
The Newsletter of the Columbia-Greene Rip Van Winkle Chapter #569 of Trout Unlimited

TU...TO CONSERVE, PROTECT & RESTORE NORTH AMERICA'S COLD WATER FISHERIES & THEIR WATERSHEDS

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2004!

FRAN CONVERSES ON CONSERVANCY

Fran Martino was our guest speaker at the last meeting on December 16th. She is the environmental educator for the Columbia Land Conservancy, Inc. She gave us an informal presentation on the organization, its function and some of the benefits of being a member. She brought one huge map showing conservancy land, public land, and private land. This was followed by a slide show of many areas under their jurisdiction and programs that they operate in those areas.

It was an enlightening and educational evening presented by an enthusiastic and dedicated lady who leads many programs for adults as well as children. Canoe tours along the Hudson River spotting eagles and other wildlife, bird walks in the Greenport Conservancy area, searches for endangered turtles in the Drowned Land Swamp, snowshoe hikes on state land, are just a few of the environmental awareness and educational programs that she leads.

It was a terrific presentation and she had lots of handouts to top it all off. Our thanks go out to you, Fran, for taking the time to put together and present your programs in such an interesting and entertaining manner.

Dick

AQUATIC BIOLOGIST, DAN ZIELINSKI, TO VISIT!

On January 20, 2004, Dan Zielinski, an aquatic biologist from the DEC will speak at our C-G TU Meeting. He has had the title of aquatic biologist for 14 of the 19 years he has been with the DEC, working primarily in Columbia and Greene Counties.

Dan has worked on projects on Copake Lake, Kinderhook Lake, the Roeliff Jansen Kill, the Catskill Creek, and is currently doing research on the Beaverkill Study dealing with physical and chemical aspects of the stream environment including water temperature, discharge and flow measurements. Highlights of Dan's presentation will be the results of his recent survey on the Catskill Creek and an illustration of wild trout population trends over the years.

We are very fortunate to have someone so knowledgeable about our local lakes and streams come and take time from his busy schedule to enlighten us at O'Brien's at the January meeting.

Hank

DEC HATCHERY STAFF LEVELS AND IMPACTS TO HATCHERY PRODUCTION LEVELS

For your information, we are publishing a letter that we thought you might find interesting. It was written by Mr. Douglas Stang, Chief – Bureau of Fisheries, NYSDEC, to explain the DEC position regarding personnel levels and hatchery production levels from 2001 through 2004.

Dick

I will try do my best to clarify the current situation regarding hatchery staff levels and impacts to hatchery production levels:

Until fall 2001, DEC had been operating its hatchery system with an exemption to the state hiring freeze for 80 staff. That exemption was rescinded due to the fiscal state of New York. The number of staff in our hatchery system dwindled (due to promotions, retirements, other employment opportunities, etc.) to 74 and, without an exemption to the hiring freeze, we were faced with reduced production capacity in our hatchery system. Based on staffing levels at our fish culture facilities during spring/ summer 2002, we proposed a reduction in the number of brown trout to be reared (proposed reduction in production of 100,000 brown trout yearlings).

The Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources attempted to get the exemption for the hatchery system reinstated so that we could operate our system at full production. Instead of the exemption, we received 6 waivers for individual positions within the hatchery system. We filled those 6 positions by late fall 2002 and we operated close to full capacity last winter.

In March 2003, the state, faced with an increasing fiscal crisis offered DEC employees a retirement incentive. Six fish culture staff retired under the incentive and 2 others left for other reasons. We were able to fill 2 of the positions vacated by retirement as part of the DEC's staffing plan. We did our best to get all the fish stocked last spring with the reduced staff in the hatchery system. Distribution of the fish was difficult last spring, but mother nature cooperated with cool temperatures and lots of rain which allowed us to still stock the trout into waters with suitable conditions.

Currently, we have 73 positions in the hatchery system and are faced with the problem of too few staff to operate the hatchery system at full production and to distribute the fish raised into New York's waters in a timely manner. In order to alleviate the stress on the system and its employees we will reduce production at the two facilities where staffing shortages are most problematic: Rome Hatchery and Catskill Hatchery. We plan to reduce overall (statewide) brown trout production by 100,000 yearlings for spring 2004. We will stock out additional brown trout as fall fingerlings to reduce the carrying capacity of the hatchery system to a more manageable level. We're stocking out 50,000 brown trout from each of the two hatcheries as fall fingerlings which will reduce the number of yearling brown trout we will stock next year from about 1.865 million to 1.765 million.

