
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

SEEN ANY RIVER OTTERS LATELY?

The October meeting will feature a representative from the NYS DEC Hale Creek Field Station in Gloversville who will present a program about river otters. Prior to the 1800's, the river otter occupied every watershed across the Empire State until human influence pushed them into the more remote areas of the Adirondacks. Since the 1970's wildlife managers have helped many animal populations, including otters, make a huge comeback.

The program will include a slide presentation about otters that will help you learn how to look for signs of otters, and how you can assist with the Hudson River Otter Stewardship Program to help re-establish healthy populations of river otters. Justin

CAMP COLBY CAMPER CHATS WITH C-G CHAPTER

Dustin Van Alphen, the Columbia County student our club sponsored to attend this past summer's DEC camp, came to our September meeting to thank us for his very enjoyable and educational week at Camp Colby in the Adirondack Mountains.

Dustin enjoyed making new friends at camp. He also said his favorite adventure during the week was his 4 hour canoe trip...despite it being cut short because of the potential of a thunder and lightning storm. Dustin was also pleased to have taken and passed the hunter safety program in order to receive his hunting license. He had the opportunity to shoot a 22-caliber rifle as well as a 12-gauge shotgun.

We at Trout Unlimited try to be environmentally aware and involved...and were interested to hear Dustin explain their mock project and his role as DEC coordinator, discussing problems associated with building casinos in rural areas and how they could affect the wildlife and the streams that so many of us enjoy. There are many pros and cons on this sensitive topic.

Dustin even got in a little fishing at camp; however, he had about the same luck most of us have had fly fishing the last few weeks. Finally, when asked if he would like to go to DEC camp again his response was, "I sure would! Thanks for sending me!" Hank

LEAF PACK PEOPLE PROVIDE PERKY PARTY

Emma Bachmann from the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development and The Erpf Gallery, Jenn Grieser from the NYC Department of Environmental Protection, and Abbe Martin

from the Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District were the guests for the September meeting. They brought buckets of water containing leaf packs, creature identification charts, round plastic viewing cups, and plenty of personal energy to provide a "hands on" demonstration which consisted of TU members opening up the leaf packs to discover and identify the critters residing therein.

The leaf packs...nylon net bags (similar to onion bags) filled with leaves...had been placed in the Batavia Kill, near Ashland, NY for three weeks. Some of the packs contained leaves from native vegetation: sumac, birch, and poplar. Others contained Japanese Knotweed leaves. Nymphs and other water residing animals climbed into the leaf packs while they were submerged in the stream. The intent (which got slightly distracted) was to make comparisons between the leaf packs. The results can serve as an indicator of the stream's health. Less importantly, it can be used by fly fishers to help determine what fly to use for fishing that particular creek.

However, these grownups, acting like 6th graders as they separated the bugs from the leaves, got so involved with catching and identifying the critters including mayflies, caddis flies, and damselflies that the intent got slightly sidetracked. It reminded me of the days when we were kids enthusiastically trying to catch polliwogs with our cupped hands in the local pond. This was a fun night for our members and we appreciate the time, effort and patience of these three dedicated gals who provided an evening of amusing entertainment and education.

By the way, does anyone out there know how to tie a watersnipe?

Dick

What's Next?

Come help GCSWCD and NYC DEP bolster the riparian buffer at their previously completed restoration projects.

Bring a friend, bring some tools... we'll supply the plants.

Call 518-622-3620 with questions.

October 29th & 30th (Saturday/Sunday) @ West Kill at Shoemaker property

November 5th (Saturday) @ Stony Clove in Lanesville

INFORMATIVE WEB SITE – Leaf Pack Network

www.stroudcenter.org/lpn

FROM THE EDITORS: Chuckle for the Month

A fisherman goes to the fishmonger and buys six trout. The fishmonger asks, "Do you want them wrapped sir?" The fisherman replies, "No thank you. Could you do me a favor though? Could you throw them to me gently one by one?" "Yes sir I can, but why?" he inquired. "Well," explained the fisherman, "I have been fishing all night and all day and I haven't caught anything. If you throw me those trout and I catch them, I can honestly say when I get home that I caught six trout."

FROM THE INTERNET

HALF-HITCHES AND DOUBLE HAULS FOR HARDCRABBLE DAY

September 10th marked the celebration of Hardscrabble Day in Red Hook. The day's activities featured street vendors, live music, and a parade. Several chapter members were at the Hudson Valley Angler giving tying and casting demonstrations. Joe Reina, Wendy Neefus, Bill Newcomb, and Justin Seeley spent the day restocking depleted fly boxes and casting for "bonefish" near the cemetery adjacent to the store.

