



January 2008

# *The Conservationist*

Potomac-Patuxent Chapter

www.pptu.org

## Chapter Fly Tying Demonstration

Enjoy the beginning of 2008 with a glimpse of how to tie flies and maybe even pick up a new hobby. At 7:00 PM on Wednesday, January 16 th, 2008, at the Schweinhaut Senior Center, 1000 Forest Glen Road, Silver Spring, MD, the Potomac Patuxent Chapter of Trout Unlimited will present our annual fly tying demonstration. Join us at this chapter meeting to see our most talented local tyers show off their skills and favorite patterns. Come learn how to make it easier to succeed at this intriguing sport of fly fishing, and do so with the satisfaction of using flies which you tied yourself rather than flies you purchased.

Dennis Covert will be wowing us by tying the very productive Crystal Meth, a great steelhead pattern. Jeff Kane will be once again show off his crocheted extended bodies, while John Colburn ties the delicate soft hackle patterns he likes so well, and likes because they produce trout. George Vincent will be tying PMD parachute patterns, and Tim Pembroke will unravel the mystery behind the Griffith's Gnat. Paul Vicenzi and his son Peter, along with his other family members, will be presenting at the kids table. Jim Greco will be tying a very versatile favorite, the Kaufmann stonefly nymph. Once again, Robert Simpson >

will be sharing his rigging and knot tying expertise for anyone who has an interest in learning better ways to rig your leaders, tippet, and flies. Bob Dietz will be taunting us with his favorite flies for spring creeks.

Come to this meeting, and share with us one of the season's most popular presentations by some of the most experienced fly fishing members of our chapter. Hope to see everyone there.

## Annual Fly Tying Demo Wednesday, January 16

7:00 PM

(see bottom of page for directions)

**\*\*Guest Tyers\*\***

Dennis Covert, Jeff Kane,  
John Colburn, Paul Vicenzi  
and many others

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### Monthly Chapter Meetings

**Time and Day:** 7:00 PM, Third Wednesday except December, June, July, and August

**Place:** Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center, 1000 Forest Glen Road, Silver Spring, Maryland

**Directions:** From Capitol Beltway: North on Georgia Avenue (Rte. 97). First right onto Forest Glen Road, then go past Holy Cross Hospital and across Sligo Creek Parkway. The Center is on the right.

## The Conservationist

is published monthly, except Dec., Jun., Jul., and Aug., by the Potomac-Patuxent Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

The content of signed articles are the opinions and views of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions, views, and policies of Trout Unlimited, the Potomac-Patuxent Chapter, or their respective officers and directors.

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Contributions in the form of clip art, articles, conservation activities, trip reports, letters, fishing and conservation news, tying tips, book reviews, and essays about trout fishing should be sent to the Editor as plain text in the email body or in a Microsoft Word attachment. Authors should also include their phone number and a brief descriptions of the attachments. The deadline for submissions is the twelfth (12th) day of the month prior to the month of publication.

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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Bob Dietz

Many of you fish the Gunpowder Falls and by this point are probably aware of the big flap over the removal of wood from that stream. For those that hadn't heard, a few members of a canoe club took it upon themselves to take chainsaws to some deadfalls in the stream, and then brag about the fact on their club's website. They broke several laws by this removal, and ruined some trout habitat. Members of the fly fishing community (that's us) reacted strongly. State authorities were notified, and given enough criminal evidence, license plate number, photos of the culprits at work, and witnesses) to prosecute. Various blogs around the area proclaimed that the Gunpowder was ruined, and would take years to recover.

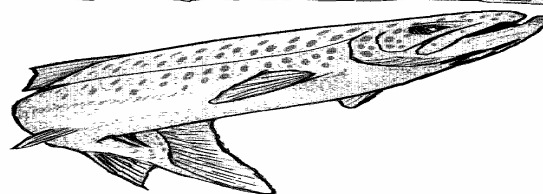
The good news is that the Gunpowder is not ruined. The cutting was limited to a few sites around Falls Road. The bad news is that the Natural Resources Police chose to let the offenders off with a written warning.

Reflecting on this incident, a few thoughts have been turning over in my mind. First, we can't hold the canoe club to blame for the actions of a few of its members. The club didn't authorize the action; and many of their members counseled against it.

Second, what if the shoe were on the other foot? Suppose members of our chapter illegally planted impediments to canoeists in the stream (as I'm sure some of us have fantasized about)? Should we as a chapter be held responsible?

