammer Road,” there's no hope for you.

Van Vliet includes a lot of conservation and other history in the book, as well as a solid understanding of the geology and chemistry of these karst bedrock streams. That makes for entertaining reading.

I referred to several streams and turned to TroutRoutes basic offering. But since I don't have the more expensive (\$58.99/year) Pro app, I don't know if it will show easement sites or project areas. For many streams, that information is available on the DNR “TROUT” tool or, through 2013, in Todd Hanson's “Map Guide to Improved Wisconsin Trout Streams.” There is really no current guide available that will cover all the varied types of easements in force on southwestern Wis-

consin streams, and especially areas where habitat projects have been carried out. Still, you should have hundreds, even thousands, of miles



with DNR easements across the region, and many of them will have good habitat, even without sleuthing out non-DNR easements. Easements are not crucial to enjoying these streams, anyway: if you can enter a stream from a bridge or road right-of-way, you can fish as long as you keep your feet wet.

You won't have trouble finding spots to fish in this area if you rely on this book. It'll get you started and encourage you to explore further. There's a lifetime of explorable water around our part of the world.

“Trout Fishing in Southwest Wisconsin,” by John van Vliet, is published by Trout Run Press, 2023, 192 pages, \$24.95.

Youth Camp a huge success

Linn Beck, WITU Youth Camp Director

We had another great Youth Camp this past summer. In a year when the camp started with us missing an important part of the camp, all turned out well. Dan Harmon III was our fly-casting instructor who brought a wealth of experience and expertise to the youth. We lost Dan to complications from Covid-19 prior to the camp. Luckily, Terry Cummings and Dennis Johnsen stepped up and picked up where Dan left off. They both performed wonderfully, and our fly-casting segment went off without any complications.

We were blessed with awesome campers and great mentor volunteers, both adult and youth. We enjoyed having 17 boys and three girls from 10 chapters. All were eager to learn, and all were full of enthusiasm. There were 24 adult mentors, including seven first timers, and five youth mentors. Our youth mentors

were all new to the task. We had four youth we invited back from our 2022 camp, and one new to the camp. Two of our youth mentors were fresh from the National TU Teen Summit, including Harlon Meade, a three-time attendee of the camp and Lauren Geske, first-time attendee. Everyone worked well together, and the campers enjoyed a safe and informational camp.

The highlight of the weekend was when all 51 attendees participated in the Central Wisconsin Chapter work day at Bird Creek Park in Wautoma. We were welcomed by Chad Tucker and his chapter workday crew, along with the DNR.

As part of the workday Shawn Sullivan and his DNR crew showed and explained the dynamics of stream habitat. Adam Nickle and Scott Bunde of the DNR did a stream shocking and explained the process of their recording process when they shock a stream. All the



THE COUNCIL PROUDLY PRESENTS THE 2023 YOUTH CAMP GRADUATES!

campers had a chance to join in the work and experience a chapter workday. All this excitement was followed by a phenomenal lunch coordinated by Laura Tucker, with burgers, brats and all the fixings. And there was a cake in memory of Dan Harmon III. Thank you all for a great time and your hard work and especially making us feel welcome.

The students topped off the weekend with a three-hour fish-a-long with their mentors, where they

had a chance to put all the skills they learned into fishing on the Pine and Waupaca rivers.

We thank all the chapters that sponsored students, and all our youth and adult volunteer mentors. I wish I could thank you all by name, but please know you are all appreciated. And finally, I would like to thank all the students. We hope you all had as much fun attending as we did having you there at camp.

News from TU National's Leadership Council

By Linn Beck, Wisconsin TU NLC Representative

In August the National Leadership Council (NLC) held a meeting where we participated in a town hall meeting to discuss goal 2 of the TU Strategic Plan and the Grassroots Trustee elections.

We started off with a CX3 reminder from NLC Chair Rich Thomas, who also discussed the state of TU membership. We discussed the demographics and where it was heading. He would like us to encourage our chapters twice a year to hold meetings and invite the community at times other than their normal meeting. He suggested holding meetings on different days, and possibly Saturdays, could increase interest and attendance at meetings.

NLC Secretary Sharon Sweeney Fee encouraged CX3 workgroup attendees to bring workgroup goals to share them with other workgroups for possible collaboration.

The NLC was presented with the names of Grassroot Trustees nominees by Noel Gollehon of the New Initiative Workgroup. The new nominees for the Grassroot Trustees are Susan Greer, NLC member from Arizona and Greg Placone from South Carolina. The NLC will issue final votes for them at CX3 in Spokane.

We also discussed goal 2 of the Strategic Plan, which is to inspire a diverse corps of staff, volunteers and partners to advocate for and participate in the care and recovery of our lands and waters. This was conducted by Peter Barber and Beverly Smith.

TU CARES looks to the future

By Tom Lager

TU CARES continues to look to the future and work to achieve our goal: To protect, restore and reduce the decline in habitat quality for fish and wildlife within Wisconsin's Central Sand Hills Ecological Landscape and its connected watersheds. TU's Priority Waters Program strategy and goals for Wisconsin Central Sands, with intent, are congruent with that of TU CARES. Mike Sandretto and Chris Firkus led TU CARES's effort establishing Priority Waters for the Central Sands.

Mecan River Watershed

The Mecan River Watershed is the first of the Priority Watersheds that TU CARES will work on. Leveraging decades of successful collaboration between Central Wisconsin TU Chapters and the DNR, we met to review our knowledge of the watersheds. Based on this analysis and considering our resources and capabilities, we selected the Mecan River Watershed as the watershed in most urgent need of immediate work.

The DNR attendees were Shawn Sullivan and Steve Devitt (Trout Habitat Restoration), Adam Nickel, Scott Bunde and Tom Meronek (Fisheries) and Dave Bolha (Water Quality). TU CARES attendees were Linn Beck, Chris Firkus, Al Johnson, Tom Lager, Mike Sandretto and John Tucker. Our action plan centers on applying for a DNR Comprehensive Watershed Planning Grant in fall for plan development in 2024 and plan implementation in the succeeding years. Fox Valley TU (FVTU) will apply

for the grant and Central Wisconsin TU and FVTU will provide the matching funds.

The Mecan River Water Quality Report and Watershed Management Plan Feb 2023, authored by Dave Bolha, provides initial insight to the nature of plans to be developed. At this point the emphasis of the plan is yet to be defined; however, the potential focus may include reduction of nitrate concentrations, TP and TSS loading through nutrient management planning; reduction of erosion, sedimentation, and promoting floodplain connections; and to increase instream fish spawning and adult habitat and protecting wetlands.

To achieve these goals, establishment of effective relationships with recreational user groups, county and conservation organizations and local municipalities is a necessity. TU CARES is considering hiring a consultant for plan development, therefore if other TU chapters have undertaken watershed planning with a consultant, please share your experiences with us by contacting Tom Lager.

13th Avenue project

In the meantime, the 13th Avenue Dam Removal and Road Crossing Replacement Project continues to be very challenging. The cost for the dam-removal portion of the project has been successfully obtained through a DNR Municipal Dam Removal Grant (approximately \$670,000). However, replacing the road crossing over the deep and wide ravine where a Class I trout stream flows is very expensive. The cost of road replacement exceeds



GETTING TOGETHER AND LOOKING AHEAD

TU CARES and DNR meet at the Wild Rose Trout Management Shop, initiating the Mecan Comprehensive Watershed Planning process.

the cost of dam removal.

The TU CARES Team, with extensive support from numerous DNR departments, Town of Wautoma and their engineering firm has filed for a Sustain Our Great Lakes (SOGL) grant to cover a portion of the road replacement and extensive stream restoration costs at the dam site and extending 2.9 miles downstream.

In combination with the SOGL grant, Dave Bolha, on behalf of DNR, applied for a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Grant for costs of the road replacement. The disposition of awards for these two grant applications is expected in fall and early 2024.

While the above projects consumed an inordinate amount of TU CARES' time and resources, progress continues with other projects.

Younglove Project

The Younglove Project, under DNR leadership, is close to comple-

tion. However, a portion of the project will require some of the work to be completed in 2024. An extension of the project timeline will be obtained.

Throughout this season, riffle/fords were installed, the new parking lot site was prepped, dead ash trees were used throughout the stream corridor for additional log sill installation, along with rock to be used in further bank cover modification, and herbicide application.

Development and application of new methods for trout habitat restoration requires more time than originally estimated but creates improved, durable features for long-term benefit. The project cost was near \$170,000 and funded from numerous TU, DNR and other grants, private contributions and Trout Stamp funds.

Follow TU CARES at <https://www.facebook.com/centralsandsregionTU>

Council seeking award nominations

The Wisconsin State Council of TU believes it is important to recognize the outstanding efforts of our members and the broader conservation community, and we have been presenting a number of awards since 1983.

We are currently seeking nominations for our 2023 awards, which we will bestow at our awards banquet February 3, 2024. We rely on you, our members and leaders, to let us know about those who deserve special recognition. So please take time to nominate individuals, groups or others you feel qualify for one of our awards.

Please submit your nominations, including a short narrative, to Awards Committee Chair Todd Franklin by December 1, 2023. Please contact Todd if you have any questions. His email address is toddfranklinwis-trout@gmail.com and his other contact information is on page 4.

The awards committee also includes Mike Kuhr, Jim Wierzba, Linn Beck, John Meachen, Scott Allen, Kim McCarthy and Henry Koltz. We welcome additional members to this committee, so please consider it. It takes very little time, and is one of the most rewarding things we do for TU: recognizing those members, chapters, groups, businesses and professionals who support our mission.

State Council Awards for 2023

Resource Award of Merit

Our highest award, the Resource Award of Merit recognizes a person, corporation or organization for outstanding contributions to conservation and may be a nonmember. The award can be presented posthumously.

Silver Trout Chapter of the Year Award

The Silver Trout Award recognizes the chapter that over the last year took innovative and thoughtful approaches to building community and advancing our mission. Criteria we consider include conservation impact, communications, member and community engagement, fundraising and volunteer leadership development.

Fred Young passes away

He was a long-time Blackhawk Chapter member, conservationist, pilot, paddler and more.

By Duke Welter

One of Blackhawk TU's founding members, Fred Young, 80, died at his home near Rockford July 17.

Though he never lived far from where he grew up, he lived a vibrant life and left his mark both on people and the places he loved, including trout streams in the Driftless Area of Wisconsin, the American west and New Zealand.

To limit describing him as an avid trout angler would not do him justice. He had been a dedicated and fearless whitewater kayaker known as "Fearless Fred." He built his parents' gear company into one of the world's most sophisticated, producing gears for the Mars Rover, SpaceX spacecraft and high-caliber racing sailboats; he taught untold numbers of anglers how to do it better, and he loved rivers and trout.

Fred was a participant in the Wisconsin State Council since its early days, and with the Blackhawk Chapter since its inception. He served as Blackhawk's president and in other officer positions, as a board member and membership chair for many years.

Early advocate for working in the Driftless Area

He was one of the early advocates for Blackhawk to begin working on Driftless Area streams, since the chapter's Rock, Green and Walworth counties are not known for holding quality trout streams. That advocacy helped Blackhawk become one of the earliest chapters active in supporting habitat work on the West Fork of the Kickapoo, and around the Driftless Area, in the 1980s.

"He was always forward-thinking," said Gordon Long, another long-time Blackhawk board member. "He was always challenging us to think about doing new things for trout and streams." He also strongly

supported TUDARE from its inception, and often suggested projects on streams where he'd found degraded conditions and willing landowners.

It was hard to find a trout stream in the Driftless Area that Fred hadn't fished. Often, he flew his plane up and down the Mississippi, gazetteer in hand, identifying potential spots to fish. Regularly he'd fly a newbie angler out of the Beloit airport to Viroqua, where he had a junker fishing car stashed, for a day on a stream.

He and I had a competition for quite a few years to try and stump each other with a stream the other didn't know. One day I called him and said, "I've got you, Fred. By Golly Creek." (It's a real stream flowing into the Chippewa River in Pepin County, reputed to be a brook trout haven.) I could hear him chuckling, as he came right back at me: "Is that above or below the county highway bridge?"

Dave Patrick, another now-departed Blackhawk stalwart and long-time leader of the chapter's widely-traveled LUNKER building team, and Fred tried mightily to find out where the other fished. One would say they caught their fish on Chainsaw Creek, the other on German Run, noms de angle to disguise their favorite spots. Patrick parked his truck under foliage so Fred couldn't fly over and spot it. But it was a red truck.

With his late wife, Wendy, Fred was a leader in national and international gear-making circles, and they travelled widely to build their business, and perhaps for Fred to get some fishing done. He made more than 25 trips to New Zealand and fished all over that country, and explored small western streams in the northern Rockies.

In 2019, we fished New Zealand together and shared great rivers, thoughtful conservation talks with guides and scientists, Indian food, and visits with some of the country's

Distinguished Service-Leadership

In memory of Jeff Carlson, this award recognizes an individual whose enthusiasm, persistence and leadership have inspired generations of conservationists. This award is for an individual whose leadership has enriched the TU community at the chapter, council, NLC or trustee level. A key attribute of leadership recognized by this award is the sharing of ideas, experiences and knowledge with others to nurture and mentor the next generation of coldwater conservationists and leaders.

Distinguished Service-Youth Education

This award recognizes the fundamental importance of creating a new generation of conservationists in a manner that sustains TU's conservation legacy. The award honors individuals who demonstrate exemplary leadership and a deep passion for inspiring young people to become thoughtful, responsible stewards of our coldwater fisheries. Adults and youth are eligible.

Distinguished Service-Service Partnership

This award recognizes an individual who embodies the TU community-building spirit with regards to nurturing and healing veterans and first responders and involving them in TU events, activities and operations.

Reel Partner Award

This award recognizes businesses or organizations that have served as partners with the Council or its chapters in forwarding our mission.

Robert Hunt Resource Professional Award

In honor of Robert Hunt, this award recognizes a conservation professional who has shown concern for our coldwater resources over and above his or her normal duties.

most prominent gear makers. I got to watch Fred catch plenty of large to huge trout, which was a good, albeit humbling, learning experience.

Council Gold Trout Awardee

In 2001, Wisconsin TU honored Fred as its Gold Trout Award winner, kind of an MVP award for a state volunteer. He'd handled officer duties, membership and even edited and published the newsletter (at his own expense), according to nominator Larry Meicher at the time. On top of all that, Fred often chipped in to help TU projects and TUDARE with needed support.

One of his best-recalled actions was inviting new members and fly anglers to fish with him. Dan Ivancich, a Blackhawk Chapter member, came to the chapter an inexperienced trout angler. Fred took him under his wing and, when he finally caught his first nine-inch trout on a fly, "Fred acted as if I'd caught a 20-pound king salmon," Ivancich recalled.

He brought a wry sense of humor to his life and his fishing. With my wife, Kris, when she was pretty much a newbie, he coached her along a Crawford County stream as I fished farther upstream. When she hooked a nice white sucker—an achievement for anybody—he told her, "play it, and when you land it, then hold it up like it's a big trout, so he can see it." They had me cheering from far off.

For some years Fred would get so excited about going fishing that he'd put on his waders, but not wading boots. He grumped a bit that the feet of the waders "just didn't last." Finally he got around to wearing boots. Once, he left with Long for a western trip, but turned back when he realized he hadn't told his wife he was going.

While he fished with many well-known anglers, Fred was humble, not a name-dropper. After he mentored Ivancich, Dan picked up a co-

py of Ross Mueller's well-known book about Driftless flies, and immediately saw plenty of photos of Fred with big fish. Soon after, Fred called him to come over to the house. There he met Mueller himself, who signed a book for him.

His whitewater career

Less known to TU members was his whitewater career. He met Wendy when he paddled big Eastern rivers with the UW Hoofers kayaking group, and she was a nearly Olympic-caliber kayaker with the University of Minnesota club. In his office was a photo of Fred going over a 30-foot waterfall in his boat, bow heading straight down. Later, he and a paddling friend designed a new whitewater channel for a branch of the Wisconsin River in Wausau. The power company that owned the dam upstream would open the gates when a competition or practice took place, such as the World Junior Kayak and Canoe championships.

In recent years, Fred's daughter Kika (they all go by their nicknames) has taken a major role in the operations of Forest City Gear, but he continued to be an interested participant. His other two daughters, Appie and Mindy, and their families, live nearby. Fred was an always-admiring father and grandfather.

We last saw Fred in mid-June, when we worked to get him up to Black Earth Creek and out along the stream on a tracked wheelchair provided by Access Ability Wisconsin and Ron French, a board member and SWTU member. Fred was initially hesitant, but once he figured out the controls he toiled along the path at Salmo Pond and cast to rising fish one more time. A little over an hour was enough for him, but his casting was still smooth from 70 years of fly-fishing. On that hot sunny day, his favorite black leech just wasn't a draw to a rising trout. It didn't seem to matter.