More information regarding the other numerous upcoming events at the Hudson Valley Angler, including book signings, guest tyers and classes, can be found at www.hudsonvalleyangler.com.

Justin

La ROCCA'S CORNER – "Fish Tails & Fish Tales"

"You're likely to find some big rainbows up here this time of year." That was the sage wisdom passed on to me on the banks of the Cemetery Pool on the Esopus Creek below The Portal ten or twelve years ago. "The rainbows will come up from the reservoir following the spawning browns...they eat their eggs." So said the wader-clad gent who looked like he knew what he was talking about. I am not sure how knowledgeable he really was, but a few minutes after our conversation I set the hook on a strong rainbow that jumped once, ran straight downstream for the big boulders at the end of the run and broke me off.

FALL COLORS

It is still "dry as a cork" as they say in Medusa, and there is only a week left in September as I write these notes. New Orleans drowns for a second time in a month and New Jersey is considering serious water use restrictions. The hurricane season, which seems to get longer and longer every year, has not even come close to adding enough water to our northeast streams to cover their exposed bones. Last Sunday's *fish and game* column featured advice and guidance on fall trout fishing...including the notion that stalking would be the order of the day if you ventured out. I have not ventured out, but it seems to me that as of right now one would have to be the best stalker, the best caster, and pretty much the best of all that makes up a fly fisherman to get trout out of our local creeks...and even if one were all of those things, better I think, to let the stressed trout rest until the rains do come to our local waters.

It has not always been this way when it comes to the weather. There have been many years when the creeks are brimming by this time of year, and I have caught a few nice browns in the Esopus when the water is full of big yellow sycamore leaves blown into the creek by the gusty winds that sometimes make casting difficult in the narrow Esopus valley. Those browns did not hit very often, but when they did they would take Prince Beadhead Nymphs fished deep in the holes and come in with a struggle. Most of them were heavy, even when they were small fish, and many were shaded creamy and yellow like the blown leaves that floated around them in the river's currents.

It is more than ten years ago now, but there was a span of years when an informal group of friends calling ourselves A.E. Tours fished the Adirondack ponds of the St. Regis Canoe Area in the fall every year. Toward the end of those years we began to catch some brook trout that, like the browns in the Esopus, reflected the colors of the leaves of the season. In this case their coloring was flamboyant, and I distinctly remember the first of those that a member of our little group caught spawning squaretails.

Back then, even though a few of us fished with flies, we would invariably be chucking small spinners and spoons from our seats in canoes when we paddled those ponds in the spring and fall. We would mount these expeditions as soon as the ice was off the ponds in the spring and as late as legally possible in the autumn. The early season trips usually produced more fish, and the fish seemed to be more spread out in the ponds. Fall trips were often more pleasant in terms of weather (although we did get snowed on a couple of times), but the fishing was more difficult...and we were slow learners. When we did not pick up fish in the usual places we'd quit early and chalk it up to warm weather or warm water or some other natural phenomena, and were quite content about it.

Then one year during a particularly slow fall trip one of our boats ventured way off the regular route to the very end of Long Pond and found a small pod of spawning brookies. Young Terry Enk caught one, just one, but it was a beautifully colored, eighteen inch male. I am still not sure what it was about the spot that fish came from – a cold spring that bubbled up, a little bit of current, a gravel bottom, but the experience started us all looking at and fishing places we would not normally fish in the spring and had never fished in the fall.

A year or two after that fish had started our autumn explorations I vividly remember another autumn brook trout experience. Al and Dutch were on Clamshell or Nellie Pond slowly poking around the edges when one of them saw a rise. A few casts later they had landed three or four very good brook trout, again in full spawning colors. When the action died they paddled closer for a look, and peering down into about ten feet of water they saw another dozen or so fish slowly finning in and out of the branch stubs of a huge white pine that had tumbled into the water probably decades before. The next morning produced only two fish from the pod, and both of them took a Zug Bug cast by a newcomer to our group...the only one of us who fished only with flies! (Judd had tried to teach a few of us fly tying the previous winter and had been invited along as part of his "fee." He only joined us for one trip.) Two things I remember about those fish: first, how readily they came to that Zug Bug, and then, how absolutely perfect the home of those brook trout was. Looking down into the water at that small group of fish was like being at a museum or aquarium or looking at an old Field and Stream cover: clear green water, cobblestones on the pond floor, the big pine with its tangled branches, and these beautiful fish swimming in irregular circles under the log. The only thing lacking to make it the complete magazine cover was a Zug Bug and a broken leader trailing from the lip of the biggest trout in the pod!