The reason for the 100,000 fish level of reduction in 2003 and 2004 is due to similar reduced staffing levels in 2002 and 2003.

Additionally, we will be working with Regional Fisheries Management staff to try to reduce the number of trips that the hatchery drivers make to distribute the trout. This may involve reductions in the number of increment stockings in a few waters, reduction in the number of smaller waters stocked, etc. We will work out the details this fall/winter with the Regional and hatchery staffs.

Our goal, as always, will be to provide the best fishing possible given our resources - without placing undue stress on the system and the system components (including staff). We are hopeful that conservative reductions now will help us prevent potentially catastrophic problems from overly taxed system and staff.

As to when we will see an improvement in staffing levels in the hatchery system or in any of our Regional Units or other Units - it is anyone's guess. At a recent meeting with Lake Ontario stakeholders, I said for the remainder of 2003-04, it does not look like we will see any staff level relief - optimistically, we might see something in 2004... (I believe that is the source of projected date as 4/1/04 for, potentially, more staff).

Bottom line in all of this: we filled the 6 positions last year when we had the opportunity; staff attrition has occurred since last year and we are at the same staffing level a year later; resulting in a reduction in our production capability for the hatchery system.

I hope this clarifies the "how we got to where we are" scenario. If you want to discuss further, please let me know.

Doug

Douglas Stang - Chief, Bureau of Fisheries
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway Albany, New York 12233-4753

THE CURRENT ON"LINE"

IF YOU RECEIVED THIS NEWSLETTER BY MAIL AND HAVE AN EMAIL ADDRESS PLEASE CONTACT ONE OF THE CO-EDITORS SO OUR TU CHAPTER CAN SAVE MONEY ON MAILINGS.

Also, if anyone doesn't want to receive the newsletter any longer please notify one of us:

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FROM THE EDITORS: THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

If five people in a team think alike, four of them are redundant.

JOHN LaROCCA – a popular thought he shares at his workshops

La ROCCA'S CORNER – “Fish Tails & Fish Tales”

Some year the trout season will come to a close with a memorable day when there is a slight overcast; the wind does not blow; there is snow in the woods but no ice in the creek; the water is black but clear; and the trout bite. Until then, it is the usual.

CHRISTMAS WRAPPING

Before the Transportation Security Agency and before the airlines consistently lost money and became so much tighter with both security and their restrictions, I frequently did “back to backers.” When working with a client on multiple visits, I’d buy two sets of tickets, one set originating in each city that would be included in my travel. The tickets would be scheduled to meet my schedule, but purchased to make both trips include the proverbial “Saturday night stayover.” You could often buy two trips for less than the price of one that did not include such a stay. Occasionally I’d throw or give away the second trip if it was not needed and still be ahead of the game.

One year a colleague and I were working with the same client and traveling together – both buying “back to backers,” and at one point we were left with a pair of round trip tickets to Denver. My son and his friend (now wife) had friends in the Denver area, so off they went. They visited and toured, renting a car and driving up into the mountains. It was so late in the year that the passes were beginning to close with snow; one road they took ended at one of those closures.

Near the road at its stopping point was a little mountain pond populated that day by two heavily clothed fly-fishermen and who knows how many brook trout. The anglers were up to their chests in the icy black water, and most of the trout were rising. More than a few of the brookies were fooled by feathers and fur. Mark, a professional photographer, took a lovely black and white that afternoon. The image is so soft and mellow that you can almost hear the silent snowflakes – countless blurry white dots on the print – as they hit the still water of the pond. I framed the glossy print, and at this time of year often stop for an extra long look when I pass it at the foot of the stairs. “Wouldn’t that be a lovely way to spend a few hours at Christmas...after the gifts but before dinner?” I wonder to myself. “What a great way to wrap up a trout season!”

