

# *The Conservationist*



## Potomac-Patuxent Chapter Trout Unlimited

Jan 2026 • Published monthly except June, July, August and December

## “Annual Fly Tying Extravaganza” Guest Tiers – PPTU Members & Friends

**Jan 21<sup>st</sup>, 2026**

Once again we’re gearing up for the PPTU annual Fly Tying Extravaganza meeting! What a better way to kick off the New Year than gathering with friends to compare fish stories and observe the awesome tying skills of our volunteer fly tying demonstrators. It’s always a fun filled evening.

Watch and talk with the tyers one-on-one plus take home a pattern recipe to try the flies out yourself. Catching fish on a fly that you tied is something special!

Our January Fly Tying meeting will be In Person! So come out to The Laurel Volunteer Fire Department on Van Dusen Road in Laurel this January to meet and greet your fellow chapter members while also viewing some great tying demonstrations.

— *Scott Cernich*



### Jan 21<sup>st</sup> Chapter Meeting

Laurel Volunteer Fire Department  
7588 Van Dusen Road, Laurel, MD 20707

Time and Day: 7:00 PM, Third Wednesday of the month except June, July, August and December

**Note: This Chapter Meeting is In Person!**  
Visit our website: [PPTU.org](http://PPTU.org)

## OFICERS and DIRECTORS 2025 – 2026

President: Craig VanderKolk: president@pptu.org

Past-President: Joe Taylor

Vice-President: ***“Open Position”***

Treasurer: Alan Williams

Secretary: Pete Anderson

Directors: Sean Beck

Bob Bokulic

Ron Briggs

Tom Brosnan

Doug Johncox

Ethan Miller

Ray Miller

Jim Senker

## Presidents' Column - Craig VanderKolk



I want to continue my recent practice in my columns of recognizing activities and members and acknowledging participation. November and early December have been busy for PPTU with the Erie Steelhead outing and the Presidents luncheon. Both were well attended and enjoyable for everyone highlighting participation and recognition, both key goals of this year in PPTU.

The Erie steelhead outing was typical and successful. As always, we worried about temperatures and flows. Air temp and Elk Creek temp were good. Flows had been up down early in the month. We got snow just before the trip on Tuesday and Wednesday and that made the flows go up on Thursday but were good on Friday and Sat. High again on Sunday and good on Monday. Typical Steelheading weather. The rain and melting snow brought fish in, but everyone noted that number of fish in the Creek was down, as was catch rate. Apparently, smolts came from the Tionesta Hatchery in the past but to reduce risk of disease, Fairview state hatchery is now the only hatchery providing smolts. This has resulted in less fish over the past few years. When you add in the recent drought conditions, the numbers of fish is falling and probably will be that way for a while. Despite these issues, most anglers (20 of us) on the trip caught fish. We had a great turnout for our Friday and Saturday dinners with many “fish” stories told over good snacks, food, beer, wine and bourbon.

The Presidents Recognition Luncheon was also a success. Thanks to Social Chair Bob Bokulic, 24 members attend and met new members, renewed old friendships and enjoyed some good Mexican food. This year we recognized 5 members who have volunteered their time and hard work on behalf of PPTU. They were Past President and TIC chair Alan Burrows, past Treasurer and Financial Reviewer Bob Kaiser, Outings chair Lou Reichel, current Board member Ron Briggs and past board member Jim Senker.

Alan has been President twice over the years which came at opportune times. In addition, he has coordinated the largest Trout in the Classroom (TIC) in the country for the past 15+ years. Alan has led the way with planning, finding volunteers, organizing schools, equipment and trout raising and

### Committee Chairs:

Fundraising: *Vacant*

Forum Moderators: Sean Beck, Motti Tadmor

Librarian: Lou Reichel

Mentor Program: Ray Miller

Membership Secretary: Jay Sheppard

Conservationist Editor: Bob O'Donnell

Outings: Ron Kerrik & Lou Reichel  
[Outings@pptu.org](mailto:Outings@pptu.org)