STREAM Girls comes to the West Fork Kickapoo

By Gillian Pomplun, Kickapoo Scout

For the second year in a row, Coulee Region Trout Unlimited (TU) and Girl Scouts of Wisconsin Badgerland collaborated in an innovative STREAM Girls event at the West Fork Sportsman's Club. The weather was beautiful for the event, with mild temperatures and sunny blue skies.

STREAM Girls is TU's watershed STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) program for girls. The program is described as "building confidence and breaking down barriers in science and the outdoors." The program description explains that, through the eyes of a scientist, artist and angler, girls can make a personal connection to their home waters. STREAM stands for science, technology, recreation, engineering, art and mathematics.

Eleven girls from local Girl Scout chapters, as well as chapters from Onalaska and Sun Prairie, showed up for the lively, interactive event on the banks of the West Fork of the Kickapoo River.

"The STREAM Girls program of Trout Unlimited aligns with the Girl Scouts mission of building character, confidence and courage in our members," explained Nick Harnish, the Girl Scouts of Wisconsin Badgerland experience enrichment manager. "By giving girls this kind of experience, we are helping to break barriers to STEM careers and enjoyment of the outdoors for girls in the Driftless Region and everywhere."

Women's participation in STEM careers is an area where growth has been seen after efforts, like STREAM Girls, in recent years to support young women in pursuing

those careers. According to the U.S. Census, despite making up nearly half of the U.S. workforce, women are still vastly underrepresented in the STEM workforce. Women made gains – from eight percent of STEM workers in 1970 to 27 percent in 2019, but men still dominated the field. Men make up 52 percent of all U.S. workers but 73 percent of all STEM workers.

And, according to the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (RBFF), more women picked up a rod and reel in 2021 than in any previous year, and now make up 36 percent of all anglers in the United States, the highest number on record for female participation in fishing. According to their report, out of more than four million first-time participants in 2022, 40 percent were women as were 46 percent of those who consider fishing

"We know through research that recruiting and retaining female anglers is critical to growing fishing and boating participation overall," RBFF President and CEO Dave Chanda said. "The bottom line is, increasing female fishing participation is also good for business, and the industry stands to benefit greatly from focusing more on this growing audience."

STREAM Girls badge

Girl Scouts who complete the STREAM Girls educational activities earn a 'STREAM Girls' badge for their sashes. In order to earn the badge, participation in the eight core activities of the program is required. Those core activities include:

- STREAM Walk
- Fly Casting



Gillian Pomplun

GRACEFULLY CASTING GIRL SCOUTS

Girl Scouts participating at the STREAM Girls event in the West Fork Kickapoo Watershed. They really seemed to get the hang of fly casting with instruction from Trout Unlimited volunteer Joseph Meyer.

- Go with the Flow!
- Macroinvertebrate survey
- Fly-tying
- Scavenger hunt & bracelets
- Reflection throughout
- Discussion throughout

A lively event

On Saturday, the girls were seen alternating between fly casting instruction and practice, and taking a well-supervised walk in the relatively low-flow waters of the West Fork Kickapoo River. In a shelter at the West Fork Sportsman's Club campground, snacks, art materials and fly-tying supplies lay waiting on the table.

"One of my casting mentors was a woman named Joan Wulff," local TU member Joseph Meyer told the girls. "I learned so much from her, and do you know who the National Casting Champion in the U.S. was? It was Joan Wulff! That's not just in a woman's division. She was the national champion among all the fly casters who competed, men and women."

During the Stream Walk, the girls were encouraged to make a multi-sensory observation of the stream, looking at the water, plants, animals, weather, soil, rocks and the landscape. Later, they would follow science protocols to measure the condition of the stream, including the condition of the stream bank, water flows, ecosystem biodiversity, the streambed and water chemistry. They record their findings and discuss what human impacts there may be on the stream.

"Be quiet, and listen," a Coulee Region Trout Unlimited volunteer leading the stream walk told the girls. "What do you hear? Do you hear crickets and the sound of the water flowing in the creek? Do you hear cars or trains or buses? Do you smell car exhaust?"

Girl Scout's Harnish had only glowing things to say about what the experience offered girls.

"There is nothing more empowering than getting girls outdoors and active, and learning skills," Harnish

observed. "With this activity, and many others such as rock climbing and paddling, our girls are out there breaking barriers."

Kristal Welter, one of the Coulee Region Trout Unlimited volunteers on hand to help with the event was herself a Girl Scout, and claims "once a Girl Scout, always a Girl Scout." She said that for her, Girl Scouts is a way to learn new things that you never knew you could.

"One of the artistic projects the girls undertake is to make a bracelet reflecting different aspects of the stream," Welter explained. "Those aspects are water, riffles, trees, short plants, the sky, animals and bugs."

After sampling stream water for 'macroinvertebrates' or aquatic bugs, classifying and recording the organisms they find, the girls use the data they've acquired to give the stream an overall water quality score.

The sampling is followed by a discussion of the kinds of bugs that trout eat. This discussion leads directly into the lesson on fly tying.

Feedback on event

Nick Harnish had only good things to say about the weekend the girls had spent in the Driftless. "The girls had an absolute blast," Harnish said. "Their feedback was that they had fun and learned something new."

Harnish commented that he thinks the program as a whole is well thought out and is experiential in nature. He said that the girls learned plenty without realizing that they were learning. STREAM stands for Science, Technology, Recreation, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics, and Harnish said the girls practiced these skills all under the theme of fly-fishing.

"I did hear one girl tell her dad when he picked her up that she would like to go get a fly rod," Harnish said.

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Mining update

By Johnson Bridgwater,
River Alliance of Wisconsin

We are experiencing heightened interest in mining, not only in Wisconsin, but also in Minnesota and Michigan, as regional mining pursuits pose threats to the treaty resources of our tribes, as well as to the amazing natural resources enjoyed by citizens who routinely recreate, hunt and fish across these lands.

Although several projects are being pursued, the most immediate concern is a Michigan project known as Copperwood, which is being pursued on the shore of Lake Superior. For more information, please visit www.protecttheporries.com.

We are closely following this development due to its potential impact to Lake Superior, which contains 10 percent of the entire world's fresh water, and potential impacts to tribal interests such as fishing and ricing.

Like many mining projects, they are making claims that this mine is needed to "fuel the green energy transition." Known as "green washing," these claims do not hold up to scrutiny. Copper mines are for-profit pursuits, plain and simple. As shared below, the United States is a regular exporter of copper, and in no danger of "running out."

Copper listing

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) denied a request to add copper to the official United States'

"Critical Minerals List," which covers minerals mining, and firmly asserting there was no risk to the copper supply.

However, a recent decision by the U.S. Department of Energy (an entity completely independent of the USGS) has added copper to the United States' "Critical Materials List," which covers components/materials used to build items deemed critical to the United States. These are two distinct lists. While it may seem minor, it is the difference between pushing for more copper mining in the U.S. versus more processing, refining or recycling of critical materials like copper. The United States is a net exporter of raw copper.

Reef Deposit, Eau Claire River, Marathon County

GreenLight Metals' pursuit of exploration drilling in Marathon County has been quiet for many months. We are following the situation, but there is nothing new to report at this time.

Bend Deposit, Yellow River, Taylor County

There is nothing new to report on GreenLight Metals' pursuit of exploratory drilling in Taylor County. The Wisconsin DNR issued a conditional letter of approval to Green Light on May 4. You can read the conditional letter of approval in full on the following DNR web page: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Mines/Projects.html>

However, this deposit is in the Chequamegon National Forest, and therefore requires an approval from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). As of this update, the USFS had still not issued a final approval to GreenLight Metals for this project. So, at the time of writing this mining update, no on-the-ground activity had taken place.

Jackson County, GreenLight Metals

We would like to share that although no "digging" is underway yet in Wisconsin from GreenLight Metals, they are seeking additional mineral leases in Jackson County, Wisconsin, in addition to their pursuits outlined above. Our reports show no new leases have been secured, but we will be following this development.

Back 40 Mine

By the time you read this, the 3rd Annual Water Celebration will have been held by the Coalition to Save the Menominee River. The good news overall is that the current owners of the proposed "Back 40 Mine," Gold Resources Corp. of Colorado, have made zero progress on their pursuit to get the mine permitted. They have also been facing some serious financial trouble that is likely impacting their ability to try to develop the Back 40 project. We will keep you posted on developments in the future.

Mole Lake to celebrate 20th anniversary of mining victory

I would like to close out this update with some great news. The Sokaogon Chippewa Community Mole Lake Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, along with all of its friends and allies, will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the band's Crandon Mine Purchase on Saturday, Oct. 28. This purchase eliminated the possibility of any mining interests moving forward and sealed the safety and protection of Mole Lake's ricing and water resources. Activities will focus on the Crandon Mine site and then move to the Mole Lake Reservation with a mini-powwow at the Potawatomi Community Center. Go on Facebook closer to the event date for more information or visit the Mole Lake web page.

You can reach Johnson Bridgwater at jbridgwater@wisconsinrivers.org.



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Watershed Access Fund: Obtaining public access

The Watershed Access Fund continues to help acquire public fishing areas around the state. As a donor to the Watershed Access Fund you will have your name added to the list and will see it appear in Wisconsin Trout for a year following your generous donation.

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Make your check payable to Wisconsin Trout Unlimited

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Please support Friends of Wis. TU in 2023

As chapters plan their 2024 habitat improvement projects, they need to remember that the maximum amount for a Friends Grant has been increased to \$2,500. We thank our generous donors for their contributions, which have made this increase possible.

Providing habitat improvement grants since 1991.

\$2,000 to the Antigo Chapter for area habitat crews in 2023

\$1,000 to the Northwoods Chapter for an intern to survey crossings and do habitat crew in 2023

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Empowering women anglers

Wisconsin Women's Fly-Fishing Clinics are among the best and biggest events of their kind.

Wisconsin Women's Fly Fishing Clinics, sponsored by the Southern Wisconsin Chapter, has been making waves in the world of fly fishing with its annual Wisconsin Women's Fly Fishing Clinics. Held every June in the picturesque Driftless Area since 2010, these clinics have become a beacon of empowerment, inclusivity and education. With a unique experience that blends tradition and innovation, these clinics have earned their rightful place among the largest women's fly-fishing events in the Midwest.

The setting

The Driftless Area of Wisconsin, with its rolling hills, lush valleys and pristine trout streams, is a fly-fishing paradise. Against this breathtaking backdrop, the Wisconsin Women's Fly Fishing Clinics have carved out a niche of their own. These clinics provide a serene escape into nature, where the art of fly fishing blends seamlessly with the beauty of the surroundings.

By Women, For Women: Beginner Clinics

The beginners clinics are designed with novices in mind, catering exclusively to women who are new to the world of fly fishing. Spearheaded by passionate women leaders, these clinics provide a safe, supportive and empowering environment. Participants learn the fundamentals of fly casting, knot tying and streamside etiquette. It's a

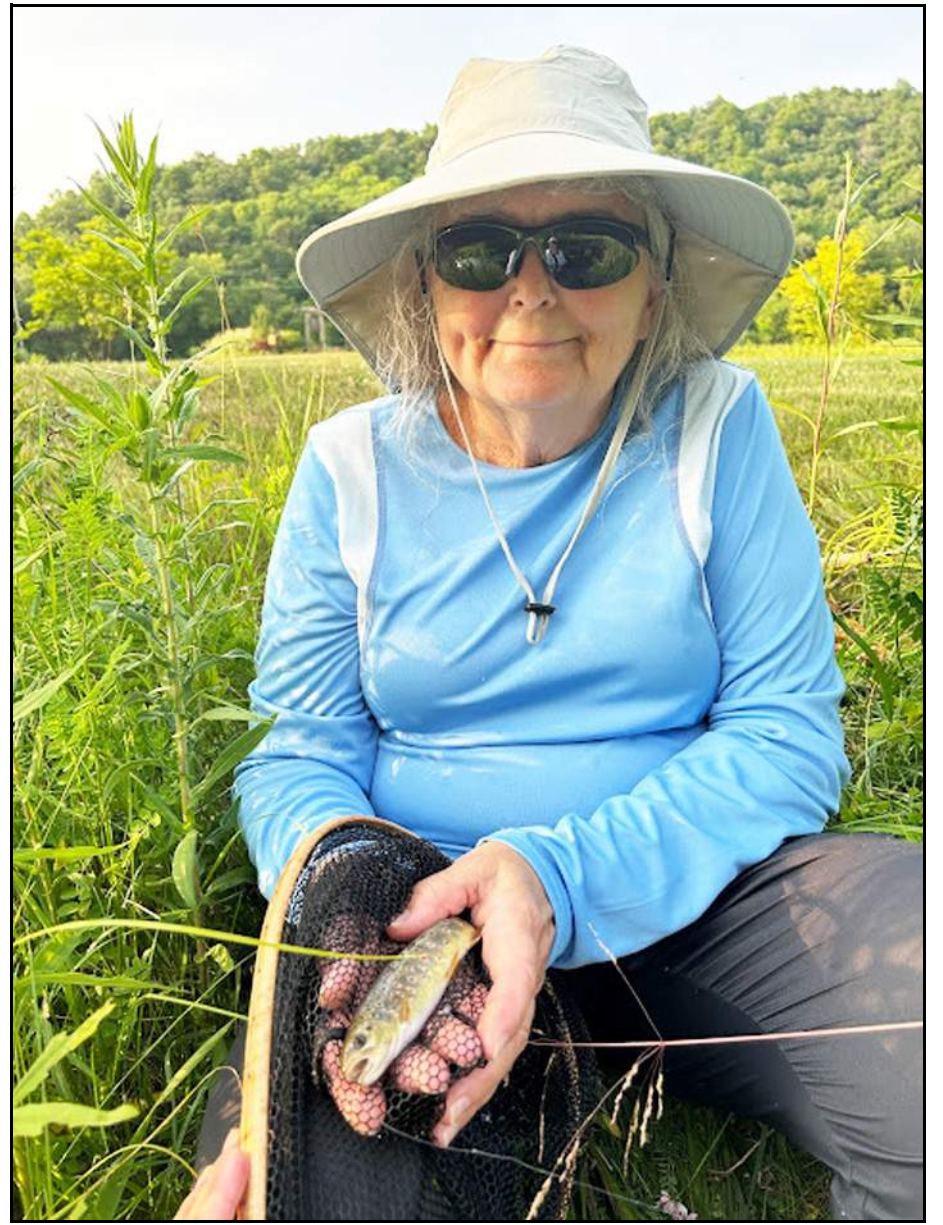
chance for women to step into the stream with confidence, knowing they have a supportive community behind them.

Women's On the Water Skills Clinic—Intermediate

The Women's On the Water Skills Clinic — Intermediate is affectionately known as "WOWsci." This intermediate-level program pairs women with three different volunteers of mixed gender for three separate on-the-water learning sessions. This hands-on approach allows participants to hone skills they would like to work on and practice, along with learning new skills while on the water. It's a remarkable opportunity to build confidence and competence in the company of experienced mentors.

Passion in action: leaders and volunteers

Central to the success of these clinics are the passionate women leaders who conceive and execute the week's activities. Their dedication and expertise infuse the clinics with an atmosphere of enthusiasm and empowerment. To make it even more empowering, volunteers affiliated with Trout Unlimited come from all over the Midwest to be mentors and join forces to ensure that every participant has access to the guidance and knowledge needed to succeed. It's also a chance to catch up with old friends and meet new ones.



TAKING PRIDE IN A SUCCESSFUL CATCH

A Wisconsin Women's Clinic participant enjoying the beauty and enjoyment of trout fishing in the Driftless Area.



INVERTEBRATES: IT'S WHAT'S FOR DINNER...FOR TROUT

Women's Clinic participants study the smallest of stream inhabitants, and learn about fishing and conservation along the way.



BONDING BY THE BONFIRE

Women's Clinic participants enjoying the moment.

National recognition of a sustainable model

The Wisconsin Women's Fly Fishing Clinics have gained national recognition as a sustainable model for teaching fly fishing. Their holistic approach, focusing on education, inclusivity and environmental stewardship, sets a shining example for the fly-fishing community. The clinics are not just about catching fish, but also about understanding and preserving the fragile ecosystems that make fly fishing possible.

More than fishing: Friendships and conservation

While these clinics are undeniably about fly fishing, they offer much more. Participants forge lasting friendships, bonding over their shared love for angling and the outdoors. They also gain insights into critical conservation issues, learning how to be responsible stewards of the environment. The clinics are a holistic experience that leaves a lasting impact on both skills and values.