Canoeists and fishers both need to realize that we share the same resource. As much you may be annoyed when a boater paddles through the spot you're fishing, it really doesn't affect the fishing much. Fish in the Gunpowder would starve if they stopped feeding every time a canoe passed over.

I said above that the Gunpowder wasn't ruined. I meant by the removal of deadwood. The lack of flow could be another issue, however. That's a concern to both fishers and paddlers. Let's realize that they're our allies in some things. ■



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# November Outing Report, The Erie Steelhead Trip

By Dennis Covert

Stowing our gear in two vehicles, Will Amland, Ken Bowyer, Tim Bowers and I rolled out 5 am Sunday heading North West for Erie, PA. Two hours later we pulled into the diner at Breezewood for breakfast hoping the fog would lift. Instead, it thickened to a soup while we ate and stayed with us until late in the morning to almost interstate 79. Once the fog did clear the hillsides lit up with bright sunshine the trees still having surprising good leaf cover for this far north this late in the year. Past peak, the colors were somewhat subdued, a mixture of deep reds, brownish greens, dull yellows and oranges. Still quite beautiful making the distant ridge lines meld into a rusty olive that Ken and I thought would probably make a good nymph dubbing color.

Arriving just after noon we checked out Folly's End before heading down to the mouth of Elk Creek. It was chilly; temps had risen throughout the morning from 30 to 42 degrees but were now heading back the other way. We pulled on our gear in the parking lot in a light drizzle turning up our collars against a good breeze. On stream the water levels were much better than expected. Knee deep in the deeper runs and stained enough we couldn't see the bottom. We spread out between the first two bends fishing the three and a half hours till dusk producing only one fish, a fat twenty three incher that Will talked into taking his brown wooly booger as he worked it along in the deeper water close to the bank

Next morning Tim and Will went on ahead to Folly's End while Ken and I suited up in the motel parking lot. I was telling Ken about my routine of keeping track of the keys by always having them either in my pocket or in my right hand before locking the truck. Waders and boots on, I rolled back the bed cover and snapped it, then couldn't find my keys. In the next 20 minutes we unloaded the cab of the truck twice, looked under the seats, under the truck and took off my waders going through all pockets of everything. Then we just stood there; no ideas, when Ken raised the tailgate saying "here they are." my keys laying on the bumper right where I set them before lowering >

the tail gate to snap the roll back. Good god.... Catching up with Tim and Will at Folly's, I had Will's rod in the truck, but Tim was rigged and ready to go, we found him a little later on the pool behind the tackle shop already into a fish. The rest of us waded fishing downstream for a couple of hours in water that was low and clear. Not seeing many fish in the runs and the ones we did see were spooky had us changing locations to below the Conrail tubes. There were definitely fish here; a couple of guys with spinning and bait tackle were really tearing them up in the big pool below the tubes, Will and I headed down stream 100 yards into the riffles and small pools next to the bank each of us hooking up and losing a fish before moving up to the pool to join Ken and Tim when things began to look a little less crowded. Fish were piled up the length of the pool and at the lower end we could see a couple of dozen holding mid column.

I'm a novice at this steelhead fishing, but what seems pretty common to these steelhead is on the hook set they just sorta hunker down, power up, and explode. Hot doggies!

We spent the rest of the afternoon there, Tim landing three more working his crystal meth deep through the head of the pool, me taking a couple at the tail, one on sucker spawn the other on a hot orange egg.

That evening as we made our way back to the trucks it began to rain. The weather report was only calling for sprinkles but on our way over to the Outback for steaks after unloading out gear at the Inn it was flat out raining. Checking the Elk the next morning at the tubes, we met guys on their way back out shaking their heads, too high and muddy. We loaded back up and headed for Twenty Mile Creek on the New York border, getting there we were met with guys at the pull off saying it was barely fishable. Needing to see for ourselves we rigged up and hiked in but barely fishable proved to be an overly optimistic assessment in our opinion creating a moment of indecision that almost ended the trip.

From the reports we had it takes at least a day for the streams to clear up, and we were leaving in the morning. Standing there next to the stream watching leaves and other debris swirl in the chocolate froth there was talk of just going home. We still had the option of Sixteen Mile Creek, but that option seemed to be going south as well. Cont'd page 4 >

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## November Outing Report cont'd . . .