If all goes well I'll be in the Adirondacks for a little fishing this weekend. I hope to be on one of the area's famous streams and would love to find a few of those spawning brook trout we watched and caught back then. Maybe we will find a few; weather permitting, of course.

TROUT BROOKS & TROUT BOOKS:

A Look Into Justin's Bookcase

In 1964, the then feature writer for *Life* magazine wrote a piece called “In Praise of Trout.” The trout that Paul O’Neil praised were the wild rainbows of the temperamental Esopus Creek. If you’ve been following the reports of the recent conditions of the Esopus, the following words from O’Neil will sound familiar: “The Esopus, nevertheless can drive [an angler] out of his mind. It is victimized so steadily by both man and nature that its wounds, illnesses and distortions of personality, its slow recoveries and its sudden relapses gradually become the major preoccupation of his existence; and he finds himself – even in those rare occasions when the creek is running clear, its temperature normal and its water level perfect – cringing in sure anticipation of horrors to come.”

The article is the centerpiece of the book *In Praise of Trout – and also me*, which not only elaborates on the pleasures and pains of being an Esopus regular, but is also highlighted by a warm introduction by Ernest Schwiebert and a fascinating record of letters written by O’Neil, the Troutmeister, on behalf of the Woodland Valley Trout Fund.

These letters, while designed to coax funds from regular anglers for the purpose of stocking a tributary of the Esopus, reveal a man who also fought to protect a valuable yet often overlooked member of the fabled Catskill streams. The fund lasted for over a quarter-century, and was continued by his son after Paul O’Neil’s death.

O’Neil, through his words, and more importantly through his actions, summarizes and elaborates on the countless hours of behind-the-scenes work that is critical to improving and maintaining quality fisheries.

FROM THE EDITORS: Thought for the Month

A teacher friend of mine sent me this message: “*Childhood should be a journey, not a race.*” I think the same thing applies to fly fishing. Klaus, thanks for putting that thought in my head!

Hank

HANK'S FLY BOX – California Mosquito

On Monday, August 8th I fished the Farmington with Wendy Neefus, and as usual was humbled by his fishing abilities. Fortunately before we started Wendy asked me if I had any size 16 mosquito dry flies and I said, “Sure!” When he saw them he said, “They’re not dark enough, try these.” He explained that his buddy Tom (Starace) and he had good luck with Tom’s black, downwing style of mosquito a few days earlier on the Farmington.

After fishing nymphs for a long time I finally saw a nice rise and put on a "dry fly." I think it was a size 18 Tan Elk Hair Caddis because I did see some tan caddis emerging. After a turn down or two, I put on one of the mosquitoes and proceeded to catch a few fish on dry flies!

When I returned home I looked in a couple of my tying books and found a recipe for the California Mosquito. Thanks Wendy and Tom for introducing me to this variation of the mosquito! Following is that recipe with a few of my own variations:

CALIFORNIA MOSQUITO

Hook: Dry fly, size 12 - 20

Thread: Black 8/0

Tail: Grizzly or dark moose main

Body: Black floss or black Uni-flexx

Rib: White thread

Wing: Grizzly hackle tips – tied in downwing construction 30-40 degree angle

Hackle: Grizzly

AND THE SEPTEMBER WINNER IS...

...Abbe Martin who won the FREE door prize of flies tied and donated by Wendy Neefus.

Those wishing to donate flies or other door prizes for the free monthly drawings should contact Dick Riccio.

THE CURRENT ON"LINE"

IF YOU RECEIVED THIS NEWSLETTER BY MAIL AND HAVE AN EMAIL ADDRESS PLEASE CONTACT US SO OUR TU CHAPTER CAN SAVE MONEY ON MAILINGS. Also, please notify us **if you have changed your email address or no longer want to receive the newsletter:** Dick Riccio (518) 851-7002 newsletter@cgtu.org
or Hank Theiss (518) 851-9442 newsletter@cgtu.org

C-GTU MEETINGS

EVERY MONTH: Our regularly scheduled meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. **at the Cornell Cooperative Extension Building on Mountain Road in Cairo, NY,** the 3rd Tuesday of each month (except July and August) unless otherwise indicated.

THIS MONTH: Tuesday, October 18, 2005 – **FREE DOOR PRIZE DRAWING**

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, November 15, 2005 – **FREE DOOR PRIZE DRAWING**

Chapter Officers

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Keep current...with The Current! Dick, Hank & Justin (Editors)