Registration opens soon

Clinic Info is available at <https://www.swtu.org/learn/womens-flyfishing-clinic/> Look for registration to open in early November. Be aware that spots fill fast and a waiting list is available. The basics clinics are June 14-16 and the WOWsci clinics are June 12-14. All clinics are held near Westby, Wisconsin.

Casting dreams and building bonds

The Wisconsin Women's Fly Fishing Clinics are more than just a series of fishing events. They are a celebration of empowerment, camaraderie and education.

In the tranquil waters of the Driftless Area, women of all backgrounds come together to learn, grow and have fun. They can then apply these skills to other waters and fish species. With passionate leaders, dedicated volunteers and a commitment to sustainability, these clinics are a testament to the power of community and shared passion. Here, dreams are cast, skills are honed and bonds are built, making each year's clinic a cherished memory and a source of inspiration for women anglers everywhere.

Got your TU plates yet?

Support Wisconsin TU and get your Wisconsin TU license plate now. Go to www.dot.state.wi.us/drivers/vehicles/personal/special/trout.htm



ROCK FORD, from page 1

The ford was brought to the WRC's attention in the spring of 2022 and by mid-summer the DNR became involved with two site visits. At that second meeting, a gentleman with the DNR, who worked in permitting, said the ford, being an unnatural structure in the river, could be removed. And we learned if we removed it by hand there would be no permitting needed, whereas with equipment, a permit is needed. After many meetings, we were granted permission to remove it.

The ford was located on public lands, but the easiest access was through a small section of private property. Although they liked the ford, they were willing to allow the WRC to work through their property to remove it, which provided us much easier access.

This was going to be no small task. The ford was about 110 feet long, averaged 16 feet wide, and had an average height of two feet above the stream bed. Who would volunteer for this? As it turns out there were plenty of folks willing to help, because they wanted to be involved with something bigger than themselves, something that would help both the Hunting and Wolf Rivers and their local communities.

As with most volunteers, they came to make a difference and for reasons of their own. They came for that indescribable feeling a person gets inside for helping to fix something that is in need of fixing that will not get done with well wishes and talk. They came from within our chapter, and from other TU chapters, from posts on social media, and staff from the Northeast Illinois Council Scout Camp, Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan, in Pearson, Wisconsin. The volunteers came and they hand-picked rock by rock by rock.

The first load of rocks went out on the morning of June 12. Brian Biermier and I decided to fill his old Tacoma truck to see how long it would take for a small pickup truck to be loaded. He carefully backed out onto the ford and in about 25 minutes we had loaded as much rock as was comfortable to haul, not bad for two retired guys and a truck.

We scheduled more work days in June and July. On the first work day the weather was as cooperative as it could have been, although the heat was something else. But being in the water made it easier.

Chapter Secretary Laurie Zen Netzow stayed as long as possible the first work day, to make sure the paperwork was all taken care of and to be a part of the task.

The Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan staff and their dump truck arrived and they removed two large loads of rock.

The Scouts also took out three loads. It was a true pleasure to work with these young folks on all occasions.



JUNE 17 WORK DAY CREW

The Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan staff and their dump truck arrived and they removed two large loads of rock. The Scouts also took out three loads. It was a true pleasure to work with these young folks on all occasions. Their eagerness and devotion to the task was impressive.



LAST LOAD FOR THE MIGHTY WOLF RIVER CHAPTER ROCK MOVERS

Tired, sore, and oh so proud of a long, tough job completed. The Wolf River Chapter dedicated the project to the beloved Chapter President Chuck Valliere, who passed away recently.

sions. Their eagerness and devotion to the task was impressive.

The rock was taken from the far west side and passed towards the vessel of removal. Once the vessel was loaded with rock, it was hauled away and a different vessel was loaded.

Some loads were hauled up the hill and deposited near the old foundation of the barn on the Bloedorn property.

The Scouts' dump truck loads were hauled to their camp.

Andy Killoren hauled a four-ton dump trailer supplied by Duane Vellie with some of the loads also going to the Scout camp, another to give support to a retaining wall in need of help and a load that Andy would use for landscaping.

Some people took a few rocks for fire rings and souvenirs, a few even went to Iowa with Ed Evans. Brian Biermier must have taken about 12

loads to fill in ruts up in his hardwood forest from logging and sap gathering.

Most, if not all of the task was completed on July 22, and time will tell if we need to do more.

Immediate results

What is the Wolf River Chapter hoping to accomplish with this undertaking? We expect to increase the quality of the water in the Hunting River, which will help the Wolf River.

After the first full work day there was a noticeable difference in the depth of the river upstream. Silt and sand that has been accumulating for decades in the stream channel has begun to move, exposing logs, some axe cut.

A beer bottle from the Antigo Brewing Company was exposed. Rocks and gravel that has not seen the light of day for decades are re-

surfacing. With each rain, silt is being deposited along the shoreline and upstream, the main channel is getting a little deeper. Silt and shallow lily pads have been exposed and are greening up, which in time will trap and hold more silt during high water. The river will continue to narrow. We are anxious to see the results of the thermistors that were placed by Tim Waters in 2022 and 2023 to gather water temperature changes.

Because of this cooperative effort, the Hunting River runs a little faster, it might cut a little deeper and maybe, just maybe, a little cooler. While it is not practical to mention all who participated, they are all extremely thanked for their help.

With tremendous sadness we report that beloved Chapter President Chuck Valliere was not able to see this task completed. It is to his memory that the removal of the Old Rock Ford is dedicated.



MAKING PROGRESS ON THE OLD ROCK FORD ON THE HUNTING RIVER

July 22 rock-removal crew loading up and loading out river rocks.



ANOTHER LOAD READY TO HAUL OUT

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Pictured: Carl & Kathryn, Aventuron owners.

Little Plover River in big trouble...again

Will the river completely dry up this year? Time will tell.

Once again, the Little Plover River is in trouble, and not only because of this summer's drought. To understand why the Little Plover isn't flowing like it has been in the past few years, we have to look underground.

In 2013, the Little Plover River was named one of the United States' most endangered rivers by the American Rivers water advocacy group. The river dried in stretches every year from 2005 through 2010, and otherwise often flowed below "healthy" flows.

"Healthy" flows, or "public rights flows," are based on the minimum needed to keep fish habitat below the water surface. They were set by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources shortly after Little Plover stretches dried for the first time in 2005. The healthy flow is at least four cubic feet per second (cfs), or four cfs at the USGS gauge at County Highway R. Recent flows have been about 40-50 percent less than the healthy minimum.

August 24 marked two months that Little Plover River flows were less than "healthy." While the last decade of record precipitation helped the aquifer and river temporarily recover, this year's high-capacity well pumping is spiking Little Plover River flows. Flows dropped to less than healthy levels on June 24 and have remained there almost continuously. Flows dropped rapidly from a healthy 10 cfs in early May to only 2 cfs in late July, a decline of more than 80 percent in less than three months.

The cause is no mystery

"Without high-capacity well pumping, the Little Plover would be doing well right now," said George Kraft, Professor Emeritus of Water Resources with UW-Stevens Point and Extension. "The notion that drought alone is stressing the Little Plover is just plain wrong. The past decade has been about the wettest in local history, and even in 2023 rainfall was above average through June. Nearby groundwater-fed streams where there is little groundwater pumping are well within a 'healthy' range," he said.

When Kraft spoke to Wisconsin Public Radio about this issue in July he said, "the Little Plover should be chugging along very

healthily today if we weren't pumping all the water surrounding it right now. It's bad enough that it's below healthy flow if you care about things like trout and critters, but we could be facing a dry-up this year."

Groundwater-fed streams, Kraft explained, have the equivalent of "money in the bank" for dry times due to water stored in aquifers during wet times. Groundwater discharging to such streams can normally maintain healthy flows during dry times. But when dozens of neighboring high-capacity wells pump groundwater, both the aquifer and stream run low on water, just like running up credit card charges causes real "money in the bank" to run low. This demonstrates the fact that precipitation, while important, does not solely determine healthy flows in streams, particularly in the Central Sands.

Failed efforts toward significant progress

Efforts for a permanent solution to over-pumping included 14 years of talks between conservationists and groundwater pumping interests – irrigated producers, the Village of Plover and industry – but yielded little result. Pumpers began a closed process of "Little Plover Enhancement" in 2018 with a commitment to restoring Little Plover River healthy flows.

"Enhancement has been a mixed bag," said Kraft. "It's done some nice stuff like habitat improvement, creating a wetland, killing invasive buckthorn, and making promotional videos. But as far as putting flow back in the river, it appears like thimblefuls at great public cost. The late Barb Gifford, a Little Plover champion, calculated once that over \$2 million of public dollars have been spent with only a small effect."

This situation highlights the need in Wisconsin for a comprehensive, integrated and enforceable system of managing our shared waters for the long-term benefit of everyone.

Written by Bill Davis, River Alliance of Wisconsin Senior Legal Analyst and George Kraft, Professor Emeritus of Water Resources with UW-Stevens Point and Extension

Source: River Alliance of Wisconsin

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If you are a TU member and have investments with Thrivent Lutheran Financial, you may have the ability to make charitable donations to groups of your choosing through Thrivent Financial's Thrivent Choice program.

The Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited is now a listed entity within the Thrivent Choice program.

If you are a Thrivent member and have the ability to make Thrivent Choice donations, we would be honored if you'd consider including the Wisconsin Council of TU within your charitable planning, and making a donation to our cause.

Great Lakes Stream Restoration Update

By Chris Collier, Great Lakes Stream Restoration Manager, Danielle Nelson, Northern Wisconsin Project Coordinator, and Emma Balliet, Great Lakes Field Coordinator.

It's hard to believe that I've already been a part of the TU team and providing this update article for the Wisconsin Council, chapters and supporters for 4.5 years. In that time our team has grown from only me to three and a half full-time staff. This growth has enabled us to be involved in more projects and help to expand efforts to protect and restore coldwater systems.

Having a team in place also helps keep things moving when schedules get chaotic, like this summer when I took a month of parental leave to spend time with my newborn son, Maxwell. Four years ago, I would have been anxious about what wasn't getting done. But with Scott, Danielle and Emma, we didn't miss a beat. I was able to spend a month with Maxwell, getting outside between the waves of wildfire smoke, and not feel like I had to sneak in and check my emails.

Our growing northern Wisconsin team also gives you a chance to hear from a variety of voices, and not just me.

—Chris Collier

Aquatic organism passage and habitat restoration updates, by Chris Collier

2023 was an exciting season in the field for our Northern Wisconsin Great Lakes Team. TU and our partners completed five projects and one more was scheduled for construction in September. Five of these were culvert-replacement, aquatic-organism-passage projects that reconnected 15 miles of coldwater habitat and one was a habitat restoration that restored approximately one mile of trout stream.

The habitat project was a wood addition project on Wedde Creek in the Central Sands region. That was our program's first foray into this area, and you can learn more about the project in an article provided by Jamie Vaughan and Scott Allen in this issue of *Wisconsin Trout*.

Aquatic Organism Passage projects are the foundation of our Northern Wisconsin program, with 50 projects reconnecting more than 160 miles of trout stream completed since 2017.

Our 2023 projects were crossing replacements on McDonald Creek in Oconto County, Wilson Creek in Douglas County, an unnamed tributary to Armstrong Creek in Forest County, Kingstone Creek in Forest County and Hendricks Creek in Florence County. The Wilson Creek project was especially exciting for us because it was our first crossing replacement in the Lake Superior basin and is a Class 1 tributary to the Bois Brule River. It should be the first of several Bois Brule watershed projects and many more projects in the Lake Superior basin.

2023 field season update, by Danielle Nelson

Another whirlwind field season has nearly come to an end and, as I catch my breath, let's take a look at some of the work we accomplished in the world of science and monitoring.

We had another great crew of seasonal technicians, who you met in the last issue of *Wisconsin Trout*. They spent the summer working on

our inventory and monitoring projects throughout northern Wisconsin. Our technicians completed about 100 road-stream-crossing inventories in priority watersheds in Ashland, Bayfield and Iron counties as we shifted our inventory focus to the Lake Superior basin.

These road-stream-crossing inventories are crucial to help TU and our partners identify potential barriers to brook trout movement, so we can plan future aquatic organism passage (AOP) replacement projects.

We also completed electroshocking surveys at seven road-stream-crossing replacement sites: Barney Springs in Oconto County, Twentymile Creek in Bayfield County, Elvoy Creek in Forest County, Rock Creek in Forest County, South Branch Oconto River in Oconto County, an unnamed tributary to Hay Creek in Oconto County and near a former logging dam on the North Branch Oconto River in Forest County.

These surveys give us a snapshot of what the fish community looks like near an AOP structure that is going to be, or has already been, replaced, compared to a control reach.

This data collection is an important part of long-term efforts throughout the Great Lakes to quantify AOP replacement project success by demonstrating with real-world data the impact these projects have on fish diversity, abundance and size classes.

Finally, we kicked off a new monitoring initiative with EnviroDIY stations in three locations in northeast and central Wisconsin, with two more on the way next year. These stations measure stream temperature, conductivity and depth and upload the data to an online portal every 15 minutes. Our new stations will be live by the end of September and data can be viewed using this link: www.monitormywatershed.org/browse.

The stations are located on Wedde Creek in Waushara County, Upper Middle Inlet in Marinette County and Duck Creek in Brown County. EnviroDIY allows us to collect continuous point data for a relatively low cost and manpower effort.

They are also great tools for outreach and education, as demonstrated by our burgeoning partnership with Howard-Suamico School District at the Duck Creek location. The goal of this station in particular is to educate students and the public alike on water quality impacts in an urban environment.

Looking ahead, we have a busy "off-season" schedule filled with stream surveys, partnership building and data management. This time of year finds us all pivoting to more of an indoor role, but that role is no less important as we manage and interpret data, plan future projects, work with partners to identify areas of shared interest and apply for funding. As always, the "off-season" presents an exciting opportunity to grow our Wisconsin program and find more ways to protect our coldwater resources for years to come.

Michigan Upper Peninsula field season 2023 Update, by Emma Balliet

I split my time between Northern Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula (UP) of Michigan this season, but the majority of my days were spent electrofishing in the northwoods of Wisconsin.

To update you on what we had



"WORKING UP SOME FISH"

Having a great time working up fish! Clockwise from top: USFS Fish Biologist Jake Carleen, TU Great Lakes Field Coordinator Emma Balliet, Seasonal Technicians Jayden Janusiak, Owen Wysocki, and Dylan Wendricks.



NEW CULVERT RECONNECTS BOIS BRULE TRIBUTARY

New culvert being installed on Wilson Creek, a class 1 tributary to the Bois Brule River.

going on in the UP this summer, big kudos to my UP supervisor, Sarah Topp, and both of our Great Lakes Stream Restoration Specialists, Chad Kotke and Scott Allen, for all their hard work on the projects I am reporting on. This summer we had two Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP) projects go into the ground in partnership with the Ottawa National Forest and the local county road commission. The first project is on Spargo Creek, a tributary to the East Branch of the Ontonagon River, which eventually dumps into Lake Superior, located in Houghton County, Michigan. This project reconnected more than 1.5 miles of class 1 trout stream habitat.

The second completed project is on Trout Creek in Ontonagon County, which is very close to Spargo Creek, highlighting our effort to practice coldwater conservation on a watershed scale, with the health of the entire watershed at the forefront of our minds.

The crossing on Trout Creek had two extremely undersized and very perched culverts that were a complete AOP barrier at all flows. Those pipes have been replaced with a gigantic pipe arch that includes stream simulation, a U.S. Forest Service design technique which involves building a streambed and banks within the structure, mimicking natural stream conditions, to further enable passage of all organisms.

This project reconnected 7.5 miles of beautiful coldwater habitat.

Aside from the AOP projects, we have been hammering away at road-stream-crossing inventories in Mackinaw and Schoolcraft counties in cooperation with the Michigan DNR.

For 2024, we are looking forward to expanding our monitoring and research efforts, completing more habitat restoration projects, one dam removal, and getting many more AOP projects in the ground. We are continuing to build and maintain strong partnerships with the staff in the Ottawa and Hiawatha National Forests, as well as other UP conservation groups. We have a very full project load planned with them for the next several years.

We'd love to hear from you

As you can see, we have a lot going on across the Northwoods and the UP. It's exciting work that we are all passionate to see hit the ground and are equally excited to share with you.

Speaking of sharing this work with you, these articles are only one way we can communicate this work with you, the supporters that make TU the robust organization it is. If you have any questions about projects or interest in seeing them in person, feel free to email me at chris.collier@tu.org. We would be excited to get in the field with you.