Back at the truck I took my waders off, but then regret began to sweep through the group about not at least checking Sixteen out before heading back to the Inn to check out, so off we went to have a look. What a mistake leaving would have been. Taking up positions just up from the mouth within 100 yards of the lake, the guys closer to it began sticking fish with the action heading our way. Tim, closest to the mouth, got into a couple and we all kept sliding down stream when ever a hole opened up in the line. A guy from Indiana just down stream of Tim definitely had the best location. I don't think it an exaggeration to say he landed 15 plus, maybe even twenty fish that afternoon before just going up and sitting on the bank leaving his spot to his buddy who had previously been kept busy netting fish for him. Tim shared the wealth with the rest of us letting us rotate in and out and we all got into fish landing several. We even worked out a lunch schedule; Tim and I going up first to cook and have a potty break then back down to let the other two go.

Of all the leaping fish we saw, one of Ken's was hands down the most spectacular. After that little hunker down and power up maneuver I mentioned earlier, this fish took off on a screaming 35-40 yard run in a series of four or five down stream leaps that culminated in a high leaping somersault spraying water high in the air on re-entry. Guys up and down the bank were whooping and cheering, maybe for the fish, and Ken, who was just holding on and rocking foreword a little with every jump while the fish peeled off line let out a little "OOohhh..." Thinking he just lost him when the line suddenly went slack as the fish hit the water, followed by a look of stunned disbelief when we all started yelling "you still got'im! You still got'im!" then quickly ramped back into action recovering the slack line getting him back on the reel. Smiles don't get any bigger than Ken's when after several more minutes of give and take he finally had that fish in the net. What a great day! Lots of hookups, everybody landed fish, everybody happy.

We finished up Wednesday morning at Folly's, fishing until about 10 am before packing it in and heading back home. Tim, who was definitely the hot rod of the trip, was into several more just below the tackle shop. Ken and I waded down stream where Ken spotted a large pod of fish moving up through a long riffle. Ken and I waded down stream where >

Ken spotted a large pod of fish moving up through a long riffle. Ken, catching fire Tuesday and fast approaching Tim's count hooked and lost three before I noticed him waving me up from the pool below. Light blue crystal was what they wanted but they turned off that in a hurry. In the next hour I managed to hook-up and quickly lose one on sucker spawn, Ken losing two and landing two on white crystal, landing one of them running through a riffle, rod in one hand net in the other while I snapped his picture as he was scooping him up.

Before leaving I stopped fishing just to look around. This is a beautiful place in the fall. The trees still had lots of color on the bluffs above the creek, and standing mid stream I watched those dark shapes moving through the riffles and pools. The whole scene had me not wanting to leave, but..... We all landed fish, I think 17 or 18 total with at least twice that many hookups lost. All fish landed were between 22 and 26 inches except for my mighty sucker on the last morning, Ken coached me in landing it. There were no hot flies other than maybe pink crystal meth on Sixteen Mile Creek Tuesday. Tuesday night at dinner, we took a quick show of hands voting Erie the 2008 November outing destination, so, start planning now boys & girls.

Another thing worth mentioning was the good etiquette everyone showed along the creeks we fished for the entire trip. Often we would be fishing in tight, not only with other fly fishers, but bait and spin fishers, getting tangled up with each other from time to time, and I never once heard an unkind word from anyone. On Sixteen Mile Creek when someone would leave guys would stop fishing long enough to say; "good fishing with ya" or "see ya next time" or asking guys where they were from. We were impressed with everyone's streamside demeanor and especially the courtesy and sportsmanship those PA boys extended to us non locals.

### **PPTU MENTOR PROGRAM: BEGINNERS AND BEYOND**

One on one stream side fly fishing instruction is available to PPTU members. Participants must show commitment by having waders or hipsters, a rod and reel outfit, and leader. Discussions will include equipment, knots, casting, flies, dry fly and nymphing techniques, entomology, reading water, conservation, etc. at nearby streams. Instruction will be tailored to individual needs. Members who have not made an **Annual Supporting Contribution** will be asked to contribute \$15. Contact Ken Bowyer at 301-627-7154 or e-mail [kenbowyer@comcast.net](mailto:kenbowyer@comcast.net).

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# Tackle and Tactic Tips

By Jay Sheppard

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Fighting a large fish on a light tippet is one of the fun challenges of fly fishing. A 2–3 lb trout on 6X or 7X tippet would be a real challenge for any fisher. I generally like to fight directly off the reel any fish that may weigh about half or more of the strength of the tippet. Any lighter fish and I will usually just strip the line in by hand as I fight it. The big problem with fighting any fish by direct handling of the line is that one cannot truly and wisely estimate the amount of tension being delivered to the tippet and the fish at any given moment. Make an error in holding the line too tight and the fish and you will part ways.

