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

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

## HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

### MEET DOC SNEED

Tom Mikulka grew up in northern New Jersey just south of the New York State line. He learned his earliest fishing lessons from his father, Bill, who was a draftsman, artist, cartoonist, tinkerer, inventor, newspaper columnist (wrote an outdoor column for the Hillsdale (NJ) News) and sometime fisherman. By the time he got to high school Tom was fishing local waters of Bergen County, and later in his high school years he had graduated to and succeeded on both Catskill and Adirondack waters with flies and an Orvis Battenkill fly rod. And somewhere in that timeframe Bill had turned his attention and his talents to creating a tool for fishermen designed to be an “on-stream reference” to water conditions and fish appetites for bait, lure and fly selection...in short, a tool designed to give the fisherman at least a preliminary answer to the perennial question, “Hmmm, what should I use for bait?” Bill called himself Doc Sneed, and put his draftsman and other talents to work creating a **Fisherman’s Slide rule**.

Slide rules became extinct and A River Runs Through It pushed the interest and growth in fly fishing off the charts. Bill got old and quit fishing, but Tom stayed at it and saw an opportunity in his father’s early tinkering. Come to the next C-G Trout Unlimited Chapter Meeting, November 15, meet the new Doc Sneed, and, as Paul Harvey says, get the “**rest of the story.**”

John LaRocca

### YOU “OTTER” HAVE BEEN AT THE MEETING

You “otter” not have missed this one. “This one” was a presentation about otters in NY by Laura Bried, a Wildlife Educator from the NYSDEC. As a companion, she brought along an otter (that had a run-in with a taxidermist) mounted in a diorama box. Complete with slides, rubberized otter tracks and scat, as well as a mounted weasel, (the family to which otters belong), this was a quick but comprehensive look at the status of this playful but elusive creature that exists primarily in the eastern section of NY.

The DEC has an ongoing project (to which Laura is attached) to study otters in the Hudson Valley, particularly the Hudson River area. Part of the research concerns the affect of pollutants on the health of otters in the Hudson River Watershed, which includes all the rivers that run into the Hudson River.

Any otter sightings in this region can be reported to the Hudson River Otter Stewardship Program, NYSDEC Hale Creek Field Station, 182 Steele Ave Ext., Gloversville, NY, 12078, or call (518-773-7318), or email hrotter@gw.dec.state.ny.us Thank you, Laura, for presenting an entertaining, educational, and lively evening about this sleek critter that few of us have seen in the wild. Dick

## **SAVE THIS DATE ON YOUR CALENDAR!!!**

The First Annual Columbia-Greene Trout Unlimited Banquet is January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2006 and will be held at the Freehold Country Inn. Cocktails: 6:00 p.m. Dinner: 7:00 p.m. The guest speaker on "Fly Fishing the Catskills" will be the well-known author and fishing guide, Bert Darrow.

Join us for an interesting program, a delicious meal, good company, great fishing stories, and a chance at some super prizes. Door prizes, bucket raffles, and a silent auction will have many fishing items as well as a few surprises for "non-fisherfolk." Wendy Neefus and Joe Reina

The menu is as follows:

Mesclun Greens with Sherry Wine Vinaigrette  
Grilled Chicken Breast with Lemon Herb Vinaigrette  
Penne Pasta with Tomatoes, Fresh Mozzarella Cheese and Basil  
Mashed Potatoes  
Chef's Choice Fresh Vegetable Medley  
Rolls and Whipped Butter  
Warm Chocolate Cake with French Vanilla Ice Cream and Fresh Strawberries  
Coffee and Tea

**All are welcome, whether you fish or not.**

Tickets are \$30.00 per person. Please make checks out to: Columbia-Greene Trout Unlimited.  
Mail to: Wendy Neefus 741 Warren Street, Hudson, NY 12534

If you would like to set aside a table, please let us know how many people in your group and we will reserve a table for you. Reservations will be listed at the door.

**Deadline for reservations is January 1, 2006.**

**In case of bad weather listen to WHUC (12:30 AM ) or WGNA (Country 107.7 FM), or call Wendy Neefus (518-828-6645 or 518-828-1321) or Hank Theiss (518-851-9442).**

## **SPECIAL "THANK YOU" NOTES!**

We appreciate all those who donated materials to be used in our tying classes! While doing the inventory, George Goth, Dick Riccio, Joe Reina and I have been in the process of organizing all the materials that will be used. Much less will have to be purchased this year...for example, we will only have to buy 1 box of hooks, some thread and just a few other supplies. Thank you all so much for your generosity!