I hope everyone has a great end to the summer and gets to enjoy the fall colors before the snow flies.



BEFORE: MCDONALD CREEK WITH UNDERSIZED AND PERCHED CULVERT
The previous undersized and perched culvert over McDonald Creek had created a full aquatic organism passage barrier.

AFTER: NEW MCDONALD CREEK CULVERT RECONNECTS 3 MILES
This new culvert installed over McDonald Creek reconnects three miles of class 1 trout stream.



BEFORE: NO PASSAGE THROUGH THESE KINGSTONE CREEK CULVERTS
Two undersized culverts created an aquatic organism passage barrier on Kingstone Creek.

AFTER: NEW BOX CULVERT RECONNECTS FOUR MILES OF STREAM



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Wood is good:

Using natural techniques to enhance Wedde Creek, a Mekan River tributary.

By Scott Allen, Great Lakes Stream Restoration Specialist, and Jamie Vaughan, Great Lakes Engagement Coordinator

Many anglers have heard the refrain, “Wood is good; foam is home.” It is sound advice when fly fishing, helping one to think like a trout and therefore find those big trout hidden in cold streams. Resource managers think about this saying, too, and TU staff recently took it to heart to enhance Wedde Creek in the Central Sands region.

Wood is good, indeed, for many reasons. Leaves and branches break down in the water and become the foundation of the aquatic food web. Insects feed on leaves or twigs in the water and then trout and other fish eat these insects. Dead trees in the water create complexity in the stream by helping to form deep cold pools, uncovering gravel substrates and storing sandy sediment. Logs also provide diverse habitats and overhead cover for fish and insects.

The morphology, or shape of a stream, is influenced by woody material. Wood has always been a natural and critical piece of stream habitat. Unfortunately, the trees along our rivers today are relatively young and natural recruitment into the stream has decreased, thus resulting in streams lacking this important component. That’s why TU staff encourage the strategic addition of woody debris to improve the health and quality of coldwater trout streams.

Enter Tom Gross. Tom owns a beautiful property in Marquette County on both sides of Wedde Creek, a Class II trout stream and tributary to the Mekan River watershed, which boasts some of the finest trout streams in central Wisconsin.

Environmental conservation is important to Tom, so he worked for years with Brendan Woodall of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to restore acres of upland into open prairie and oak savanna, and to remove invasive buckthorn and honeysuckle from wetlands along the creek.

Once they were happy with the progress on dry land, they turned their attention to the creek. The 3,000 feet of creek flowing through the property had some pools at the outside meander bends, but several banks were degraded. Most runs had a wide, flat channel bed. Overall, the creek lacked habitat diversity and channel complexity.

Tom and Brendan reached out to TU for advice, and the partners developed plans to install wood structures in the creek to mimic natural



WOOD IS GOOD...FOR SCOURING, HABITAT CREATION AND BANK PROTECTION

Tree trunks with rootwads were pencil-tipped and driven into the bank, leaving the rootwads in the creek to induce scour and create habitat complexity, while also protecting banks.

features and add the complexity that you would expect in a healthy stream. Specific trees along the banks were felled into the creek to induce scour and deposition, provide instream and terrestrial habitat and help floodplain connectivity.

Tree trunks with rootwads were pencil-tipped and driven into the bank, leaving the rootwads in the creek to induce scour and create habitat complexity, while also protecting banks.

Brush bundles were used to restore channel banks with woody materials that offer aquatic and terrestrial benefits and narrow the channel.

Tree trunks were scattered in a backwater to provide basking logs for turtles and habitat for frogs and other wetland species.

Installing large wood can sometimes be controversial, so the project team was careful to consider potential negative impacts.

It’s important to recognize that millions of people in Wisconsin use our creeks and rivers for canoeing, kayaking and boating, so the installed woody features were not channel-spanning in order to allow for navigation.

The installed features were limited in size to reduce impacts to water surface elevations during flood events.

And while all anglers know the annoyance of having stream access impeded by downed trees, or the

frustration of having your fly hung up on a log, we also know that fish love the habitat created by the wood and more habitat equals more and bigger fish throughout the creek.

We are thankful for our partners at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service —Partners Program — for organizing this project. We owe a big thanks to Brian and the habitat crew at Ideal Land Management for a fun three days working in the creek. And most of all, we are truly grateful for Tom, a forward-thinking

landowner and active steward of our invaluable water resources. He is leaving a legacy in this special region.

There remains a widespread belief in public discourse that our streams need to be “cleaned up” by removing all woody debris and creating a straight, uniform channel. But woody debris is essential for a healthy aquatic environment, and we believe that balance can be achieved for the benefit of fish, wildlife and humans.

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In search of gold

Prospecting for golden trout in Montana's Beartooth Mountains.

Words and photos by John Lyons,
Artwork by Joe Tomelleri

All trout are beautiful. To me the most gorgeous species is the golden trout. I was fortunate to encounter golden trout more than 30 years ago, deep in the heart of the Beartooth Mountains of Montana. Reaching these trout was one of the most difficult physical challenges I've ever faced, but catching them was one of the highlights of my long fishing career.

Golden trout (*Oncorhynchus aguabonita*) used to be considered a separate species, but now they are classified as a distinctive subspecies of rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss aquabonita*). Historically, this subspecies was native to just three small headwater drainages high in the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California, and each of the drainages had a genetically unique strain. The spectacular appearance of the golden trout has led it to be widely stocked throughout the West beginning in the 1930's. The subspecies requires very cold and clean water and can't co-exist with other types of trout, and many of these stockings were unsuccessful. But in a few small, naturally fishless, high-altitude lakes, including several in the Beartooths, golden trout have thrived and become established.

I first saw the Beartooth Mountains as a teenager way back in 1973. My dad and I had just finished our first fishing trip to the Yellowstone National Park region, and we passed through the Beartooths on our way to Billings Airport. The trip had been great, and we had fished the Madison, Firehole and Gibbon rivers, Slough Creek, Henry's Fork and Yellowstone Lake.

But even after more than a week of breath-taking scenery and amazing vistas, something about the raw and severe landscape of the Beartooths grabbed me. I was further enamored when, at a Forest Service visitor's center, I read that some of the high-mountain lakes there had been stocked with golden trout. I had just caught my first cutthroat trout, grayling and Rocky Mountain whitefish on this trip, along with browns, rainbows and brookies, and I had become smitten with the idea of catching as many different members of the salmonid family as possible, a passion that I still have more than 50 years later. Landing a golden trout was top of my list. I resolved that I would return someday to fish for them in one of those lakes.

It took me nearly 20 years to get back to the Beartooth Mountains to fish for golden trout. In the early 1980's, my parents began spending a

week each August on the Boulder River, just northeast of Yellowstone. They stayed at a ranch with several miles of private water, and my dad would fish for big browns and rainbows while my mom went horseback riding and relaxed. It sounded wonderful. My parents urged me to come join them, and finally, in 1991, I was able to do so. I was well aware that the Boulder River was not far from the Beartooth Mountains, and I immediately planned to add a couple days at the end of the trip to backpack into one of the Beartooth lakes for golden trout.

My visit to the Boulder River was great fun, although the fishing was slow. The water

was particularly low and clear, and the hatches and fish numbers seemed to be down. My dad and I worked hard every day for just a few fish. But the water was beautiful, and we each had refusals from giants, and I completely understood why they loved the place. Then the week was up, and my parents departed while I headed for the Beartooth Mountains.

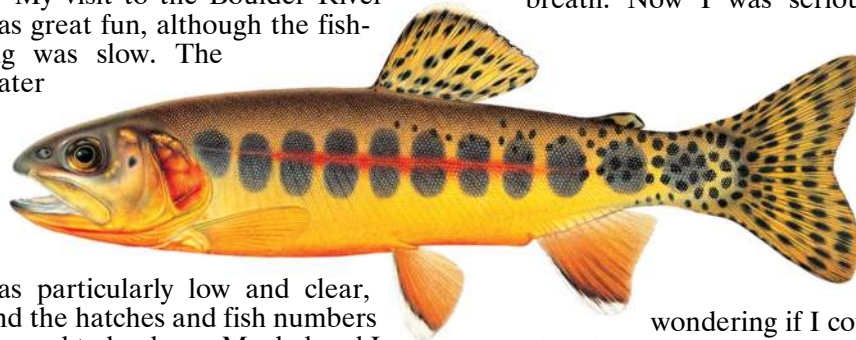
In those days it was a lot harder to get up-to-date information on conditions, and my first stop was a fly shop in Red Lodge to inquire about the best place to go. The people there agreed that Sylvan Lake was the place. They gave me directions and advice about what flies to use, but they warned me that the five-mile trail into the lake was particularly steep and difficult, and they said that most anglers preferred to go in on horseback. The first 3.5 miles climbed over 3,500 feet to a more than 9,500-foot elevation. But I was in my mid-30's then and in reasonable shape, and I assured them that I'd have no trouble hiking in. How wrong I was.

I reached the trailhead before noon. At the start of the trail there was a hiker sign-in book and a large sign warning about possible dangers from bears in the backcountry. But the book was in tatters, and it was impossible to register. The damage to the book looked like vandalism, but a small part of me wondered if it could have been destroyed by a bear. I swallowed and tightened my pack straps and started up into the mountains. I figured it would take me a couple of hours or at most three to get to the lake and I'd have plenty of time to fish. And the bear threat was no doubt overblown.

How wrong I was.

Right away, the trail was winding, uneven and steep. I was quickly breathing hard and sweating profusely. I kept expecting the climb to let up a bit as the trail hit a level patch, but it just kept climbing and climbing. Soon I was exhausted and had to stop for a break. I clearly wasn't in as good a shape as I had thought. I briefly wondered if this hike was a good idea, but the lure of the golden trout was strong, and I stumbled off again.

There was no letup. The trail got even steeper, and soon I had to stop every 50 yards or so to catch my breath. Now I was seriously



wondering if I could make it. The scenery was spectacular, but I no longer looked or cared. I just kept putting one foot in front of the other and plodded very slowly uphill. Once I came close to vomiting from exhaustion, and I had to make an extended stop to recover. At another point, a pack string of horses came down the trail, the only other people I saw during my time in the mountains, and I seriously considered asking if I could hitch a ride with them back to my car. But one of the riders said that I was close to the top, and that gave me enough incentive to keep going.

After another hour, I was wondering what he had meant by "close." I kept climbing and climbing and no end was in sight. At each especially steep segment of the trail, where I couldn't see what lay beyond, I kept thinking that I would get to the end of the segment and see the summit of the ridgeline. Instead, I was confronted with more trail going upwards. I began to despair that I could make it.

But just when I thought I could

go no further I suddenly and unexpectedly reached the top. It had taken me more than five hours to cover 3.5 miles, but I had made it. And there in front of me was an apparition, a large dark-bluish bird sitting on a rock staring at me. I approached to within about 10 feet, but it never moved. I found out later that it was a blue grouse and that in high-mountain areas where they encountered few people, they were easily approachable. But at the time I wondered if I was hallucinating from a lack of oxygen to my brain.

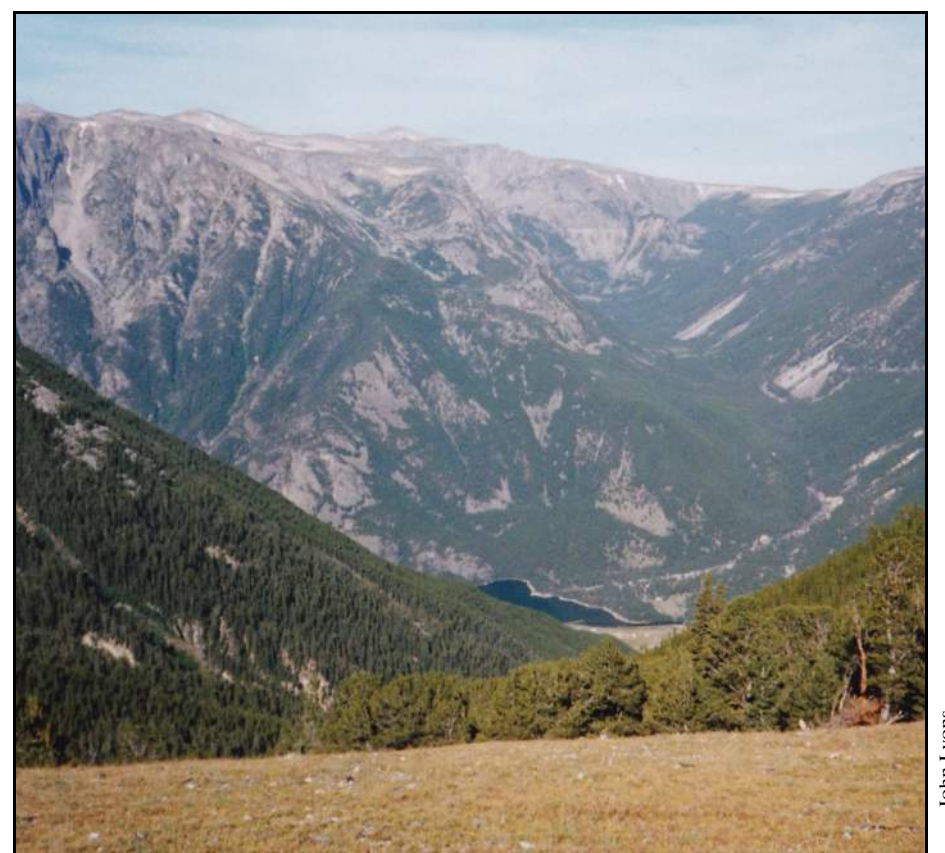
From the top of the ridge, it was a rolling and slightly uphill hike of about 1.5 miles along the ridgeline to the lake, but in my depleted condition, stopping every 50 yards to rest in the thin air, it took me almost two more hours to reach it. It was a breathtaking place in both senses of the word. By the time I arrived, after nearly seven hours of hard hiking, the light was beginning to go, so I quickly set up my rod and staggered down to the water. In the deepening twilight, I could see fish dimpling on the surface, so I started with a small Adams dry, as recommended by the fly shop. I got a few splash refusals, but the Adams wasn't what they wanted. I started changing flies frantically looking for something that would work, more and more difficult in the fading light. I was starting to panic that my death-march up to the lake would fail to yield any fish. Finally, I put on a #14 black caddis pupae nymph and cast to the nearest riser. To my surprise, the fish took the fly confidently and was hooked. I played it carefully and finally beached a 10-inch golden trout.

What an incredible fish it was. This was one species that definitely lived up to the hype. The trout had bright shades of red, orange, yellow and gold across the flanks and belly and was sprinkled with dark spots towards the tail. I was mesmerized. Incredible. Seeing that fish was well worth the pain of the trip in. Although the light wasn't ideal, I snapped a picture with the last of my film.



FINDING GOLDEN TROUT CAN TAKE SOME SERIOUS HIKING

Sylvan Lake sits at 9,700 feet elevation in the Beartooth Mountains. Rises can be seen on the water.



NO SHORTAGE OF ALTITUDE IN THE BEARTOOTH

The view of the Beartooth Mountains once I finally got to the top of the ridgeline. The small lake in the distance is East Rosebud, located 3,500 feet below this point.



Chapter News

Aldo Leopold Chapter

It's been a quiet summer here at Aldo Leopold with the hot, dry weather. We have been attending the local farmers market in Sauk City to sell our "TU Brew" coffee to help raise funds for the chapter and also educate people on the work TU does for our coldwater resources. We will continue to go there until they close for the winter, with the last date being October 14. If you need more, or want to try some, stop down and see us, or email me, Dan Endres, at dtendres9@gmail.com.

Originally we thought it may be just a once- or twice-a-year fundraiser, but with the cooperation of our local roaster, John Joseph Coffee, we will have it available year round. Let us know if you have suggestions on other outlets/places that we should be attending to sell.

This coming winter we will again be having our "Bar Flies" tying events starting in December. Expect to see details in our upcoming newsletter or by checking our social media outlets.
—Dan Endres



NEW BIKES: TOP PRIZES AT THE ANTIGO CHAPTER'S KID'S FISHING DAY

Antigo Chapter

Happy October to all. It's time to say again, "Where did the summer go?"

In June we again held our annual Kid's Fishing Day with about 400 kids. There was fishing, prizes and food for all. Thanks to the DNR staff for running our casting contest again this year.

We joined with the DNR, Green Bay Chapter and other volunteers on a great work day on the Evergreen River. We worked on placing trees in the river as brush bundles and our chapter provided lunch for all.

We maintained the waste line boxes we placed last year and added more sites this year.