Speakers Program: Scott Cernich

Conservation Advocacy: *Vacant*

Project Healing Waters: Ray Collette

Publicity: Bob O'Donnell

Raffles: Joe Taylor

Trout in the Classroom: Alan Burrows

Water Quality: Pete Yarrington, Peter Schuler

Climate Change Coord: James Irons

Webmaster: Ken Bowyer

Motti Tadmor

Youth Program: *Vacant*

### Stream Committees:

Paint Branch: Joe Robinson

Northwest Branch: Joe Robinson

Middle Patuxent: Bryan Sirotnik

Patuxent: Jay Sheppard

### Mid Atlantic Council Delegates:

Ron Briggs

Bob Bokulic

Tom Bronson

Bob Dietz

Randy Dwyer: Council Chair

Bob O'Donnell

Craig Vanderkolk

Nick Weber

### Contact Us:

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release for thousands of students in Maryland. Providing many students with their first exposure to conservation and the outdoors. We all thank you Alan for your tireless work over the years.

Bob Kaiser has been the brains and the experienced organizer of the chapter's finances and activities. He provided considerable expertise in establishing financial practices and records for the chapter, which he continues to this day with monthly review of the treasurer reports. In addition, Bob has helped with fund raising, raffles, donations storage and advice to the President and Board over the years. Thank you, Bob for making it a little easier for our treasurer since we can't afford to lose him.

Lou has traveled hundreds of roads in Maryland, Pennsylvania and New York organizing and participating in PPTU outings. He provides all the information a chapter member needs to get out and enjoy our regional streams. He leads by example and is at the head of the caravan traveling to remote locations. With his knowledge of fishing, everyone on the outings catch fish and have a wonderful time not to mention warmth and hospitality behind his van cooking brats and beans - always finished with cookies. We hope you'll keep it up with the able assistance of Ron Kerrick.

Ron Briggs career was as a salesman for news organizations and TV stations. He can sell any new angler with the advantages of joining PPTU. Ron is our ambassador to fly shops and new members. Ron loves to teach others about fly fishing, especially with Howard County community college's Fly Fishing 101. Thanks, Ron, for always helping with stocking, taking DO measurements and clearing brush on the Patuxent.

Jim Senker is a businessman with a love of fishing. From chasing white marlin and tuna on the ocean to brown trout on the Gunpowder. He loves to share those experiences with other anglers and record new videos of the great local streams. As a board member he helped with finances, ideas for PPTU branded products. equipment donation storage and PPTUs very successful Fly Fishing Swap Meet. Thank you to Jim for serving on the Board and being an avid promoter of the chapter and its activities.

Thank you to each of these members and all the others who volunteer throughout the year for cold water fisheries and PPTU.

Have a great holiday and I hope to see you in the New Year and at the fly tying night January 21st.

Craig VanderKolk  
President, PPTU

## PPTU Mentor Program Beginners & Beyond

**PPTU** provides one-on-one streamside fly fishing instruction to PPTU members. Participants must show commitment by having waders or hip boots, a rod and reel outfit, and leader. Discussions will include equipment, knots, casting, flies, dry fly and nymphing techniques, entomology, reading water, conservation, etc. all on nearby streams. Instruction will be tailored to individual needs. Members who have not made an **Annual Supporting Contribution (ASC)** will be asked to contribute \$20.

Contact us by e-mail: [mentor@pptu.org](mailto:mentor@pptu.org)



## Upcoming Events and Outings - PPTU

**January 23<sup>rd</sup> – The Fly Fishing Show**  
Edison, NJ

**January 24<sup>th</sup> – Outing to Big Hunting Creek**  
Thurmont, MD



## Early Fly Fishing Memories

- Pete Yarrington

I recently started writing down my earliest fly fishing memories, many of which involve the D.C. area. I thought I'd share some of them with the chapter, in hopes that people find them interesting.

I was 10 or 11 in the very early 1970s when I caught my first fish on a fly. The fly was a size 12 Coachman wet fly I tied myself, and I think the fish was a Green Sunfish. It, and then many others, were caught from a pond next to what was then called Grosvenor Apartments in Bethesda, Maryland. I had been tying flies for a year or so at that point, and my friend John and I were borrowing his father's blue Garcia fly rod, taking turns catching one sunny after another. Most of the fish were quickly released, but some wound up a short distance away in the apartments' swimming pool. We didn't have any role models yet, you see...