We also thank Justin Seeley for his donation of large plastic containers to hold all these supplies. I think my wife thought our inventory was going to make our house look like we have been having chicken fights in our dining room...with feathers flying all over the place. Thank you George, Dick, Joe and Justin, for making the inventory a cleaner more organized project than anticipated.

Another special thank you to the Columbia County Sportsmen's Federation, which is helping to defray the cost of our guest speaker, Bert Darrow, at our January Banquet. Hank

## **MEMBERSHIP REMINDER...like you need another one.**

You may be interested to know that our chapter, at the time of this writing, has 102 members. That is a substantial increase from a few years ago when membership was in the mid thirties and we would be hard pressed, on some nights, to get a quorum in order to have a meeting. Since those times, membership has steadily grown and we are becoming a stronger organization with better participation.

Despite our name, Columbia-Greene Chapter of TU, our members have zip codes that reflect their living areas as follows: 45 Columbia Co., 43 Greene Co., 4 Dutchess Co., 3 Ulster Co., 2 Albany Co., 2 Rensselaer Co., 1 Schoharie Co., 1 Kings Co. (Brooklyn), 1 Nassau Co., (Long Island). It is a geographically diverse group but we are concerned, because there are some folks who have not yet renewed and we would like to have them continue as chapter members and part of this social fabric. **So...this is your reminder to renew.** Also, if you are not a member and would like to join TU, we would welcome you to our chapter. There are benefits listed below and it is easy to join or renew. Instructions for both, follow the list of benefits:

- One-year subscription to TROUT magazine
- TU Calendar (mailed in the fall)
- Official TU membership card
- Car rental & hotel discounts
- Personalized TU address labels
- TU decal
- Local chapter membership

There are 3 ways to join TU:

1. Request an application from me. It is a self explanatory, pre-addressed application/envelope I normally have with me at meetings. Write, e-mail, or call me for an application: Dick Riccio, 203 Route 9-H, Hudson, NY 12534. [membership@cgtu.org](mailto:membership@cgtu.org) (518) 851-7002.

2. The next way to join is via the computer. Go to the website which is [HTTP://www.tu.org](http://www.tu.org) Click on join /renew. Review the membership levels. Then, for non-members, click "here to join" (you will receive a free gift), for renewals/former members, click "here to renew" (you may also get a gift). In both cases have a credit card handy. If you're asked for a chapter number, ours is #569.

3. The third way to join is by calling 1 (800) 834-2419. Keep a credit card handy for this method also.

Dick

## FROM THE EDITORS: Thought for the Month

With all the rain in October you may want to think about building an ark!

Hank

*Never be afraid to try something new.  
Remember that a lone amateur built the Ark.  
A large group of professionals built the Titanic.*

DAVE BARRY

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

"It's soft...the light, I mean...the light is soft." So said my father forty or more years ago in response to my positive comments about a particularly fine photograph he had taken. Dad took literally thousands of pictures in his lifetime of world travels, and after the first few thousand, many of them were beautiful. "That light makes for brilliant color, but not glaring color," he explained. Years later, my son, then a "semi-pro" photographer, would tell me, "Late afternoon sun, Dad; it's the best...it's soft light."

### HOME WATER AT SEASON'S END

Brother Steve and I and Steve's fishing buddy, Phil, fished the Ausable over the last weekend of September. When the invitation came I jumped at it even though I knew I could not spend the whole weekend up north. It was late in the season, and I wasn't sure Steve and I would get out again even though there are lots of open waters now during what I call the "extra innings" of modern trout seasons. We had to remind each other to buy new licenses given that we would fish on Saturday, October 1. The Ausable got some rain the week before...a good bit in fact, so when we arrived in mid-afternoon on Friday its flow was dropping but still a little up and a little off color. Two local fly-shop experts (in different shops) said we could get fish on nymphs – each suggesting dramatically different patterns, and we did...on both patterns. Friday evening was productive for me; Saturday was a bust. Steve did just fine as always. At one point on Friday evening I thought I had a monster; it turned out to be a sucker that actually inhaled the bottom nymph and then foul hooked itself in the tail on the top fly. Before I figured it out I had Steve hustling upstream with a net! At least I had evidence that I was getting fly down.