Blackhawk Chapter

The Blackhawk Chapter has tried to keep active this summer despite the temps and drought. We had our picnic in July at Sweet Allyn Creek, on the banks of Turtle Creek. It's a smallmouth stream, and not a trout stream, but everyone had a good time trying rods and getting tips on technique. As always the brats and side dishes were awesome.

Our monthly meetings at Boundaries Bar & Grill have been pretty well attended. The food is great and the conversations lively. We have not had any speakers, but hope to have some programs this fall and winter.

I attended the Midwest Outdoor Education Expo to tie flies with the kids. The article about the event in the Summer issue of Wisconsin Trout was great, but unless you were there you don't realize what a one-of-a-kind event this is for kids. I always have a great time and recommend attending to everyone.

Blackhawk sponsored kids for the WITU Youth Camp again this year. Blackhawk treasurer and awesome member Anita Vaughan at-

Our chapter helped send two people to the TU Youth Summit held in Montana this summer. They are Lauren Genske and Harlan Meade. What a wonderful way to show and encourage our youth to get involved with the coldwater resource.

Our chapter held two work days doing stream-edge brushing, and we stained two TU signs. We then moved to the fishing dock located on the East Branch Eau Claire River.

Have a great fall and upcoming winter as we continue to work to improve our coldwater resource.
—Scott Henricks

tended as a mentor for the whole camp. She couldn't give enough accolades about the event, the organizers and the kids. She said she was exhausted at the end but the experience was terrific.

The chapter is having fly-tying get-togethers each week at the DNR Service Center in Janesville. All members and the public are invited to come and learn, tie and talk. There's a lot of storytelling, but we do manage to get some flies tied.

We're making up boxes for meeting raffles and our banquet. We hope to have enough for our chapter and for donations to the State Council. If other chapters would be interested in a swap, just give me a call.

Lastly and sadly Blackhawk and Wisconsin TU lost one of its most ardent supporters in Fred Young this summer. Fred was a spearhead in promoting conservation efforts and Trout Unlimited. He will be greatly missed.
—Dave Brethauer

Central Wisconsin Chapter

The Central Wisconsin Chapter decided not to take the summer off. We decided to still hold our business meetings, but with a twist. We hold our summer meetings at members' homes for picnics.

July found us at Harvey Jones's home on the Pine River. The evening was gorgeous. Sitting by the house looking down on the river, it was hard for me to concentrate on the work at hand. We were treated to hamburgers, brats, baked beans and a mother lode of other treats.

Our August meeting found us along the Pine River again, but instead of overlooking the river we were sitting at the riverside. John and Laura Tucker were our hosts, and everyone was treated to a wonderful meal. John and Laura served fried chicken, salad, red potatoes and more. The highlight of the evening was Laura's many famous pies. Thank you, Harvey, John, and Laura, and all involved for highlighting the summer meetings.

The month of August continued to be just as much fun. The workday in August was a great highlight, attended by more than 80 participants. Chad Tucker and his workday crew put on a fantastic workday. They were joined by the Wisconsin Trout Unlimited Youth Camp campers, youth mentors and the adult mentors, along with some extra DNR crew members. As part of the workday Shawn and his crew showed and explained the dynamics of stream habitat. Adam Nickle and Scott Bunde of the DNR did a

stream shocking and explained the process of their recording process. All the campers had a chance to join in and experience what it is like to attend a chapter workday.

Another highlight of the day was the dedication of a streamside bench to Dan Harmon III. This bench is located just across from the rock dedicated to Tom Poulette in Bird Park. It's a very fitting setting for these two long-time friends and former college roommates. All this excitement was followed by a phenomenal lunch coordinated by Laura Tucker, with burgers, brats, all the fixings and I can't forget the cake in memory of Dan. Thank you all for a great time and your hard work.

As September kicked off, we got into our regular workload. We will be working hard on solidifying all our programs with volunteers for the next year. You need not be a board member to get involved with any of our committees or events, as these are open to all CWTU members. We have several opportunities for our members to get involved. One event we really could use some help on is our banquet. There is no solid date, and the venue has not been locked down, but we will let you know as soon as we get it scheduled.

There are other opportunities on many of the activities and committees. If you are interested in joining in the planning for this fun and important event, please contact me.
—Linn Beck



ENTIRE CWTU WORKDAY CREW INCLUDING YOUTH CAMP ATTENDEES



YOUTH CAMP STUDENTS, MENTORS AND VOLUNTEERS



YOUTH CAMP STUDENTS ENJOYING THE DNR SHOCKING DEMO

Chapter News



CWTU PICNIC MEETING AT THE TUCKERS



RAY WHITE SPEAKS ABOUT BEAVER SYMPOSIUM AT CWTU MEETING

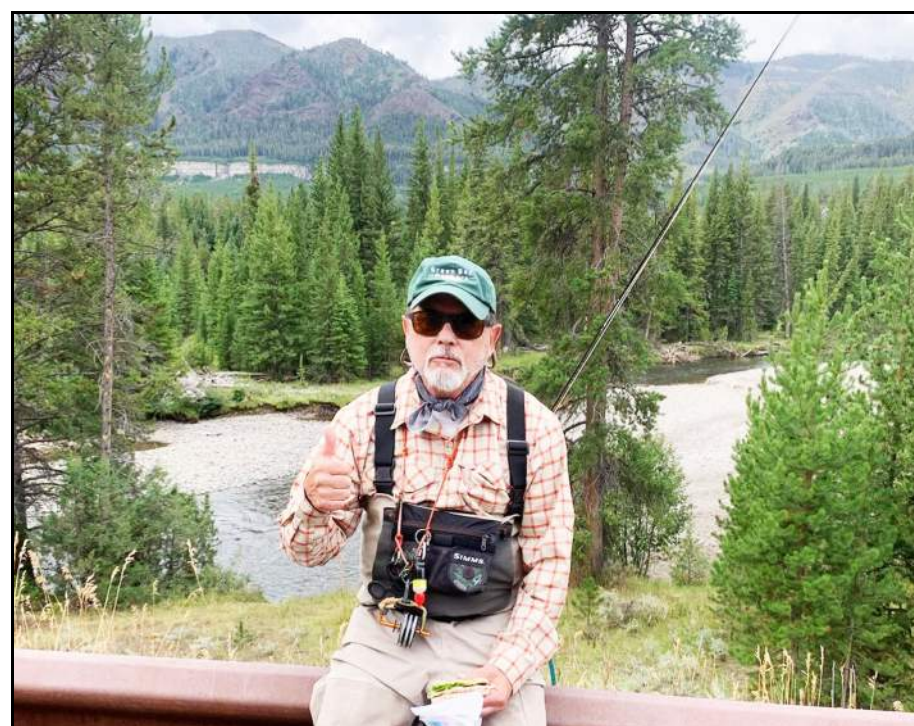
Fox Valley Chapter

The Fox Valley Chapter remained active during the summer, with multiple committees planning important fall events. We also participated in stream-improvement projects with the Central Wisconsin chapter. Central Wisconsin Chapter's Chad Tucker has been instrumental in organizing our joint stream improvement effort in the central sands' streams. Over the summer, each third Saturday, we worked to improve Bird Creek and the West Branch of the White River. Jerome Herro leads our stream improvement efforts.

Nate Ratliff planned and organized our annual Autumn Angling Adventure, which for the past few years has focused on southern streams of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Most anglers will camp in Land O' Lakes. We will fish the ma-

ny streams around the Middle and East Branches of the Ontonagon River. AAA participants will meet at a restaurant near Land O' Lakes to hear a presentation about fishing the UP. Seth Waters of Dark Waters Fly shop in Iron River will be the expert speaker.

Over the summer, a five-member committee has been planning a very special gathering. Leading that committee are Dave Coonen and Bruce Pennings. On October 19, at Appleton's Grand Meridian, FVTU will celebrate our 50th Anniversary. Yes, in the Spring of 1973 a small group of local anglers including John Hammond and Ron Gilard formed what is now FVTU. They will be our honored guests at our Anniversary Event. The event will start with a social hour starting at 4:30 p.m., followed by a dinner at



THE "NOT-CATCHING-MUCH" LOOK

The Fox Valley Chapter's longtime Chapter Report writer Don Clouthier grabs a sandwich between not catching any fish. He's passing the torch for writing Chapter Reports to Tony Pudlo.

6 p.m. Among the speakers, Wisconsin's State Council Chair Scott Allen will be featured. As FVTU celebrates the past, we look forward

to a bright future of fellowship and active habitat stewardship.
—Don Clouthier and Tony Pudlo



HORNBERG YOUTH CAMP GRADUATES ENJOYING THEIR NEW RODS

Allison and Aubrey Raddatz are already putting their new flyrods to use chasing bluegills on their favorite pond. They received the rods as graduates of the State Council Youth Camp.

Frank Hornberg Chapter

In June the Frank Hornberg Chapter completed a long-overdue project at the Jim Henke Farm in Amherst Junction. We had a lot of wood for LUNKER structures in a collapsing barn and it had to be moved to a safer location. We had a nice turnout and moved the lumber before noon. Afterwards we had brats and burgers, enjoyed some camaraderie and made new friends.

July saw our chapter on the Tomorrow River at Welton Road, brushing, clearing trees and doing maintenance on old projects. We had a small group, but they accomplished a lot. Thanks to everyone who helped.

The last Saturday in July we held our annual fundraiser/brat fry at Fall Line Outfitters in Stevens Point. A huge thanks to Craig Cook

of Fall Line Outfitters for donating the brats and drinks and to Pat Stoiber for donating the chips. I really appreciate Roberta Laine, Eric Bergman, Stu Grimstad and Pat Stoiber for selling the brats and making this event a success.

In August our chapter guided Madison Newhouse of Illinois on a fishing trip to the Pine River during the TU Youth Fishing Camp. It is always rewarding to teach youth about conservation and trout fishing. If you really want to make a difference, volunteer at the Youth Camp next year and help shape the kids to become the next stewards of our trout streams. Contact Linn Beck at chlbeck@att.net for further information.

—Doug Erdmann

Green Bay Chapter

Since our last report, we held three additional habitat improvement days. On Father's Day weekend nine members of Green Bay Trout Unlimited (GBTU), two members of Oconto River Chapter and three Department of Natural Resource (DNR) staff members combined to do fishability brushing on the Wausaukee River. The prop-

erty we worked on is TU-gifted land. The DNR Limited Term Employees (LTE) that led the effort were partly funded by Northeast Wisconsin TU chapters (including GBTU). This is an amazing example of TU involvement in multiple aspects of a project, from funding to land purchase to volunteering at a workday.



HAPPY KIDS AT KIDS FISHING DAY, THANK TO HELP FROM GBTU

Adrian Meseberg



Chapter News



Adrian Meseberg

GBTU VOLUNTEER DENNIS GUSICK HELPS A YOUTH AT KIDS FISHING DAY



Adrian Meseberg

A BRUSH BUNDLING CREW AT GBTU'S EVERGREEN CREEK WORKDAY



Adrian Meseberg

GBTU, OCONTO CHAPTERS AND DNR AT NORTH BRANCH BEAVER CREEK



Adrian Meseberg

GBTU'S PAM HARNER VAN EREM PROVIDING FLY-CASTING INSTRUCTION



Adrian Meseberg

GBTU VOLUNTEERS AT THE OCC WOMEN'S OUTDOOR WORKSHOP

In July multiple TU chapters including GBTU, Antigo, Oconto River and Coulee Region teamed up with the DNR to install 17 brush bundles in Evergreen Creek. According to the DNR's Taylor Curran, "The purpose of the bundles is to narrow, deepen, concentrate stream flow and re-meander the stream channel. The bundles will capture soft sediments and over time create a new bank that will eventually vegetate. This will allow the stream to flush sand and silt, exposing spawning gravel, all helping to maintain cold water temperatures." The brush bundles were recycled Christmas trees donated from the cities of Antigo and Merrill. Nine hundred and thirty-six feet of stream were covered by the bundles.

Eleven members of GBTU, six members of Oconto Chapter, three workers with the DNR and a representative of the Coleman Lake Club got together for fishability and flow improvement brushing on the North Branch of Beaver Creek. Like the brushing we did at the June workday on the Wausaukee River, the North Branch of Beaver Creek was so overgrown with vegetation it was nearly impossible to fish. When all was said and done, 3,250 feet of stream was successfully brushed.

For more than 30 years GBTU has partnered with the Brown County Izaak Walton League, the Brown County Health and Human Services PALS program and the Green Bay Exchange Club to bring disadvantaged area youth out for Kids Fishing Day. In July we did it again. This year we had 31 kids and 27 adult volunteers and sponsors

who came out and fished, catching everything from bluegill to bass to perch. In between the fishing, our guests enjoyed a picnic dinner of hot dogs, beans, chips, water, soda and cookies. GBTU helped with baiting hooks, taking off fish, teaching fishing and being a friend.

Over the past few years GBTU has developed a strong partnership with the Outagamie Conservation Club (OCC). We have been invited to teach fly tying and casting at their Take a Kid Fishing Day for several years. In September, for the second time during the past couple years, we came out for their OCC's Women's Outdoor Workshop (WOW). There are 11 outdoor-related activities available, and participants can choose six. Our role is to help participants tie their own fly and learn how to cast a fly rod. Afterward, women use their fly (or a fly provided by our chapter), and their new fly-casting skills, to fish in one of the OCC's ponds. Several caught their first fish on a fly rod, using the first fly they ever tied.

Finally, GBTU continues to run our Veteran's Service Program. They are held at Tight Lines Fly Shop in De Pere every other Monday starting at 4:30 p.m. If you are a veteran who would like to participate, or if you would like to volunteer, please contact GBTU Veteran's Program Coordinator Paul Kruse at kruser2@new.rr.com or 920-639-2361.

For more GBTU Chapter information, please visit our website at greenbaytu.org or check our social media on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

—Adrian Meseberg

Harry & Laura Nohr Chapter

We finished stream restoration on Big Spring. This is just above the confluence with Six-Mile Branch.

We are working on getting permits for the state property off Bower Road. Since it is state property, NRCS is not involved, so we are using TUDARE's Paul Krahn to do the permits. This includes a more formal plan than what we had initially created.

We do have permits and NRCS and DNR plans for doing the Blue River Stracka property just outside of Montfort, which is upstream of any work we have done to date. We

may end up doing both properties next year, as we only have a couple of months left in this year's work season.

We have continued to add and replace stiles on Gordon Creek.

In September we had a Summer Landowners Appreciation Social off Bowers Road on the Blue River. The picnic included food by the board and officers and some casting instruction for those interested and a shocking demonstration by the DNR. Some even went fishing.

—Brian Larson

Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter

Starting in mid-June, policy issues took center stage for Kiap TU Wish as Ridge Breeze Dairy in Maiden Rock announced plans to increase their dairy herd from about 1,200 to 5,000-plus cows. This operation is located about 2.5 miles on either side of the Rush River and Nugget Lake (which flows into Plum Creek), with their farm fields being much closer to these waters. The dairy is seeking additional acres needed to spread the large increase in manure.

While not opposing agriculture and the dairy industry, Kiap TU Wish has concerns about the substantial increase in nutrient loading on land this close to two of our cherished trout streams. Concern over recent trout kills due to failing manure storage at other CAFOs heightens our concern. The chapter supported a petition calling for a one-year moratorium on CAFOs in

Pierce County until further studies and discussion on these issues could occur. The Land Conservation Committee voted at a public meeting to ask the County Board for the moratorium, but reversed itself at a later meeting.

In August chapter members and other Kinni supporters turned out in force to attend an open house on the Army Corp of Engineers ecological restoration project within the City of River Falls. The Corps is currently in the process of executing a Feasibility Cost Share Agreement (FCSA) with the city of River Falls as the non-federal sponsor to complete the feasibility study. It's anticipated the FCSA will be executed early March 2024 and the study will last approximately one year.

Volunteer efforts this summer started in June with John Nowicki, Jeff Dahl, Jim Anderson, Tom Anderson and Randy Arnold helping

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THE KIP TU WISH CHAPTER WAS WELL REPRESENTED AT OPEN HOUSE
Kiap TU Wish members Ed and Suzanne Constantini, Missy Hanson and Gary Horvath at the Army Corps. River Falls open house.



SHOCKING ALWAYS BRINGS UP THE BIG ONES
Kiap TU Wish volunteers helped the DNR crews with their shocking surveys this past summer and discovered some lunker trout.

Nate Anderson and his DNR crew seed and mulch the new restoration at the Thom easement on the lower Trimble River in Pierce County.

Volunteers Don Fritz, Katie Fritz and Al Schmalz worked this summer to ensure that the trees we planted earlier this spring at Cady Creek got watered to help them survive the lack of rainfall in the area. A large turnout that included Joe LaFave, Mike Forsberg, Dave Gregg, Chris Olson, Curtis Doornink, Pat Sexton, John Carr, Ed Constantini, Don Fritz, Brad Wistrom and Ben Belt all assisted Kasey Yallaly and her DNR crew with their large stream-shocking surveys in August. Some fine fish were seen.

