May 2000 Newsletter Potomac-Pautxent Chapter



Warm Water Fly Fishing by King Montgomery

Wednesday, May 17

If we have another arid summer like the one we had last year, and there's every indication that we will, most of us are going to have to take to a species other than trout. Remember, at one time last summer the Upper Patuxent was at one-quarter of its lowest recorded flow, and that was after a May of flooding. Seems like a perfect time then to introduce yourself to three warmwater species: the smallmouth, the largemouth, and the sunfish. Before you salmonid purists stomp off in a huff, consider that this year it could be either wide water or no water.

Our speaker this month will be King Montgomery, and he will introduce us to fishing the warmer waters of the upper Potomac, Rappahannock, and James Rivers for feistier and more aggressive species than we usually find in coldwater fisheries south of New York state. King is a professional outdoor writer and photographer from Annandale, VA, and he is intimately familiar with the streams he will be discussing.

For those of you looking for a reason to fish Virginia but not wanting to plunk down \$60 to fish little brookie streams in the mountains, here's a chance to learn about some larger game and expand your knowledge about geography and species. Bring pen and notepaper.

A fifteen-inch bass in wide water on a five weight is a whole new ballgame.



May PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Jim Keil

I'm approaching the end of my first year as president of this chapter, and it has been a growing experience. I've come to see the breadth of this chapter's investment in local watersheds and the issues that affect them, and I've begun to appreciate in greater depth the dedication of chapter members to conserving and protecting our streams and riparians. It has been a busy but very rewarding year.

For a long time, it seems, this month's President's Column has been devoted to looking back over the past year, assessing it, and thanking the chapter members who have made an impact on the chapter and our local watersheds. Let me begin with past presidents Robert Simpson and Jay Sheppard, whose unfailing support of my efforts has helped me replace my trepidation with confidence.

Dave Piske has been my editor and advisor, and not only my prose but also my ideas have benefited from conversation with him. Our secretarial duties have been performed ably by Jim Greco and the bookkeeping managed by Len Blakley (with guidance from C.P.A. Fai). The faithful Directors included Tom Allegretti, Lou Boezi, Val Walters, Robert Griffin, and Fred Kallmeyer. Jack Dawson leaped into the librarian's seat when Fred headed to the Appalachians. Bill Barton has handled membership duties with aplomb, even with January's large influx of new members.

The word about meetings and events has gone out to the press each month, and Jim Green has handled these duties once again. Bill Miller has handled refreshments. The raffles have been fun (as long as the two Jasons have stayed home) and raised a lot of money for the chapter this year; kudos to the bargain hunting Willy Oldes. Dave Pratt has taken us hither and yon in search of hungry trout; and Jim Feudale has mentored some of us so that we knew what to do when we got there. To all the members of Mid-Atlantic Council, including Bruce Eberle and Bob Plumb (and to Jason Beckstrom for stepping up), my gratitude. David Feldman once again organized and taught a flytying class. The watershed chairs, Charlie Gelso, Larry Coburn, Jay Sheppard, and David Dunmire have done a wonderful job with, respectively, the Middle/Little Patuxent, Upper Patuxent, and Paint Branch.

Particularly with the latter, the threats to the watershed roll in one on top of the other, seemingly without pause. Until I saw firsthand what was involved in conserving and protecting these waters, I wouldn't have believed the energy and resolve these members bring to these responsibilities. There are powerful people trying to take these streams away from us, but thankfully there are some government workers and these members holding the line on attempts to ruin these waters for trout and anglers. To all who participated in a tree planting or tire rolling, my thanks. Finally, I'd like to thank the families of these members for giving the chapter some of their time with them.

I'd like to hope that one of the tasks this chapter does well is to grow new leaders. By my count, seven people named above have never been leaders in this chapter before this year. I'd like to close this column by encouraging you to offer to serve the chapter in some capacity. You'll be glad you did.