I had started tying flies before I ever tried to cast a fly, when I inherited my grandfather's Thompson Model A tying vise. Like many people, I made my first flies using feathers from pillows and sewing thread. Then I saw real fly tying materials at the Sportsman store in Bethesda, and I got hold of Joe Brooks' book *The Complete Book of Fly Fishing*. I was soon trying to copy the flies shown in the book, and I was hooked. Joe Brooks said a Coachman was his favorite wet fly, so that pattern received much of my attention, and caught that first fish.

The Sportsman was a one-level store located on the corner of Arlington Road and Bethesda Avenue in old Bethesda. You walked through all the golf and team-sport stuff, and then up a step and you entered the fishing department. There was a section of wall dedicated to fly tying, with little bags of dyed hackle, exotic stuff like Amherst pheasant feathers, and cards of chenille. And many bags of hooks. A few days ago, I found two cards of chenille with The Sportsman price stickers still on them, both marked 30 cents.

The Sportsman's fishing department was often manned by Harold Gibson, an older gentleman with a Scottish accent and a red plaid tie. He was very formal, and when I came in, he would clasp his hands and greet me "Master Yarrington!" He likely pointed me to the book rack, because I doubt I would have otherwise noticed it. After finding the Joe Brooks book, I also found Joseph Bate's book *Streamer Fly*

*Tying and Fishing* with its many color plates of flies, tied by their originators. I was soon trying to copy the flies shown in that book and was getting more materials through the mail from E. Hille and Reed Tackle. My mother wrote out the checks, balanced against my lawn mowing and paper route money.

The first store I tied flies for was Irving's Sport Shop, at the corner of Georgia Avenue and Colesville Road. It's a bit fuzzy now, but I remember taking them a poster board with rows of streamers hooked to strips of foam, and they gave me ten dollars. When my dad and I discovered The Angler's Art, then located off River Road in Chevy Chase, I found my new home away from home. Luckily, it was not long before I had my driver's license. The Angler's Art was my first close-by, 100-percent fly shop. The shop's owner, Barry Serviente, had a wonderful combination of shelves of books, racks of Orvis bamboo fly rods, flies, and tying materials. He gave me my first paying job. Once a week, I pulled out each row of books and then pushed them back in with a ruler so the spines were perfectly lined up. Barry also gave me my first "commercial" order for flies - 100 size 14 Adams, and 100 size 16 Adams. I got 40 dollars for each hundred, a major windfall back then. I continued to tie flies for the shop for several years. In 1976, Barry had me tie 20 or 30 sets of "bicentennial flies," each set in its own little plastic box. Each box had a strip of foam, on which I mounted a Wulff dry fly, a married wing wet fly, and a bucktail, all done in red, white and blue. I found out later that Barry was only able to sell a couple of those fly sets, and I never did find out what happened to the rest of them! A year or two later, in 1977 or 1978, I also did some flies for Yellow Breeches Fly Shop in Boiling Springs. The only pattern I did for them was Ed Shenk's new Sculpin, which had made a big splash in an article he did in Garcia's 1975 Fishing Annual. These were big streamer flies for the east at time, with spun deer hair heads and marabou wings and tails.

About the time we found Angler's Art, my mother was looking in the Mobil Travel Guide for places we could go on vacation and fly fish, and found the Rangeley area of Maine. On our first trip there, we found the House of Tall Tales fly shop in the town of Oquossoc. That shop, run by Polly and Oscar Damon, occupies a special place in my memory. It was hardly bigger than a one-car garage, and it stood across the street from where the Outdoor Sporting Heritage Museum sits today. A sign hung

over the screen door reading "The Liars Den." Polly was the first person I ever saw besides myself tie a fly. I have always remembered with great clarity a frame of flies over Polly's tying bench that held a circle of several streamers tied by Carrie Stevens. Mrs. Stevens was a Rangeley-area tyer from the late 1920s into the late 50s or early 60s, who achieved national acclaim for her streamers. The flies in the frame were mounted simply over tan paper with a hand-drawn outline of Moosehookmeguntic Lake. Many times, I wondered what happened to that frame of flies. The shop closed in the late 1970s, and we lost track of the Damons.

I tied flies for the Damon's shop in exchange for materials during our summers in Maine. I remember Oscar asking me to tie some streamers, I forget the pattern. He told me clearly that he had recently gotten some streamers from another tyer, a local girl, and when he had given the wings a tug, they came off the fly. He tried several more, and they came off too. The tyer started to cry. He told me, Remember, landlocks can really pull on the wings, so tie them in tight! I still hear him sometimes when I tie streamer flies.