Loren Haas and Randy Arnold recently met up with Nate Anderson on the upper Trimble River near County Highway W to evaluate whether or not to place Elevated Riparian Optimization (ERO) structures on the stream to help alleviate some of the sand load which is burying some of the habitat features on this restored section of water. Loren was planning to visit the South Fork of the Kinnickinnic River to evaluate that site for additional EROs as well.

As of this writing there is a workday scheduled for September to assist DNR's Nate Anderson seed and

mulch the new restoration work on Parker Creek.

Randy Arnold is working with the DNR on setting up a DNR-certified chainsaw class in the fall, with 14 individuals expressing interest. Randy is also busy setting up plans for another season of brushing. He will be meeting with DNR fish manager Kasey Yallaly in late September to identify brushing sites for this winter. Brushing workdays are anticipated to start after the inland stream season closes on Oct. 15.

We hosted a Summer Solstice Event in June at the Ellsworth Rod & Gun Club on the Rush River. This was a social gathering with Kiap-TU-Wish supplying grilled hot dogs on buns, chips and cookies. Participants could enjoy a beer, or cocktail, in the club's bar or just hang out and enjoy the beauty of the Rush River Valley. After the evening's fishing, folks could catch up back at the club around the fire. Mentoring was also provided.

In early August we were hosted by chapter member Phil Kashian and his wife Kay at the Milkhouse Cottage and Gardens they operate on the Rush River, for a gathering and guided night fishing with Pat Houlton. It was a great time with great hosts as attendees feasted on hotdogs, baked beans, potato salad,

chips, cookies and fresh sweet corn. About 25 people turned out and we had great conversations and some fly casting on the lawn. As the sun went down, Pat Houlton gave some excellent instruction about fishing streamers and mice patterns at night. The group split into two groups with Pat taking one and chapter board member Ben Belt taking the other. The reports were that indeed some big fish were caught, with mice. Some new anglers reported catching their first

trout on a fly as well. Overall, it was a great event.

Continuing the social trend, the chapter kicked off its meeting schedule with an Open House and Gear Swap at Rush River Brewing in River Falls in September. This event featured a farmers market, food and music, along with a gear swap and sale. We also signed up new members at half off the usual price.

—Gary Horvath

Lakeshore Chapter

What a summer it has been for the Lakeshore Chapter. We held our traditional monthly habitat restoration workdays, conducted our second STREAM camp of the summer and were recognized by the Great Lakes Partnership as 2023 Champions of Conservation.

July began with an Onion River workday with 18 volunteers turning out to work on LUNKER structure repairs, brush bundling/bank reinforcement and logjam removal. Our progress on this three-year project is persistent and making a noticeable impact. We are not allowed any heavy equipment in the stream itself, so the work is pretty much manual labor. I guess it takes a special kind of crazy to enjoy this stuff, but the number of volunteers at workdays keeps growing, so I guess there are more than a few of us out there who are just a little nutty.

August began with our second STREAM camp of the month, this time at Camp Y-Koda in Sheboygan Falls. Fifteen boys and girls enjoyed the day camp. We followed a revised version of the TU STREAM curriculum that fit in with the day camp

routine. The weather was perfect. The kids loved the stream walk, macroinvertebrate survey, fly tying, fly casting and fishing.

We had the kids tie foam beetles that they used the next day to catch bluegills on the pond at the camp. None of the kids had fly fished before and nearly every one of them caught at least one fish on a fly rod that day. Many of them caught 10 or more fish on flies that they had tied. Those kids are hooked in a big way. We had 11 volunteers contribute a total of 70 hours to support this camp. All agreed it was a great investment of our time and very rewarding.

Our August workday was a record-setting event. We were lucky enough to be joined by the young people and adult leaders from the Wisconsin Conservation Congress youth camp that was being held in Calumet County. The Youth Conservation Congress brought 18 outstanding youth ages 12 to 18, many of them interested in careers in conservation or related fields. They also brought seven adult volunteers to join our habitat restoration workday. The school bus arrived at 8:30



Nicole Gates

LAKESHORE CHAPTER WORKDAY WITH YOUTH
Lakeshore TU volunteers with the Youth Conservation Congress campers and adult leaders at their August workday.



Al Wortz

LAKESHORE TU HOLDS STREAM CAMP FOR KIDS
STREAM Camp kids learn about macroinvertebrates from volunteers Dave Gerhartz, Jeff Beismann and Greg Zimmer at Camp Y-Koda.



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LAKESHORE CHAPTER AMONG "CHAMPIONS OF CONSERVATION"

a.m. and unloaded the troop of bleary-eyed volunteers who had endured a very rough night hiding out in their bus after severe thunderstorms and heavy rains chased them from their tents.

After a bit of talk on the history of the Onion River restoration, safety instruction and team assignments, the now-eager YCC youth and adults joined 20 LSTU volunteers and DNR fish biologist Ben Breaker getting sweaty, wet and muddy doing meaningful restoration work.

We worked hard until about 12:30 p.m., doing as much work in one day as we would normally do in three workdays, then gathered for brats, burgers and great conversation. It is not an overstatement to say that this was one of the single most impactful workdays LSTU has ever conducted. The experience was simply amazing for all involved. We heard later that this was the highlight of the camp for the YCC campers. They loved the work, loved working together as teams and loved the knowledge that the work they were doing was making an immediate impact on the coldwater habitat on the Onion River. Lakeshore volunteers were energized and immensely impressed with the quality and enthusiasm of these young conservationists.

Marinette County Chapter

The Marinette County Chapter had a very good banquet and we were able to cover all of the commitments of our summer project. We also had a flytying day with the Marinette Elks Club and plan on doing a series of classes this coming late fall and winter. In August we

A big thank you goes to Kyle Zenz, DNR coordinator for the Youth Conservation Congress for her partnership and leadership on executing this workday. Bringing together 45 volunteers with 18 of them being youth takes a ton of planning and coordination. Kyle was simply fantastic to work with. I know more opportunities will arise to work with Kyle and the YCC. If your chapter is lucky enough to get this opportunity, do yourself a favor and make it happen. You will not be sorry.

In September we had another Onion River workday and resumed our regular member meetings held the third Tuesday of every month at Camp Y-Koda in Sheboygan Falls at 7 p.m.

This has been an amazing summer for Lakeshore. A huge thanks go to the record number of volunteers who stepped up to work in a stream, teach a kid, cook a meal, make a brush bundle, plant a tree or clear a trail. Thanks also to our partner organizations that worked with us to make these opportunities available. None of this would happen without each and every volunteer and partner. We're looking forward to closing this year out on a strong note and planning for an even more dynamic 2024.

—Al Wortz

helped with prizes for the Marinette Recreation Department's Kids Day Fishing event when the young anglers tried their luck on catching the big ones. The event also covered other outdoor activities.

—Dale Lange

Oconto River Chapter

Work is underway in the Northwoods to improve access to a trout fishing site along the South Branch of the Oconto River. In June volunteers removed trees and brush and created a pathway to the shoreline. A team comprised of chapter members and led by Oconto County forester Monty Brink brushed the roadway leading to the newly acquired access to the South Branch. The brushing will make for easier access of equipment and material needed to complete the public ac-

cess point.

Oconto County bought the 37-acre parcel a few years ago. This is the first step to improving the site for fishing and picnic access. The property includes a winding waterfront shoreline on river. Volunteers cleared a path to the river and also worked on an additional nearby access.

Future plans include improvements to the shoreline and the river itself. Chapter members on the work team included Lloyd Heise,

Wayne Czypinski, Lyman Wocking, Dan Sunnicht, Gary Lemmen and Dale Halla.

The Suring Sportsmen held its annual Youth Day in August at their facility on River Road in Suring. About 40 kids showed up with parents, grandparents and guardians to participate in slingshot, archery, shotgun, .22 rifle and pistol (depending on age), trout fishing and casting.

Our chapter helped with the trout fishing and ran a casting contest. Our members taught fly cast-

ing. Most of the kids catch a trout, which is cleaned, and even cooked if they so choose. The casting is somewhat of a contest where each participant gets a free raffle ticket with extra tickets awarded for hitting the target. The tickets are used to draw for prizes at the end of the day. We awarded four Zebco fishing outfits to some lucky kids.

Thanks to Dan Sunnicht, Jim Trochta, Dale Hall and Wayne Czypinski for volunteering to assist in this event.

—Dale Halla

Southeastern Wisconsin Chapter

While the summer typically does not have monthly membership meetings, SEWTU was busy in the field with other activities helping further the TU mission.

June saw our habitat work crew return to the Kettle Moraine State Forest's Scuppernong River at the outflow of the Scuppernong Springs. This area is not only a high-quality coldwater remnant, but also considered environmentally sensitive, necessitating the use of hand work for restoration. It is labor intensive, but we are seeing results with more brook trout observed every workday. Seventeen volunteers installed log riprap and brush backfill, and relocated stream bed gravel. This section should be completed at our scheduled September workday.

July saw a return to Karcher Creek in western Racine County. Karcher creek is also a very small,

very cold brook trout stream located in the Karcher Springs State Natural Area. A controlled prairie burn got out of control, jumped the fire line and burned previously installed backfill and biologs. With the able assistance 14 volunteers, including our friends from the Oakbrook Chapter of TU, we were able to install new biologs and soon had the project looking as good as new. Continuing cooperative workdays with Oakbrook TU have been very effective, resulting in substantial amounts of habitat restoration work completed.

July also saw the return of our summer casting clinic picnic at Greenfield Park in West Allis. Twenty-two people attended and enjoyed an evening of fly-casting instruction, casting demonstrations, food and fishing talk. Casting instruction included some first timers as well as those looking for a tune-



SOUTHEAST CHAPTER HABITAT CREW HARD AT WORK



SOUTHEAST CHAPTER VOLUNTEERS GETTIN' R DONE!

Chapter News



up. Special thanks to Stan Strelka for restarting this long-enjoyed event.

The West Fork Sports Club in the Driftless Area was the base in August for a Mentored Fishing and Social Fishing Weekend. Friday night greeted the group with a thunderstorm with strong winds that blew tacos off our plates and sent us scurrying to our cars. The next day, however, was great with groups of anglers heading out to enjoy the variety of fishing opportunities. Some members caught their first trout ever. The weekend also featured a great casting clinic by John Graba

and a BBQ dinner with a Wisconsin charcuterie board, cowboy beans and grilled treats, followed by a "Swedish Torch" campfire.

We sponsored the IF4 Filmfest at the Bavarian Bier Haus in Glendale in late September.

Also in September we put some more finishing touches on the ongoing project at Scuppernong Springs. Lastly, none of this is possible without the tireless contributions of our volunteers. You folks make this chapter do great things, and we are so grateful.

—Rick Larkin

Southern Wisconsin Chapter

"SWTU is making a significant difference."

Those words were said several times by Todd Kalish, Bureau of Fisheries Management Deputy Director, as he presented our chapter with the External Partner Award from the Wisconsin DNR.

Todd presented the award at our September chapter meeting, in which he noted that all of the fish biologists in our area nominated us to receive the honor. He also cited our donations of labor and funds to restorations, easements and acquisitions in our area and throughout the southern part of the Driftless Area. He noted that a big reason for the award is that we work with the DNR and many other conservation organizations. He concluded by saying that what the External Partner Award really means is that SWTU has made a difference for the

resource and many and varied anglers.

After presenting the award, Todd gave an excellent presentation on the state budget's impact on fishery positions as well as some current and upcoming projects on nearby streams.

Our Stream Team workdays are one of our key areas of partnership, and Jim Hess has once again put together a terrific slate of events for the fall. We'll be working on some classic stretches of water as well as some stream sections that have recently "gone public." We'd be honored to have you join us. Please find dates and details on swtu.org.

Speaking of partnership and waters "gone public," we were proud to stand with Dane County leaders in announcing the largest conservation land purchase in the history of the County: 625 acres on the Sugar

the DNR on the White River within the Bibon Swamp in October.

So, keep us in mind when you're

looking for something different to do this fall.

—Kevin Seefeldt

Wisconsin River Valley Chapter

As many people do, I take pictures on my phone of scenery or wildlife when I can get some time on a hiking trail or near some water. I have put some of them in plastic sleeves inside a binder that I bring along to fly-tying events for people to look at while they are waiting for a seat to tie a fly. It is sometimes a helpful way to get conversations going and to share outdoor experiences.

After going through the pictures with a youngster attending Sporting Heritage Day, discussing my pictures of snakes, spiders and aquatic critters, he came to the empty sleeves at the end of the book and a big smile came across his face as he told me, "You have more work to do."

This is what's happening with the Wisconsin River Valley Chapter. One of the fundraising goals from the February IF4 film festival was to raise some money to purchase the equipment for the Trout In the Classroom program for the Maple Grove School in Athens. I am happy to report that the equipment has been set up for the classroom and they are currently waiting for the trout eggs to be added to the tank. We'll have an update on their prog-

ress in the next issue of Wisconsin Trout.

August brought the Council's Youth Fishing Camp in Waupaca. It was fun meeting this year's students. I had the pleasure of working with Allison Raddatz this year. I also had the pleasure of meeting Anita Vaughn, a first-time mentor at camp. Anita's student was Allison's twin sister, Aubrey. It was fun working with them through knot tying, fly tying, fly casting and learning about her pet chickens. I hope that we can find a time that works out in our schedules to do some fishing or perhaps some fly tying during the winter. I also want to congratulate last year's student and this year's junior mentor, Malayna Preder, on being accepted at UW-Stevens Point and wishing her the best of luck in her senior year of high school.

Also in August was Sporting Heritage Day at the Wausau School Forest. Many thanks to John Meachen, Bob Pils and Robert Paine for their help in teaching kids about fly tying and to Al Hauber and Eric and Jacob Pease for their help with showing kids how to fly cast.

September brought the Wild Rose Hatchery Watershed Ride.



SOUTHERN CHAPTER RECEIVES DNR'S EXTERNAL PARTNER AWARD

DNR Deputy Director Todd Kalish presents their External Partner Award to SWTU President Steve Musser.

River between Verona and Paoli. Thanks in part to the support of our chapter and its members, the County Board overwhelmingly approved the purchase. This action will lead to great improvements in the Sugar River, the surrounding landscape and greatly increase outdoor public

recreation. We look forward to exploring this amazing new resource, conducting workdays there and, of course, drifting a fly through.

As always, we have much and more going on. Visit swtu.org to learn all about it.

—Drew Kasel

Wild Rivers Chapter

Wild Rivers has had an active year so far and fall brings more member opportunities. Our chapter will have volunteers helping with fly tying and casting at the Iron River National Fish Hatchery's Annual Open House. We are invited to join in a field day with Great Lakes TU and regional and national leadership from the National Forest Service on the importance of collaboration and community in-

volvement. We have members assisting with fly tying, casting and macroinvertebrate identification at the Drummond School throughout the semester.

Our next chapter gathering is October 11 at Copper Range Campground on the Bois Brule, with guest presentations, food on the grill and opportunities to wet a line with other members. We are also planning buckthorn removal with



WISCONSIN RIVER VALLEY CHAPTER AT SPORTING HERITAGE DAY

Bob Pils demonstrates how to tie a black-nosed dace at the Sporting Heritage Day event at the Wausau School Forest in August.



KIDS AND ADULTS LEARNED AT SPORTING HERITAGE DAY

Wisconsin River Valley Chapter member Robert Paine gives tying instructions to a mother and daughter attending the event.



Chapter News

Thank you to Pat Esselman for all your efforts in organizing this event and to Bull Falls Harley Davidson. It was a beautiful day to take a ride to check out the Wild Rose Hatchery. Thank you to all those who participated in this event.

Our Hackle and Hops open fly-tying nights at the Sawmill Brewery

are back. We meet from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on the third Tuesday of the month through April. We hope to see you there.

We are in the process of planning our fall and winter presentations, so please look for the newsletter in your email.

—Linda Lehman

Wolf River Chapter

Chuck Valliere's wife, Lynn, called him "Chucky Cheesecake," but I always called him Cheesecake Chuck. His cheesecakes were phenomenal no matter what flavor. He never arrived at a Wolf River Chapter event without at least two cheesecakes, as he liked to present flavor varieties.