PATUXENT REPORT

Jay Sheppard

A total of 1500 browns and 2500 rainbows were planted this year, all looking to be in good condition. Some of the rainbows were in the 15–16" size range. Thanks to all who helped stock this year. I calculate that some 200–250 man-hours were involved with this year's stockings on the upper Patuxent. Some fresh signs were also posted and the stream was given a good cleaning near all the bridges and parking lots in early April. Those last two activities accounted for at least another 125 man-hours of volunteer labor. Another 40–60 hours were also spent in organizing and planning these activities. I want to thank all the members of the chapter and our friends who helped in all these activities. Now let us go forth and FISH!

The stocked trout can be expected to scatter in all directions over the coming months as they compete for space among themselves and with other trout already there. In the past, I have caught rainbows about a mile below the lowest stocking point only 8 days after their stocking. So the trout can move quickly if the conditions suit them. The overall holdover rate will depend largely upon two big factors: summer flows and poaching. I have had numerous reports this spring of poachers in the Annapolis Rock–Hipsley Mill sections of the stream. **Please report these sightings immediately.** One poacher was fined over \$400 for taking a dozen trout from the stream below Annapolis Rock bridge. I hope that word gets out to others that it can be costly to poach trout and a lot cheaper to go to the local market for something to eat.

Sometime this fall we hope to be doing electro shocking surveys of the trout populations on the Patuxent and other trout streams in our area. If you are interested, send me an E-Mail or see me at the next meeting.

The chapter was finally able to obtain some new float boxes. The present boxes have served us well for the past 20–25 years, but they were starting to break down. Over the next several months we will modify the new boxes to work as "floating shipping containers of trout." The new boxes are the same size and general configuration as the old boxes.



PROGRAM CHAIR

As we go to press, the chapter is in need of a new program chair. The chair's responsibilities include arranging the speaker for each of eight monthly meetings and writing up a notice for the newsletter. There is plenty of help to be had from the officers and board of directors, and we have a long list of candidate speakers, people who have spoken in the past and people we're still trying to get to visit us. (In fact, the November 2000 meeting is already arranged.) To do this job, you don't have to be a haunt in every flyshop from Fishing Creek to the Rapidan; some of us already are. You just have to be willing to pick up the phone and make the arrangements. Please

Help. Contact Jim Keil at 301-588-8375 if you think you might be interested.

MEMBER'S ASSESSMENT

NOW PAYABLE

The annual assessment (see back) is now payable, if you wish. Check your label--if the "PP-" date is "09<u>00</u>" (or there is NO "PP-" and date), you can send your \$15 now, and you will not have to worry about paying in September. Some members paid twice this year, so they already show "PP-09<u>01</u>." We usually do not mail notices in September. Make checks payable to "**POTOMAC-PATUXENT CHAPTER-TU**" and mail to our chapter mailbox. The assessment covers only the newsletter and related chapter administrative expenses; all donations above expenses at our raffles, etc. go to the resource and not to support our members with free newsletters, maps, etc. Final issue for those having "PP-0900" will be this next November. **Please also advise us of any address changes or errors in our labels.**



The Maryland FOREcast

Jay Sheppard

Spring arrived some time in mid-winter, I think! Moisture levels (ground water, reservoir levels, etc.) are certainly still not back to normal across the State, although we have just squeaked by with barely normal rainfall for the past 4–5 months. Flows into early summer should remain about the same as last year, which were well below average then. The problem will be if we do not have consistent and widespread rainfall from now until the end of the summer. If we have another summer like last year, you may want to shift to warmwater sport fish such as bass and those in the Bay or ocean. OR you may want to look for wetter watersheds out west or up north.

All the hatches should be very close to a normal schedule; I would not expect to see great numbers of insects, since many streams nearly dried out last summer and that had to reduce the overall population of nymphs. The great Sulphur hatches of late May on the Gunpowder can be expected to attract not just the trout but also the hordes of fishers (a double hatch, if you will). Unfortunately the overall population of the brown trout in the No-Kill section below the dam is at an all time low. They are there, but the numbers are clearly down. We need to share those pockets of deeper water, so do not stand in one pool for the whole day. As we go to press (mid-April) the Gunpowder is still not full and is unlikely at this date to make it to the crest. We can only hope they will be able to maintain the present minimum flow for the next many months. If they cannot get water this summer from the Susquehanna River and have to dump a large quantity from Prettyboy Reservoir for a week or so, then the minimum flows will really have to continue until we get a hurricane or two to really refill that reservoir.