What usually happens, however, is that I wrap up the trout season, indeed, the year, in a very different way. Sometime over the holiday I’ll wander downstairs to my “fishing trunk” and drag all my stuff up to the kitchen. I’ll clean, sort, and inventory it and think about all the times I didn’t get out on the water and all of the mistakes I made when I did...mistakes I will not make next season...right!

Now, I am not a fanatic...I do not inspect the point of every hook, but I do take a look at pretty much everything. I clean the rod, check the ferrules and guides, insert it in the cloth sack and stow it in its tube. I pull all the line off my reel, clean it with warm water, dry it well and put it back on the reel...probably not the very best way to do it, but it’s mine. Then comes “divestiture” - everything comes out of the pockets, and I marvel at how many patterns I still carry around and never use and marvel also at how many good nymphs I’ve left in rocks and trees. I mess with my waders and swear I’ll get a new pair of wading shoes over the winter.

When all is neatly arrayed on the kitchen table, I close the fly boxes; put the reel in its case; load it all in an L.L.Bean canvas bag; and put it back in my fishing trunk. Finally, as I am closing the lid, the thought comes, "Now where did I leave my buddy and beaver-made popple wading staff?" No matter; I'll find it in the spring.

I'm afraid this is the way I usually put the Christmas wrapping on my trout season. It'll do.

HANK'S FLY BOX – Fly Tying Course

In January of 1995 I took the C-G TU Fly Tying Course at C-GCC and wish I had taken 40 years sooner. Since then I have spent many enjoyable hours and met many wonderful people through fly tying and fly fishing and would like to encourage you to take the fly tying course also. The C-G TU Fly Tying Course will start January 8, 2004 at C-GCC. It will consist of 6 Thursday nights from 7 – 9:00 p.m. If anyone is interested in taking the course or teaching it, please call Lynn Lee at 828-5402.

I would like to provide you with some additional information about the course. It is a beginning fly tying course in which the student will learn to use the tools and materials necessary to tie a variety of flies. The beginner will be taught how to choose hackle, palmer hackle, stack hair, attach wings, and dub a body. Each participant will learn the basic tying knots: the jam, half-hitch and whip finish. Our goal is to help the student acquire the techniques necessary to construct fishable, well proportioned, attractive patterns...rewarding to them, and more importantly appealing to the fish. Two new patterns will be introduced and tied each night. The skills and techniques taught in each session will build on the ones taught in the prior sessions.

The course will also include instruction in basic trout stream entomology so the student can identify the common insects and their stages of development which the patterns attempt to mimic. A booklet with the 12 patterns and how to tie them will be provided along with a copy of Dave Hughes' book The American Fly Tying Manual which includes nearly 300 of America's most popular patterns. The basic tools required for the course include a vise, scissors, hackle pliers, thread bobbin, bodkin, hair stacker and a whip finishing tool. The tool set can be purchased or borrowed from C-GTU, or the student can bring his/her own tools.

The following is an outline of the patterns to be taught in this course:

<u>DATE</u>	<u>FEATURED FLY PATTERN</u>
January 8,	Wooly Bugger, Montana Nymph
January 15,	Caddis Larva, Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear
January 22,	Hare's Ear Wet, Partridge and Yellow
January 29,	Brown Bi-visible, March Brown
February 5,	Comparadun, Black Ant
February 12,	Black Nose Dace, Mickey Finn

MEETINGS:

EVERY MONTH: Our regularly scheduled meetings are the **3rd Tuesday of each month (except July and August)** unless otherwise indicated. We meet at 7:30 p.m. at O'Brien's Restaurant on Route 23B in Leeds, NY.

THIS MONTH: Tuesday, January 20, 2004

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, February 17, 2004

OTHER DATES:

Fly Tying Course at C-GCC – 6 Thursday nights, starting January 8, 2004 (7–9:00 p.m.)

Fly Casting Course at Hudson HS - 6 Thursday nights, starting February 26, 2004 (7–9:00 p.m.)

If you can help with tying and/or casting please call Lynn Lee at 828-5402.

COLUMBIA-GREENE RIP VAN WINKLE CHAPTER #569 OF TROUT UNLIMITED

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Keep current...with The Current! Dick & Hank (CO-EDITORS)