In late 2024, I saw a podcast from the American Museum of Fly Fishing where they were tying traditional Northeast streamers and explaining the methods employed by Mrs. Stevens. They mentioned that the museum recently received some flies of Mrs. Stevens from Polly Damon, and they showed a picture of the flies, mounted on a tan paper background with a very faded outline of Moosehookmaguntic Lake. I just about fell off my chair. It was, of course, the same grouping of flies I had seen 50 years ago, over Polly's tying desk in the House of Tall Tales.

I hope you found something interesting in these recollections, and that you decide to share your own memories here in the newsletter or on the chapter message board.

## Should You Use Your Wrist When Fly Casting? - Bob O'Donnell

You've probably heard this before, 'never use your wrist', which is technically bad advice. Actually, proper wrist timing creates rod-tip speed, tighter loops, and creates easier, more efficient casts.

Using your wrist at the proper time turns your cast into an effortless movement. It's a subtle flip or snap of the wrist at the end of your stroke. Using your wrist in fly casting is crucial for efficiency, but it's all about timing and restraint: you don't start with the wrist but use a subtle "break" or "snap" at the end of the backcast and forward cast to accelerate the rod tip, create tight loops, and add power, similar to throwing a ball, by moving the rod tip in a straight line and stopping abruptly to load the rod, not swinging it around wildly.

### **Key wrist actions in fly casting:**

**The "Break" (Backcast):** After the arm pulls back and the loop starts forming behind you, you relax your wrist backward (breaking it) to get the rod tip back further and load it, stopping sharply to set up the forward cast.

**The "Snap" (Forward Cast):** At the end of the forward stroke, you flick or snap your wrist forward to accelerate the rod tip, creating line speed and a tight loop, then stop abruptly.

**Timing is Everything:** The wrist action happens after the main arm stroke has loaded the rod, not at the beginning.

**Straight Line Path:** The goal is to keep the rod tip moving on a straight plane, with the wrist action acting as a lever, not to swing the rod in a big arc.

### **Common Mistakes & Tips:**

**Don't Overuse:** Many beginners use too much wrist, which makes the cast sloppy and inefficient.

**Arm First, Wrist Second:** Focus on a full, powerful arm stroke, and then add the wrist snap at the end for power.

**Practice the Stop:** The sharp stop after the wrist action is critical for transferring energy to the line.

**Analogy:** Think of flicking a fly off your finger or throwing a ball – the wrist snap gives it that final burst of speed.

By mastering this subtle wrist action, you can significantly improve your casting distance, loop size, and overall effectiveness on the water.

*"Rivers and the inhabitants of the watery element were made for wise men to contemplate, and fools to pass by without consideration."*

~ Izaak Walton

## PPTU Outings Schedule for 2026

### - Ron Kerrick

Details for the PPTU Outings will be posted online before each date. This is what we're looking at for 2026.



Jan 24: Big Hunting Creek, MD

Feb 21: Yellow Breeches, PA

Mar 28: Conawego Creek, PA

Apr 25-26: Casselman, MD

May 15-17: Spring Creek, PA

Jun 13: Gunpowder One Fly, MD

Jul: No Outing Scheduled Yet

Aug TDB: Yellow Breeches White Fly, PA

Sep 12: Monocacy Smallmouth, MD

Oct 9-12: Savage River Camp Out, MD

Nov TBD: Steelhead, PA

Dec: No Outing Scheduled Yet

**Note:** If any PPTU members have any comments or suggestions for outings, please let the Outings Coordinator(s) know, at [outings@pptu.org](mailto:outings@pptu.org)



If you spot poaching please call or text:

**Maryland Wildlife Crime Stoppers**  
**At 443-433-4112**



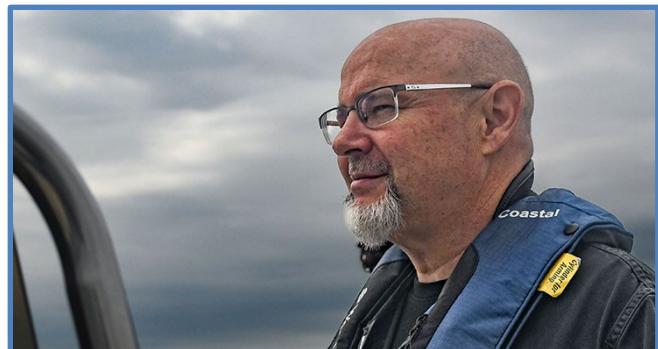
*Add this number to your cell phone contact list!*