Properly setting the drag on the reel is necessary before going fishing. I much prefer a smooth drag system on a reel if I expect to catch any large fish on light tippets. The click-click type drag systems deliver a very uneven series of tensions to the tippet as the spring clip jumps up and down with the passing of each sprocket.

The drag must be set quite low relative to the actual tippet strength. Point a rod directly at the fish, and the pull of the fish is direct to the reel. With just a slight raising of the rod the force needed to overcome the drag is perhaps doubled. Point the rod directly away from the fish, and you had better have very strong tippet for the size of the fish or you will surely break it off. A force of about 4 ounces at the reel is about all I need to hold most trout. For steelhead I might prefer about 6 ounces and for medium salmon only about 8 ounces.

The drag setting has to be determined before you go fishing. A reel that has almost all the line back on it will take much less force to overcome the drag than a reel with even 40 feet of fly line off the spool. One needs only one item to set the reel's drag. Ideally a spring scale that is carefully calibrated to ounces (or grams) would be most useful. A plastic drink container that holds up to about 10 or 11 ounces can work as the weight. Measure about 3.5 ounces of water and seal into the bottle. Mount the reel on a rod. Strip off about 30–40 feet of line so that it will hang directly off the spool and not touch any part of the reel or rod. Attach the bottle to the fly line only a foot or so from the reel itself. Adjust the drag setting until the weight overcomes the drag and starts pulling line directly off the spool. ►

Mark this point (4-oz. setting) on the drag in some manner, such as fine scratch marks. Add 4 ounces of water to the container, then set and mark the drag for the 8-ounce setting. That should be the range for 90% of your freshwater fishing. Be sure to recheck every few years as the drag wears with usage. With the drag set, you can fight a fish directly off the reel with greater confidence. ■

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## Patuxent Report

By Jay Sheppard

Hunting season will continue through most of February in some sections of the Park, so be very careful. Early stockings are expected sometime in February on the stream.

If you have not helped stock trout in the past, and want to help stock trout this year, call or email me (301-725-5559 or [jmsheppar@aol.com](mailto:jmsheppar@aol.com)) BEFORE the February meeting, or sign up at the January or February monthly meetings.

If you have not helped on this activity, you must wear chest waders and be able to help on a weekday. While this is strenuous work, it is very rewarding, as you may get to see 1.5–2.5 miles of stream and some of the trails. Those already on my e-mail list need not contact me, unless they have a new e-mail address.



### New Key to Identification of Mayflies

A new one page key to identifying our local mayflies found on trout streams has been prepared by Jay Sheppard. It will be on sale for a nominal cost at each meeting in a laminated form for packing in your vest and taking onto a stream. The key has also been posted on the chapter web site in a downloadable file. This is a useful tool to have with you while you are fly-fishing many of our streams in the mid-Atlantic. The laminated sheets are about six inches by nine inches and have the date of September 2007.

## REMINDER TO PPTU MEMBERS

### ADDRESS CHANGE?

If you have moved or see any error in your mailing labels (*Trout or Conservationist*), please notify **both** the National TU office and this chapter with **separate** notices. Our mailing list is maintained apart from the National list; we do eventually get the notice of address change from National TU, but it is often a few months before it affects your *Conservationist* and other mailings. Please help us help you.

### PPTU Membership Fees and Benefits

The only "membership" fee is to the national TU for \$35 per year. So if you are a member of national TU, then you are a member of our chapter, the Potomac-Patuxent Chapter of TU. The ASC or Annual Supporting Contribution, is the contribution our chapter asks of each member as an annual contribution of \$15. Members making this contribution get The Conservationist (either in hard copy or on the web), discounts at our fly tying classes, and discounts on books, etc.

## Spring 2008 Outings

If you have not met him, Dennis Covert is the Outings officer for our chapter. He does a terrific job putting together outings where chapter members meet at or car pool to a specific water on a scheduled date and time to fish together. This is a great opportunity to get to know other chapter members, have fun fishing together, and even learn a few things from those fishing with you.

For spring of 2008, Dennis has planned a number of outings, but he is also interested in your suggestions for new waters for our outings. So don't hesitate to talk with him about any ideas you may have for future outings. He will also welcome your reports of some days you have had on the water. Dennis can be reached at [denniscovert@hotmail.com](mailto:denniscovert@hotmail.com) or by phone at 410-740-8337.

So far, the spring 2008 outings include:

Yellow Breeches, PA January 7, 2008  
Big Hunting Creek, MD February 23, 2008  
Gunpowder, MD - One Fly Contest March 28, 2008



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