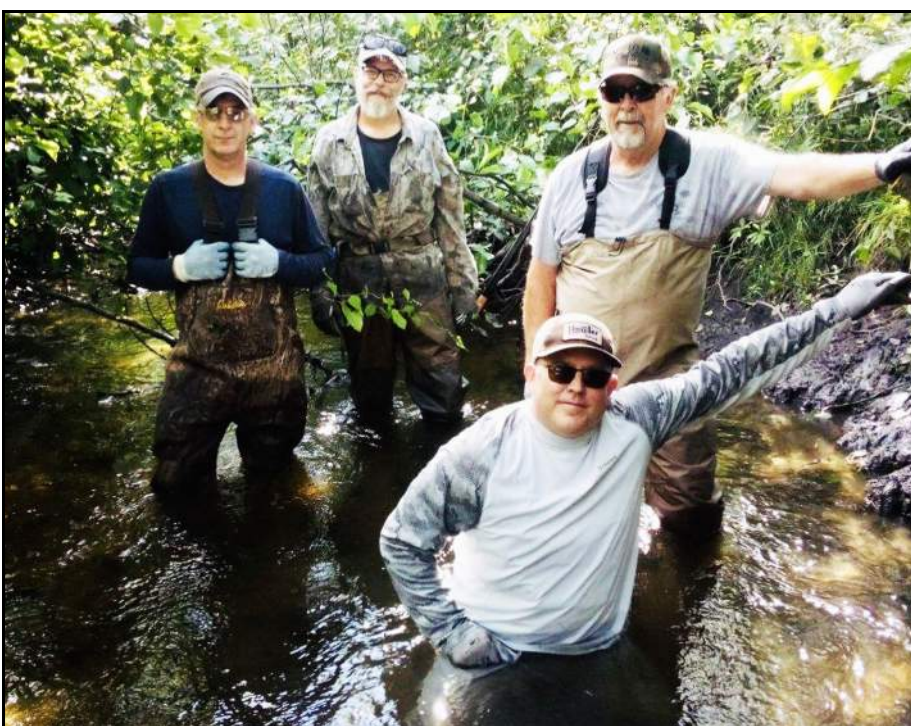
His enthusiasm bubbled from him, whether tying flies, teaching someone how to fish, paddling the Wolf River in his kayak or surveying the next conservation project to improve trout habitat on the Wolf River.

When I visited him in May at the rehabilitation nursing home, he was excited to start teaching fly tying classes to the other residents and Lynn accommodated him by bringing him his tubs of fly tying materials. Chuck was a very generous man with his time, talents and spirit. He was in the middle of his second term as president of the Wolf River Chapter, when his health made it difficult for him to participate. Chuck passed away July 17 and I believe he is fishing and sharing his wonderful talents in the great beyond. He is greatly missed by the



WOLF RIVER CHAPTER LOSES CHUCK VALLIERE

Known by his wife as "Chucky Cheesecake," Chuck never arrived at a Wolf River Chapter event without at least two cheesecakes, as he liked to present flavor varieties. His enthusiasm bubbled from him, whether tying flies, teaching someone how to fish, paddling the Wolf River in his kayak or surveying the next conservation project to improve trout habitat on the Wolf River. Chuck passed away in July, and he will never be forgotten.



WOLF RIVER CHAPTER'S NINE MILE CREEK CREW

Standing in Nine Mile Creek are Ernie Luedke, Tim Waters, Doug Moldenhauer and Nathan Schmidt kneeling are a force to be reckoned with as they pulled rocks and cut brush all summer long.

Wolf River Chapter.

Much of the work done to improve trout habitat on the Wolf River this past spring and summer was done with Chuck in mind. John Carbonari took Chuck to the rock ford on the Hunting River during the summer of 2022. John told me that Chuck's enthusiasm for removing the rock ford inspired him to get it done. During June and July of 2023, the rock ford was removed rock by rock. Five Saturday work days and many during the week, work days with as many as 30 volunteers and as few as two pulled rocks to be carted away. The Hunting River is no longer obstructed there, hopefully flowing faster and cooler. The Rock Ford Removal Project is dedicated to the memory of Chuck Valliere.

In August, the Wolf River Chapter continued brushing on Nine Mile Creek, an on-going project to remove tag alder clogging the creek. Several work days were dedicated to this endeavor. John Carbonari has done a great job as Work Day Foreman and leading the chapter in improving trout habitat. Thank you

John for all the conservation work you have done and to Doug Moldenhauer, who was present at all but one work day.

The Wolf River Chapter put together a good size team of volunteers for the Wolfman Triathlon on September 9 and received a \$500 donation from the event. A big thank you to Jon Graverson, who organized the Wolf River Chapter volunteers, making sure they knew where their assigned jobs were and collected the donation during the afterparty.

On October 7 at 10 a.m., the Wolf River Chapter will have the Autumn Meeting at a new location. We will be meeting in the basement meeting room at Wolf River Roots located at W1702 Highway 64 about a quarter mile east of the intersection of Highways 55 and 64. Lunch will follow the meeting.

In closing, I would like to thank all those who volunteered this summer to get the jobs done that needed doing. Chuck would be impressed.

—Laurie Zen Netzow

See *Goldens*, page 24

Goldens, from page 17

Now that I had the right fly, the goldens were more cooperative and I quickly caught two more. But as the adrenalin from the first fish wore off, I found that I was dead on my feet, so I staggered up the slope to make camp.

I had traveled light and had only a summer sleeping bag and a one-person backpacking tent that I set up in a small pocket of relatively flat and rock-free soil. I had eaten my dinner on the hike into the lake when I had reached the crest of the ridge, and the only food I had left was a sealed foil packet of Pop Tarts and an orange for breakfast the next morning. I figured I'd get something more substantial once I got back to Red Lodge. I was above the tree line, and there was nowhere to suspend this food off the ground. So, I walked over a rise and out of sight of my camp and buried the food under a pile of heavy rocks about 100 yards away. And then I crawled into my sleeping bag for the night.

Although I was completely spent, sleep didn't come right away. I drifted into a half-awake zombie-like state as complete darkness fell.

Suddenly, I heard loud rustling in the low bushes nearby. It sounded big! Then the rustling continued, louder and closer now. Whatever it was, it was moving towards me. Memories of the warning sign at the trailhead filled my mind, and I became convinced it must be a bear.

What could I do? Fully awake now and with my heart pounding, I plotted my escape. I would rapidly unzip the tent, no small feat given how sticky it had been to zip up, and rush down to the lake and plunge into the water. I hoped I'd have enough of a lead to make the lake and that the bear wouldn't be in the mood for a swim.

If not, having been unable to register at the trailhead, it might be weeks before the rangers found my mangled body. One, two, three! I jerked the zipper back and sprang out the tent and headed for the water.

As I glanced over my shoulder, I

saw silhouetted against the rising moon not a bear, but...a rabbit. Chagrined and deflated, I stopped, shooed the rabbit away, got back in the tent and finally managed to settle down enough to eventually fall asleep.

The next morning, I awoke tired and sore, but happy to be high in the mountains next to a beautiful lake full of spectacular golden trout.

I broke camp and, since the fish were still rising, tried a few more casts on the lake. I quickly caught another golden trout on the caddis nymph and then I switched flies and managed to take one on a #16 Adams. What a wonderful place. I only wished I had more film, as the light was perfect, and the fish were even more colorful in the morning sun. But it was time to grab my breakfast and hike out.

When I got to the rock pile, it had clearly been disturbed. The rocks were scattered about, the Pop Tart packet was nowhere to be found, and the orange had rolled well down the slope. The rocks I had piled were heavy, 20-plus pounds, and I realized that only a bear could have moved them. Maybe all that rustling I'd heard had been more than just a rabbit. With that sobering thought, and glad that I had buried the food away from my tent, I headed down the mountain.

The hike out was certainly easier than the hike in, but still no cakewalk. The steep trails put a real strain on my knees and quads, and by the end of the four-hour descent my legs were throbbing and starting to buckle and cramp.

I was never so happy to get to my car and head into town for a huge breakfast. But despite the difficult walk, easily the hardest of my life, I was so glad I had made the effort and had seen the amazing golden trout. And having achieved my quest, I was also very glad that I'd never have to do that hike again.

A member of the Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited, John Lyons is Curator of Fishes at the University of Wisconsin Zoological Museum in Madison.

Hex, hippies and huge fish

Author shares a lifetime of hard-earned knowledge about fishing for big browns during the hex hatch at night.

By Tom Meyer

It seems kind of disrespectful to call a beautiful big trout a hog. When I was younger I would occasionally use the term "hog hunting," referring to night fishing for big brown trout.

For this article, when I say "big fish," I am referring to a fish in the 18-23-inch category. Out of respect, I will call fish in the high 20's "huge fish," which is a fish of a lifetime for an inland stream angler. I have caught several big fish over the years fishing the hex hatch but I have never actually landed one in the huge-fish category. I have learned a few things in almost 40 years of night fishing but I also have probably made every mistake imaginable.

Hooked by news photo

It must have been the early 1980s when I saw a photo in a local newspaper of a 29-inch brown trout caught on a trout stream in central Wisconsin. Rumors were that the fish was caught at night while fly fishing during the hex hatch, which I didn't know anything about at the time. I had been fishing the trout streams of central Wisconsin since I was about six years old and had never encountered a fish of that size.

I knew of a couple guys who fished at night, spin and fly fishing, but the phenomenon of the hex hatch was never referred to. I always thought they were just crazy. How fun could it be to be stumbling around in the dark, getting tangled up or hooking your flies in the trees, getting eaten by mosquitoes and dealing with all kinds of scary creepy things that lurk in the night?

Up until then I had been a spin/bait fisherman for trout and my only fly fishing was for bluegills.

So I decided to try it and my first experience at fly fishing for trout was night fishing during the hex hatch.

Forty years later, as spring turns into summer and the landscape begins to green up, I start to dream about night fishing. When the wild asparagus are sprouting and the lupine are blossoming I know the time is near. After a couple of hot muggy nights of seeing bugs around my light post, I start to get antsy and excited at the same time.

The allure of night fishing during the hex hatch is hard to explain if you've never tried it. Not much else compares to fly fishing during the largest mayfly hatch, the Hexagenia Limbata.

Not for everyone

Night fishing is not for everyone. Even someone who has been fishing for a long time should probably ease into it and start out by fishing in a stretch of the river they know well. You need to know the route to get into the spot you plan to fish, but more importantly, plan your route for getting out after dark. Even with a flashlight, I have gotten turned around more than once and it's an unpleasant experience. I would recommend that anyone with a health problem should fish with a friend.

If you are fishing alone, tell someone where you are going. Keep in mind that cell service is sometimes not available and falling down

and getting injured are real possibilities.

I admit I fall down or stumble in the river occasionally. Sometimes walking into or out of a fishing spot, I fall or trip on a log or step into a woodchuck hole, regardless of whether it's light out or dark. So far I've been lucky and the only harm has been getting some water in my waders or injuring my pride.

A few times I had very large beavers slap their tails within a couple feet of me and I was glad I had a strong heart. One time a large black bear crossed the river in a hurry about 150 yards downstream of where I was standing waiting for a hatch. I was in awe of how fast and athletically this bear crossed in a wide area of the river that sometimes was three feet deep, never breaking its stride from bank to bank.

The hippie intrusion

For a while, in one of my favorite spots, a group of (for lack of a better word) hippies were camped near the river on private land, with permission of the landowner. It was sort of a homeless encampment with a couple RV's and tents. I rarely saw them but could always hear them. Depending on their level of alcohol/drug intake for that particular night they would either be laughing, arguing or just playing music loudly. I know they had every right to be there as much as I did but to me it seemed like an intrusion and I was glad when, after a couple years, they just stopped camping there. The bear sighting was near that camp area and I always thought that the bear was there for that group's garbage which was probably not disposed of properly.

I have also had unknown creatures swim between my legs. It is an uncomfortable feeling when you feel, whatever it is, brush up against your legs. Bats gave me pause in the beginning but now I am glad to see bats cruising up and down the river eating insects because it means there should be some dry fly action. Once in a while they will fly into your line or rod and even pick up your fly from the water briefly before quickly letting it go as they realize it is an imposter. I have never actually hooked a bat but I know guys who have. Apparently the process of removing them from your fly is not fun.

I spray mosquito repellent on any exposed skin prior to heading to the river and they have never bothered me much. After it gets pitch dark the mosquitos are not active at all.

On June 11, 2001 I was fishing with my cousin Will when a big storm came up rather suddenly. As we were walking out we could hear trees coming down and by the time we got back to my cousin's Jeep Cherokee an oak tree had fallen on it and partially crushed it. The storm was over quickly but all the roads were impassable due to downed trees.

My house was a mile and a half away and my wife was home alone so I walked home through an obstacle course of downed trees and branches.

Pros, cons of watercraft

Night fishing out of a canoe or kayak can also be very effective in the right habitats. I have done that often during the years, but now I prefer to be more adaptable and mobile, and that means wading.

There are some nights when the location you choose to start turns out to be a bad choice. Either because of no activity on that particular night or because of other fishermen occupying the water you had in mind. In those cases I want to be able to pick up quickly and move to plan B.

I also decided to eliminate the risk of flipping over at night while wearing waders. Over the years I recall flipping over five times either in a canoe or kayak. Some of those were during the day smallmouth fishing but it's always very unpleasant.

All-nighters not necessary

The traditional hex hatch in central Wisconsin, which usually starts around the first week of June, goes for two to three weeks. Because I fish nearly every night during the period, I am not one of those guys who go out hours before dusk in order to beat the other guy to a spot, and I don't typically fish late into the night or even after midnight. I try to get to the spot I want to fish about 8:45 p.m. and am often done fishing and home in bed by 11.

I find that some nights, after a certain amount of time, it gets harder to see. Once I lose my night vision, I'm usually done fishing. Lack of natural moon light and use of a flashlight or phone play a role. So I often fish alone but when I do fish with a friend or my cousin or brother I always make sure I have a vehicle with me so I can leave when I want. Sometimes my night is short and other times if I am in the mood and the conditions are right I will stay in the river late.

Most of the fish stop rising after about 45 minutes after dark but often the big fish are still gorging on the bugs. They are often feeding in the harder-to-get-to spots along the banks or under branches.

Sometimes the later you stay out, the chance of catching a bigger fish increases. Having said that, after the excitement of multiple fish rising in places where they are vulnerable diminishes, it is sometimes natural to want to get out and walk back to your vehicle.

I live close to some prime big trout water, which makes all of the topics I mention in this article a lot easier. I chose to buy land and build a house in this area because of the fishing opportunities. My wife reminds me of that when I plan a western fishing trip. It usually goes something like this, "Didn't we move here because of the fishing? Why are you driving 1,000 miles to go fishing?" Some things are hard to explain to a non-fisher person.

I don't want to give the impression that catching big fish is all I care about. I am perfectly happy to catch even one fish in the 14 - 17 inch category during a nighttime fishing session. It's just more exciting for me knowing that there is a chance of catching a big fish or even a huge fish.

I have hooked a couple of fish which would have been in the high

20's category but lost them for various reasons. Hooking up with one and actually getting it to the net is another thing.

Often it is because of mistakes made, but sometimes things just happen that are out of your control. I guess that's why they call it fishing and not catching. Looking back at those experiences still gives me angst. Usually it's because I underestimated how stout my line, rod and hooks need to be to land one of these fish.

Most of the fish you encounter can be landed with a standard 9-foot, 5-weight rod with 2X tippet and standard dry fly hooks. Hooking up with a huge fish is rare and I get complacent and forget that it could happen at any time.

The darkness increases the possibility of something going wrong, and if something can go wrong, it will. If a fish grows to be huge, there's a reason for it. First, they have to survive being eaten by one of their own, or overhead birds of prey. They also need to be lucky enough to avoid being caught and taken by a fisherman through their growing stage. Otters are always a danger, as well.

Big fish are vulnerable when feeding during a spinner fall at night but you still need to be stealthy. You still need to present the fly as a natural, get a good drag-free drift and refrain from lining the fish. Even though there is never a time when big fish are more vulnerable than at night during the hex hatch, it seems like the bigger the fish get, the smarter they seem to be after they're hooked.

Some are uncatchable

I also believe that some fish are truly uncatchable, I describe an example of that later in this article. Steve Devitt and Kyle Seibers, both DNR employees on the Wild Rose stream rehab crew and night fishing masters, agree that some fish are either unreachable in the feed line they chose, the natural habitat makes it impossible to land them or they just refuse anything that is not natural no matter how perfect your drift and awesome your fly is.

If you are using a heavy tippet, or perhaps an 8- or 10-pound Maxima leader, you will often get refusals while it's still light out. They either see your leader or the stoutness of the leader causes the fly to float unnaturally. Then when it gets dark, the line is not as noticeable and the fish are somewhat less discerning. I have caught fish at night with ugly flies or flies that are not anatomically correct and believe me I have experience with fishing with those flies. Your fly still needs to have the right profile of the naturals and be floating in the same water line and surface level as the naturals.