## Gunpowder Riverkeeper - Jim Delle Bovi

There was an excellent article in the Sunday Sunpaper (12/28) on Theaux Le Gardeur, guardian of the Gunpowder river. Article provided by the Capital News Service. [Read the full article here.](#)

*The life of Theaux Le Gardeur, guardian of the Gunpowder River*

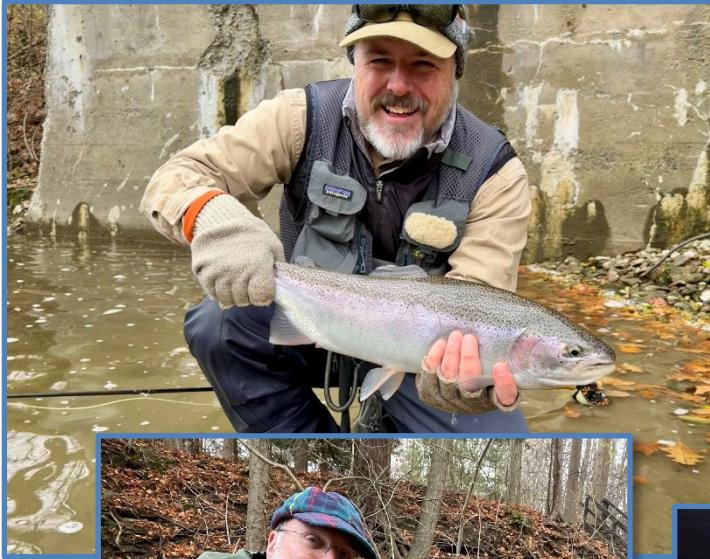


Le Gardeur serves as the Gunpowder riverkeeper, an essential role in protecting the watershed. His job is to pay meticulous attention to what others easily ignore. A spike in E. coli at a popular swimming spot, an increase in the population of invasive species, or most recently, a wastewater runoff permit that doubles daily discharge — nothing escapes Le Gardeur's watchful eye.

His profession is a blend of science, advocacy and education. When not found on the monitoring skiff, community members will spot Le Gardeur speaking at a county council meeting, collaborating with local officials and leading environmental education initiatives. He has become a trusted, steady presence in Baltimore County.

## Members Catch - Bob O'Donnell

Happy New Year! Don't forget to post notes and photos on the list server. It's fun to see photos from our members and friends.



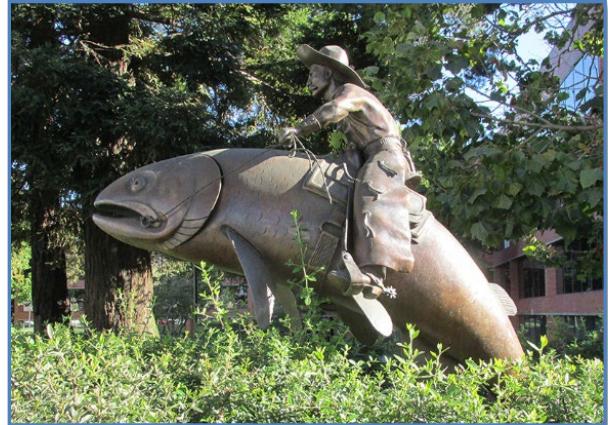
## Contributions & Questions Welcome!

Send your contributions, article suggestions or fly fishing questions to the Editor in an email or as an MS Word.doc attachment. The deadline for submissions is typically the twelfth (12th) day of the month prior to the month of publication.

**Editor: Bob O'Donnell**

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## The One and Only Midge

The One and Only midge by Barry Ord Clarke is a must have pattern and it comes with a fishing guarantee, You will catch fish with this fly! This very simple tie that uses only the most basic materials can be tied in various sizes and colours.

Put a few in your box before our January outing.

[Watch Video Here](#)



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