Out west, the Savage and Jennings Randolph Reservoirs are a bit better off right now, but we are still very concerned that if we get a very dry summer, we will again be seeing minimum flows from those dams. I am sure the low flows last year and into the winter had to reduce the overall populations of trout in both those rivers.

The lower Savage and North Branch both should maintain good flows for the rest of the spring. A couple of good rainstorms in June will help ensure good flows the rest of the summer. Don't forget that the whitewater releases on the North Branch are still scheduled for **May 15–16 and 29–30** (they usually start about 9 AM and start dropping at about 4:30 PM). No whitewater races are currently scheduled on the lower Savage. Call the tape recording at 410-962-7687 for projected release schedules and current flows. Also check our web site for links to online flow information. Right after any release subsides, the trout usually go into a feeding frenzy that is well worth the wait that day. The upper North Branch (not Kitzmiller), Casselman and Youghiogheny Rivers should have fair flows into early June this year; keep those three streams in mind, too. The myriad of May mayflies is upon us. The quality streams will have their hatches of March browns, Cahills, and many other important hatches over the next 6-8 weeks.

Hunting Creek, Morgan Run, and the Patuxent system have had good flows this spring, but they will need good rains to keep them moving the rest of the summer. A #14 Light Cahill or similar pattern seems to be one of my favorites in mid-May on these streams. On Hunting Creek, move slowly and watch for the wild browns in little pockets that are often hard to cast to.

All Maryland trout waters between I-81 and Cumberland get too low and hot most summers to hold any trout after early June. Closer to town, the Little and Middle Patuxent at Savage, MD, and the Patapsco near Daniels will normally be expected to shut down for trout fishing by about June 1 due to hot water. So visit those and such streams as Sidling Creek now. Do not forget that the middle section of Owen's Creek becomes a **no-kill** stream on **June 1**--artificial lures & flies only after that date (this is an excellent little stream after the crowds vanish).

As the trees leafed out in April (mid-May in Garrett Co.) the first major terrestrial hatch started: inch worms. This will make all those San Juan worms (greens, browns, and grays) really become deadly on our wooded streams. Ants, including flying forms, also become important at this time. Perhaps others have had luck in May, but my experience is that beetle and small cricket patterns really don't get the attention of the trout until June or later in the summer.

Overall, I think the best fishing will be in Garrett County below the Savage and Jennings Randolph Dams. I hope I am wrong and we get lots of rain this summer. On streams with reduced flows, stay low and use long leaders with smaller flies. Spin fishers need to use ultralight with 2-lb line and smaller lures. See you in September.

WE GOOFED!

In the last issue we gave an incomplete phone number for Mark Kovach's guide service. Sorry, Mark. The complete number is 301-588-8742. Please make a note of this, if you did not already have the correct number.

MAY OUTING

Please come to the May meeting, if you are interested in discussing this outing. It is not clear if, or where we might go for our annual extended weekend around Memorial Day weekend. In recent years we have gone to Garrett County, having also gone to central PA in prior years. We need to find out if anyone is interested in such an outing and where they want to go. Some years we camp, others we find simple accommodations nearby. These are mostly oriented towards exploration—seeing new water—rather than catching large numbers of trout on just one stream.

TACKLE TIPS

Jay Sheppard



As warmer weather arrives, so do the mosquitoes and sunburn. Virtually all lotions, sprays and similar items have "inert solvents" and other chemicals that will totally ruin a fly line coating. To avoid premature aging of a fly line from these chemical compounds, **NEVER** apply anything **to the palms** of your hands. Instead apply the spray or lotion to the **back of your hand** and rub it on your face, neck and other places you cannot spray or squeeze such materials. Consider the use of stick insect repellents, too.

At the same time, do not forget to clean you fly lines a couple times each year. I carefully attach the line between two stationary objects in the yard and work back and forth over the first 40 or so feet of the line to get it clean. Simple hand or liquid dish washing soap on a damp cloth will do wonders. Armoral can also do a fine job. The best product is Amway's Silicone Glaze, if it is still available. Just be sure to clean any residues of soap or cleaners from the line. I use a clean scrap of white terry cloth to see when the line finally comes clean. Some lines come with small cleaner pads. I have had mixed results with them.