If your fly has gotten soaked and is sagging down under the surface, often you will get a refusal, much like daytime dry fly fishing. Frequently applying floatant is a necessity and the higher the fly is floating it is easier to see after dark. Even if you are using foam fly patterns, floatant helps because often it is risky or not possible to false cast to dry off your fly. You don't want to be changing flies unless you have to, mostly because the prime time is a short window plus turning on your

light has multiple negative effects. If a large fish is along the bank in a slow eddy and is slurping up flies late after the main spinner fall, those fish may be eating dead flies that are starting to sink a bit and they might not be as particular or even might be looking for that presentation. Sometimes they may be targeting emergers or duns on a particular night.

Fly patterns

Fly patterns are an individual preference, of course. In the fishing and fly-tying group I am associated with, the standard theme is to tie extended-body flies with either foam, deer hair or a mallard flank feather so that when fish grab the fly, the extended body bends and is softer in the fishes' mouth, more like the naturals. The theory is that you might be able to wait a nanosecond longer for the fish to turn before setting the hook, which increases your hookups.

The first time I recall that I lost a fish in the high 20's category was during the hex hatch in early June about 20 years ago. The word was not out yet, so this particular night I had the whole area of stream to myself.

Timing is everything

I have a series of ways to gain intelligence on when the hatch is about to start, mostly a matter of driving down to the river and waiting on the bank in a couple spots to personally observe and confirm.

During this early pre-hatch period I often don't even put on my waders or have my fishing gear with me. I leave it in my truck until I confirm the bugs are there. If I see some activity on the water I can quickly return to my truck and gear up. Sometimes the hex flies are not coming off yet but fish are rising to other smaller mayflies like light cahills or sulfurs. Fishing during this time can be great so I will usually have a rod rigged up with a smaller

fly. I also rely on a couple landowners, various fisherman friends, testing the water temps myself and checking certain nightlights near the river that I know will attract the big bugs after dark.

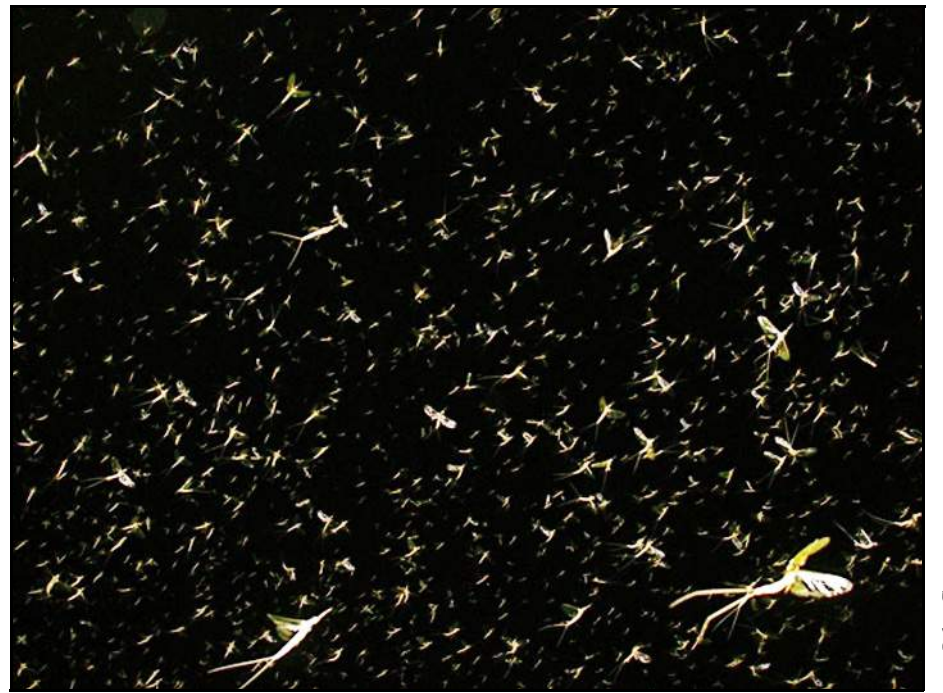
Some say the ideal water temperature should be around 60 degrees for the nymphs to start the process of becoming adult mayflies. However, the water temperatures in the main channel of the river may be different than in the shallow mucky backwaters where nymphs like to burrow in.

Tom Lager, a member of FVTU who studied aquatic ecology in college, is an expert about anything buggy and trouty. He has said that there is no absolute ideal water temp that triggers the hatch and the water temps are not the only criteria. Other factors are the status of plant life along the river and the stages of the particular nymphs.

I have spoken to DNR fish biologists who have also told me in so many words that nobody really knows but the nymphs themselves. It's usually about the first week of June in Central Wisconsin, but weather, water temps, plant life and the nymph stages all factor in.

A night to remember

That night, 20 years ago, it started out great. It was still partially light out and there were no bugs on the water yet. I was blind casting, which is just my term for night prospecting, since there was no surface activity yet. A nice, fat 18-inch brown trout took my hex dry fly in a dark, deep bend. As I released it, I noticed several fish starting to rise in the straight shallow section just upstream from me in an area I would never even consider fishing during the day. As it got darker there were some spinners coming down but it was a light hatch. The term spinner is used for the adult mayflies that have just mated above the water, dropped



JOHN GREMMER'S ICONIC HEX HATCH TROUT PHOTO

This iconic photo was taken by John Gremer on a heavy hatch night.

their eggs into the river and then died and are floating down the river with their wings spread. The perfect scenario is when there is a light spinner fall and the fish are on them. There is less competition for your fly and if done right you can get almost every rising fish to take your fly.

There are times when the bugs are so thick, they cover the river in a "blanket hatch." During those nights you might as well sit on the bank and wait for the volume of bugs to lessen.

But that night, 20 years ago, the big fish had left their secure cover and swam out into the shallow water to gorge on the big mayflies, exposing themselves in about a foot of water. They are vulnerable during this time, and if you are lucky enough to be in the right spot at the right time, it can be some great fishing.

The next fish I targeted was in the middle of that wide, shallow stretch. It ate my fly on the first cast and I managed to land and release a beautiful 21-inch female brown trout.

The next fish was rising just upstream from the previous one and it also was super aggressive, rising often. It took my fly after only a couple casts. I was also able to get this one to the net and it appeared bigger than the previous fish by an inch or two and had a pronounced hook jaw. I'm calling it 23 inches, but I didn't put the tape on this one. I released him immediately as it fought hard and I was a bit concerned about its survival. It swam away and appeared to be in good shape.

Another 50 yards upstream I could hear and see another fish rising in about the same line as the previous fish. This time a pile of sunken sticks and logs were just off to the left of where the fish was rising. I was sure that if I hooked this fish, it would certainly head right for that area, which was probably its home.

On the third or fourth cast the fish sucked in my fly without making much of a splash on the surface. As I set the hook, instead of going into the brush and logs it went the opposite direction into some wild rice and somehow dislodged the fly.

Shock and bewilderment

I stood there for a minute in shock and bewilderment. That fish was in a whole different category of anything I had ever encountered in the many years of spin and fly fishing on this very river. I couldn't help but beat myself up as to why I didn't have a stiffer rod and a stronger leader. If I had, I might have been able to put pressure on it and keep it out of the wild rice. I had a 9-foot, 5-

weight rod and probably a 2X or 3X tippet on my leader.

I didn't sleep well that night. I can still envision the dorsal fin riding above the water and the almost scary thickness of the backbone and girth of that fish.

I should have been thrilled that I caught three very nice brown trout, but instead I had the feeling that I blew my one chance at the fish of a lifetime. For the next several nights I went back to that spot but never saw that fish taking hex flies again. I tell myself that due to the size of that fish and the habitat where it lives, the sunken brush and logs on one side and wild rice on the other, that trout was probably uncatchable and will die of old age.

One time I lost a huge trout that straightened out my hook. I was fishing with Jeff Treu. Jeff is a passionate salmon and steelhead fisherman, but he's been fishing the hex hatch since he was a teenager. This fish was rising steadily under an overhanging branch. When it ate my fly it made a beeline towards some sunken logs. I put pressure on it to keep it out of the logs and it came off.

I later noticed that the hook on my fly had straightened out. Since that night, upon Jeff's advice, I always use at least a 6-weight rod, stouter hooks and 8-pound Maxima for tippet.

I always have a light attached to my hat, but try to use it sparingly. I think flashing a light around a dark river will put down rising trout, attract all kinds of bugs to your face and also can ruin your night vision temporarily.

So sometimes after yanking a fly out of a tree or off a sunken log, when I would normally change my tippet or change the fly, at night I tend to take the risk that my fly, knot and leader will function properly.

If you are lucky enough to get a big fish to the net and take a quick photo before you release it, you might not even see the fish well until you get home and look over your photos. That is if you don't drop your phone or camera in the water. Yes, I have done that more than once.

Night fishing provides adventures and pitfalls, snags and some risk, but most nights are delightful. I wouldn't trade my adventures for anything, and I look forward to it more than any other fishing experience.

Tom Meyer is a member of the Central Wisconsin Chapter of TU.



THE BIG ONES REALLY DO COME OUT AT NIGHT

The author's brother, Tim Meyer, caught this 23-inch brown trout while night fishing the hex hatch.

Volunteers aid in new AIS discoveries across Wisconsin

By Ellen Voss, Aquatic Invasive Species Program Director, River Alliance of Wisconsin

Getting folks to volunteer their time on a Saturday morning in summer is a big ask. Yet once again, dedicated water lovers braved the heat and showed up in force across the state to help find aquatic invasive species (AIS) during the 10th annual Snapshot Day in August.

Nearly 150 participants put on their waders and water shoes, grabbed their rakes and binoculars, and explored 131 different monitoring sites in 102 different waterbodies at 22 meetup locations across Wisconsin. In total, 63 lakes, 38 streams/ivers, and one wetland were monitored. Fifteen different species were found, including everything from snails to mussels to aquatic plants.

Every year Snapshot Day, a statewide scavenger hunt for AIS, supplies a vast amount of data to the DNR that ultimately helps guide management efforts. Early identification is a key factor in stopping the spread of these pesky plant, algae and animal species from spreading throughout the beautiful waters of Wisconsin, so the sooner we know where they are, the better the chance we have at getting ahead of potential problems.

Notably, many of the Snapshot Day species volunteers found had never been documented in that waterbody before, including some prohibited species such as Asian clam, faucet snail and non-native phragmites.

Even if you missed this year's event, there are still opportunities to look for invasive species every time you're out fishing. As always, please keep a careful eye out for New Zealand mudsnails, but any and all AIS reports are welcome.

Enjoy the last days of trout fishing this fall, but mark your calendar and plan to join us for the 11th annual Snapshot Day in 2024, which is tentatively planned for the third Saturday in August. Events are being planned in all parts of the state, and we hope to see you then.

Bonus shoutout to a super TU member!

Shout out to Dave Kalous of the Oconto River Watershed Chapter, who built a boot brush station with invasive species information for the 2nd South Branch of the Oconto River this spring.

Dave reached out to me last May and said he'd built a station out of scrap lumber he found behind his garage. By using reclaimed materials, the total cost for the cleaning station, including a couple 2x4s, the hand brush, foot scraper and hardware, was less than \$40.

There are countless other angler access points all over the state that could use similar signage and tools. If you have extra wood laying around your property and feel inspired to follow Dave's lead, let me know your plans so I can help.

Dave said that as they were finishing the installation, two anglers were gearing up to fish and planned to be the first users of the new station.



Laura MacFarland

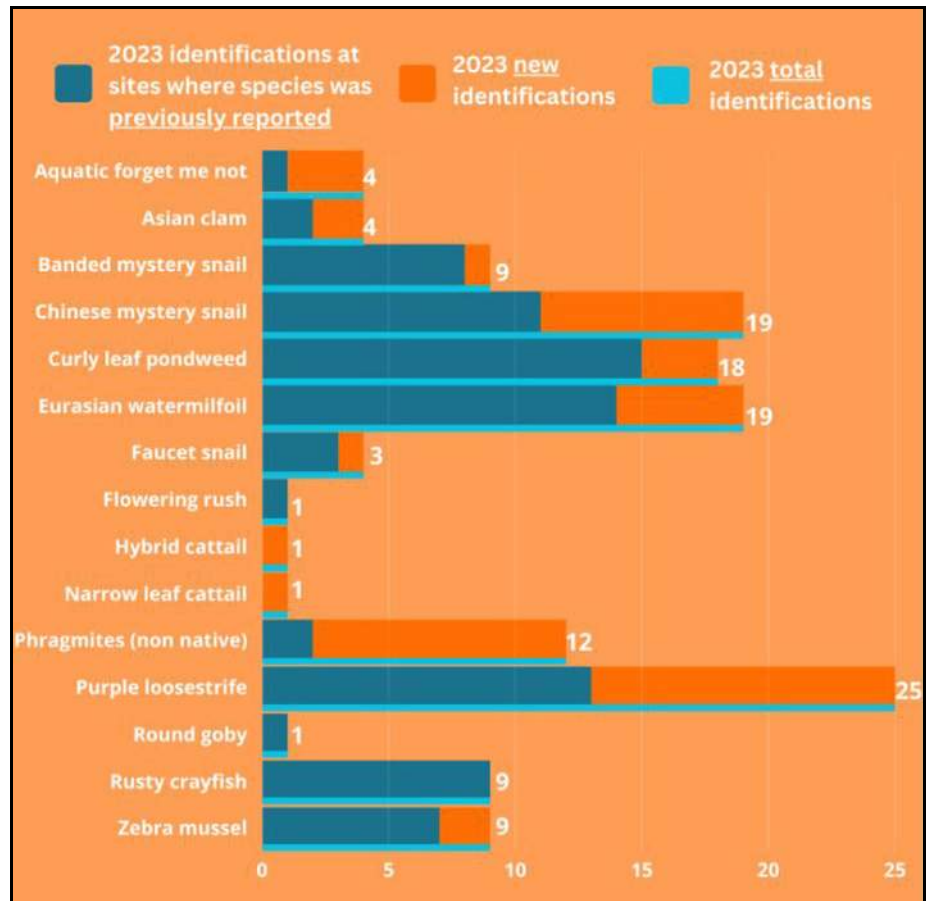
IDENTIFYING VARIOUS SPECIES

Site Leader Stephanie Boismenu helps volunteers in Oneida County identify aquatic plants they discovered while monitoring.



TU VOLUNTEER CREATES LOW-BUDGET BOOT BRUSH STATION

TU volunteer extraordinaire and handyman Dave Kalous shows off the boot brush station he built for one of his favorite fishing spots.



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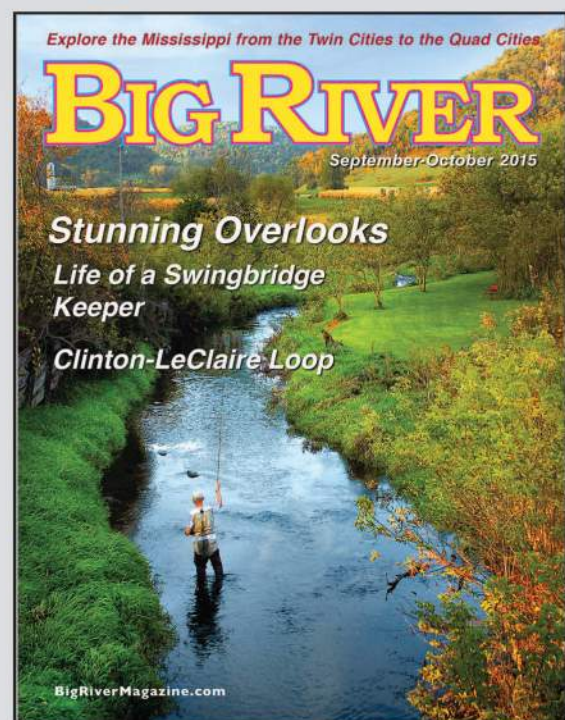
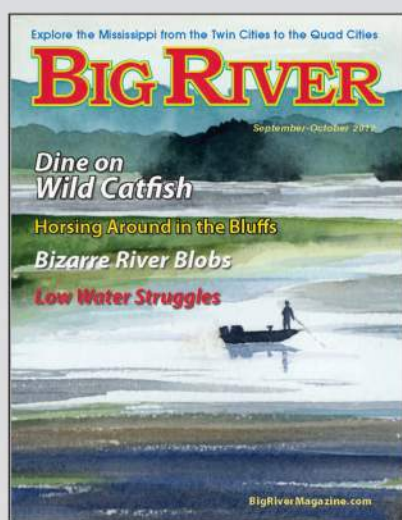
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