Do not forget to start carrying a small waterproof flashlight along on these late spring and summer evenings. Total darkness is when most hatches end, and you have to find your way home. A walk back through the woods and fields after the hatch ends is dangerous for at least the eyes, limbs and rod. Knowing the local trails is very important.

BROWNS IN MIDDLE PATUXENT

Jay Sheppard

At the last minute, DNR Fisheries found a few extra brown trout to stock in the Middle Patuxent on April 11. About 250 10" brown trout were float stocked in the middle portion of this Delayed Harvest stream. The next day the final load of 250 rainbows was also float stocked over the very same waters. Thus, some 1750 trout were stocked in this river this year, 1500 rainbows and 250 browns. Some of the rainbows were really quality-sized trout. I saw many of them being unloaded that were in the 15" range, but I have received several reports of trout in the 20" range. About three or four of the browns that we stocked were well over 13".

Last October, DNR did a quick Electro shocking survey of the river in what most of us would call relatively poor habitat. They found one brown trout! The last browns prior to this April to have been stocked in the river were in the fall of 1998. So, that one brown had survived one of the worst droughts of the century in relatively poor habitat. We are all awaiting a wet summer and then hope to see many browns survive into the fall, especially in some of the better habitat sections of this stream.

My own view of this Delayed Harvest section is that it has moderate potential for holdover and hatches, but does not have the quality water we see on the upper mainstem of the Patuxent River. The Middle Patuxent has a watershed that is composed of very sandy soils. The streambed is largely sand overlaying very large rocks and boulders. If you pick up the occasional plate-sized rock and look for insects, you will be usually disappointed. It sometimes takes examining more than several rocks to find a nymph or two. Various caddises seem to be the most common insects followed by the winter stoneflies; mayflies are relatively uncommon. Midges are present in fair numbers.

Overall, the Delayed harvest section is a lot of fun. The river is much larger and far more user friendly than the Special Area of the upper Patuxent. It is a pleasant place to spend the day without having to travel any great distance. Since we only float stock about 1.7 miles of the river, the overall stocking rate is about 1,000 per mile. Between poachers, herons, and trout moving outside this stocking zone, there still should be plenty of trout to entertain you for the rest of the spring. Try it, you'll like it!

Fish without a license – legally!

National Fishing Week (June 3-11, 2000) has grown to the point that every state except Alaska, Montana and Wyoming now offers Free Fishing Days, usually during the month of June. Locally, this year's dates are:

Maryland June 3, June 10 and July 4

Pennsylvania June 3 and September 23

New York June 24-25

Virginia June 3 and June 4

District of Columbia June 5-11

On these days, residents and non-residents alike can fish without the need for a license or trout stamp. For more details, or to check on other states, visit the website at <u>www.gofishing.org</u>. Take advantage of the chance to sample the fishing in a nearby state, or better yet, invite someone new to the sport to give it a free try and join you for the day at one of your favorite spots. Also be on the lookout for local events aimed at youngsters and introduce him or her to the joy of our sport. You'll be glad you did.



LAST ISSUE UNTIL SEPTEMBER

Just a reminder that this May issue is the last until next September. Keep in touch with your buddies and log

onto our web site for links to current reports. If you have not signed up for the PPTU reporting system, please check out our web site. You will receive reports from other members on their local fishing results. Have a great summer! See you next September.



Paint Branch Report

By David Dunmire, Paint Branch Chair

Successful Hatch Confirmed

First and foremost I want to report that once again the wild brown trout hatch have successfully reproduced in the Paint Branch. This makes, I believe, the 21st consecutive year of successful brown trout reproduction, every year since monitoring began. This year the numbers are down though. Given the severe drought conditions of last year, it is amazing that we got any fry at all.

UMD Arena Project

Last month I reported on the University of Maryland's plan to replace Cole Field House with a new stadium, and build a number of other facilities such as greenhouses, parking lots, and ball fields. Their plan would destroy forested wetlands adjacent to the Paint Branch Stream Valley Park, and add 72 thousand cubic yards of fill to the 100-year floodplain. Much has happened since then my first report.

At least 200 people attended the public hearing on March 30, about 50 of which testified against the environmental impacts of the current plan. No one spoke in favor. Many residents of the area showed postersized photographs of severe flooding throughout the area. The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission has also severely criticized the planned development.

Last year the University commissioned a field survey of the wetlands on the site. Their results indicated a significant reduction in the area of wetlands from what everyone has considered to be wetlands for more than a decade. The Army Corps of engineers concurred with their finding, and the University proceeded with a plan to develop this area.

Students and various environmental groups have had several knowledgeable individuals independently assess the former wetlands, and they all believe that these areas should be classified as wetlands. We made a quite a fuss about this. Then, much to the surprise of all, the Corps announced at the public hearing that they were going to re-evaluate their recent wetland delineation. They are in the process of conducting another jurisdiction delineation to officially determine the wetlands that qualify for federal regulation. The Corps also agreed, in response to requests from the public, to do include the EPA and Fish and Wildlife Service in this delineation process.

The University repeatedly claims that they are complying with all applicable regulations on this project. The key word is "applicable." At the very least the proposed plan is based on an extremely narrow

interpretation of the requirements, and attempts to take advantages of a number of loopholes. First they waive

all stormwater quantity controls. Not only are they not addressing the uncontrolled runoff from existing development, but they are not even planning to provide quantity controls for the new imperviousness added by this project. The University further claims to be exempt from local laws, and thus is ignoring the standard PG County regulations and Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning review and approval processes. Lastly, the forest conservation plan double-counts riparian wooded areas and provides no additional forest protection. The simple fact of the matter is that no private developer would be able to do this. The irony of destroying forested wetlands to build greenhouses.

We do not oppose the new stadium, but we are against the environmental impacts of the current plan. There are other options. We can meet the needs of the University with less impact on the environment. Public input has already significantly impacted this project, but the decision-makers need to hear that you expect the University to follow local laws and regulations protecting the Paint Branch.

The public input period regarding the permits at MDE and DNR will close the end of April, but the decisions will not be made until mid-to-late May. Besides, these are long-term issues and the individuals below need to hear from you. Write to:

Governor Parris N. Glendening

The State House Annapolis, Maryland 21401 e-mail: governor@gov.state.md.us 1-800/811-8336

And send copies of your letter to:

Dr. Clayton Mote, President University of Maryland, College Park Room 1101, Main Administration Building College Park, Maryland 20742-5025 e-mail: dmote@deans.umd.edu

301-405-5803

Senator Arthur Dorman 116 Presidential Wing James Senate Office Building 110 College Avenue Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1991 e-mail: arthur_dorman@senate.state.md.us

Delegate Barbara Frush Lowe House Office Building Room 201 84 College Avenue Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1991 e-mail: barbara_frush@house.state.md.us



White Oak Stream Walk/Clean Up

On Saturday, April 8, 2000, nearly 50 volunteers combined their efforts for the Paint Branch Community Stream Clean Up. Workers pulled a total of 422 old tires from the wooded park just north of where Route 29 crosses the Paint Branch. This is in the White Oak area.

The most difficult part was getting the tires up an embankment at least 50 feet high with a 2-to-1 slope. Workers formed a human chain and passed the tires from person to person up the hill. They then stacked the tires along the outside of the guardrail next to Route 29. The tires were later hauled away to be recycled. Robert Ferraro, president of the Eyes of Paint Branch, stated "With this steep a slope, passing the tires was the only way we could get them to the top."

Many groups played a part in making this project such a great success. The Potomac-Patuxent chapter of Trout Unlimited, the Eyes of Paint Branch, and St. Stephen's Lutheran Church organized the event. St. Stephen's provided a staging area, parking, refreshments and a wonderful lunch for participants after the clean up. The Thorton Friends School provided shuttle service to transport volunteers to and from the clean up site. The Keep Montgomery County Beautiful program provided trash bags and work gloves. The Maryland State Highway Administration removed and disposed of the tires.

Local fisheries biologist Pete Yarrington and Trout Unlimited member took participants on a stream walk and talk along the Paint Branch.

Project chairman David Dunmire of Trout Unlimited said, "This is a fine example of what we can accomplish when public and private organizations all work together."

Volunteers included college students from the University of Maryland, Girl Scouts from Troop 3003 and their leaders, Trout Unlimited members, members of St. Stephen's church, and Eyes of Paint Branch members. Pastor Anne Dwiggins of St. Stephen's commented "This project is a wonderful outreach to the community, and it is great to see such a mix of people all working together."

Stream Improvement Projects

The Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) are conducting a number of stream improvement projects throughout the Anacostia watershed, many of which are in the Paint Branch. One of these is the Gum Springs Parallel Pipe Project, which involves running 2000 feet of 36-inch pipe to cool the flow from a stormwater pond and discharge it into the Main Stem rather than Gum Springs. We have followed this project closely, given its location in the spawning and nursery area, and repeatedly identified problems.

Recently DEP and the ACOE signed a Memorandum of Understanding, an MOU as it is called, that will

hopefully prevent many of the problems we've experienced in the past from occurring on future projects. In particular, the ACOE has some significant in-stream habitat improvements planned for the Main Stem. It is critical that the professionals, such as the fisheries biologists at the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, concur with the proposed in-stream modifications, and that the other regulatory organizations also support the detailed plans. Access to these secluded sites is a particular issue.

Inter-County Connector Report

You may have heard advertisements on the radio recently by a group called EndGridlock.com bemoaning the traffic congestion throughout the area. This group claims to be a grassroots organization of citizens who are fed up with our traffic problems, and are committed to real solutions. In reality this group is a front for the Washington Board of Trade and other pro-road organizations. Many environmentalists have been referring to them with a slightly modified name, EndlessGridlock.com, based on the fact that roads alone will not solve these traffic problems.

Ending gridlock will not be achieved by building new highways. Montgomery County needs a smart transportation vision integrated with sustainable land use that focuses growth around existing and new planned transit systems and protects rural and agricultural areas from sprawl. For example, transit investments should get top priority in the I-270 and Capital Beltway corridors.

The proposed ICC would cost well over one billion dollars, destroy significant natural resources such as forests, parklands and stream valleys, cause substantial community disruption, and still not solve our congestion problems.

The most important transportation goal must be to reduce vehicle miles traveled. We need to support approaches based on a full evaluation of land use and transportation options, such as those promoted by the Citizens Planning Association in their Balanced Land Use (BLU) plan.

Nominees for Chapter Offices

At the chapter's monthly meeting on May 17, the following slate of candidates will be nominated for these respective positions:

Jim KeilPresidentDave PiskeVice PresidentJim GrecoSecretaryLen BlakleyTreasurerJason AkersDirectorPaul PrevostDirector

Pete Yarrington Director

Additional nominations from the floor will be invited at that time and the election will be held.

The nominating committee wishes to thank all the people who stepped forward when the call for volunteers went out last month. It was wonderful not to resort to major league arm twisting to find candidates this year.

Special thanks to Fred Kallmeyer, Carl Helman and Bob Griffin for their service as directors over the last several years.

ANNUAL RAFFLE NEWS

This issue had to go to press before the April 26 Annual Raffle meeting. Thus, we are unable to report any of the big winners and will do so in the September issue as well as on the PPTU.ORG web site

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MEMBERSHIPS: The Potomac-Patuxent Chapter of Trout Unlimited has two membership categories: Regular/Family (\$15/year assessment) and **Student (free**). The Chapter operates on a September-to-September basis. Assessment is totally separate from dues paid to Trout Unlimited National. Send correspondence or assessment payable to POTOMAC-PATUXENT TROUT UNLIMITED at the return address listed below. Your Chapter (and National TU) expiration date is indicated on the mailing label as PP-0999 or NTU-0998. First-time visitors receive two issues of this publication free.

THE CONSERVATIONIST is a publication of the Potomac-Patuxent Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Contribution in the form of fishing news, tying tips, new book reviews, articles, letters and even gossip should be mailed or faxed to the Editor. Items received by the 15th of the month will be published in the next issue.

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