I left my two colleagues on Saturday evening; they fished Sunday without much success. Toward the end of that week Steve called again suggesting that we might consider fishing the Neversink Gorge on the last weekend of the season in mid-October. We agreed to check in a couple of days before but never did. The rains came...and came and came, and while neither of us really checked directly on the Neversink flow, we both, I think correctly, assumed that the gorge would be a raging torrent. All the streams down the Thruway were a frothy chocolate brown when I traveled to New York City and back on Thursday. I figured my fishing local water was complete for this year.

Saturday, the last day of the regular season, dawned with a stiff breeze and peeks of bright sun amidst scudding clouds. I'd planned a day of small construction projects and headed for the lumberyard early. By the time of my return with a pick-up load of lumber there was more sun

than clouds, and I felt compelled to stop on Kellam's Bridge and check out the Ten Mile Creek. To my surprise there was no flood, just plenty of very slightly tinted water and a strong voice in the trees saying, "Better get back here this afternoon." It was 4:30 p.m. when I finally pulled into the DEC access parking lot, and as I piled out of the truck and walked to the edge of the creek it began to rain...again. I slipped under the bridge and threw a couple of casts toward the far abutment wall. No stops or even hesitations came in the drift. No problem; it was good to be on the water.

When I stepped from under the bridge at the upstream end the sun came out with me. The air seemed to have been scrubbed by the downpour and that classic "late afternoon sun," that "soft light," greeted my emergence from the shadow of the bridge. The riffle and run just upstream looked perfect and on the second cast I hooked and landed an eight-inch rainbow. Wonderful: the water was full of downed leaves, the current was heavy by tiny stream standards, and the little fish hit the bug hard and struggled valiantly. With one twist he was off the hook and home...and I was feeling very good about trout and flies and home water and "bright colors with no glare"...from the pink stripe on the little fish to the still deep green and shiny wet leaves of the streamside brambles.

For the next forty-five minutes I worked my way slowly downstream probing pockets and runs with a big ugly nymph, letting it go deep and then twitching it back to me in the riffle edges and the slower seams. Nothing moved in the water except at one point when I looked up and found four mallards staring at me from three pools downstream. They looked and waited and I looked and waited, and I won the standoff when they burst into flight in a shower of wing-beaten water that twinkled in that late afternoon sun. I wondered if they would just keep on flying; it is getting to be that time of year. The likelihood, however, is that if I went a few hundred yards downstream, I'd jump them again. The valley of the Ten Mile is a very wildlife-friendly place.

A short distance below the newly-named "duck pool," just above the point at which the stream makes a sharp bend and pushes up against an old and growing blowdown and debris pile, is a beautifully deep little run and pool that just has to hold fish. In spite of the fact that I have **never** taken a fish out of this spot, I was sure that this was my day. Wrong. I fished it hard and carefully but moved nothing at all. When I'd made my last cast and the drift had ended I looked up, and downstream, over the top of the debris, my eyes picked up a flurry of motion. With focus I was able to identify four whitetails as they filed in a line - in only a modest hurry - downstream along the edge of the water. The light was even softer but was beginning to fail. It was time to wrap it up and let it rest for half a year.

I followed the logging road out keeping to its very edge because most of it was one long puddle. It was the end of the day and the snails were out...dozens of slick little worm-like bodies in the glistening leaves. Halfway out I jumped two more deer, big healthy does with ears and tails that looked like they made up half the animal. They were not spooked and stopped on the hillside to watch me shuffle by. Then I was at the truck and there was a chill in the air. Before heading home I walked to the water's edge, peered up under the bridge toward the riffle and wished the little rainbow good luck for the winter. With good fortune I'll fish a few more times before the hard winter sets in, but not at home, not on this little creek. And that's just fine.

## **TROUT BROOKS & TROUT BOOKS:**

### **A Look Into Justin's Bookcase**

Eric Leiser's book The Dettes: A Catskill Legend has quickly become a legend in its own right since its publication in 1992 by the Willowkill Press. Anglers and collectors alike have kept copies of this book leaping off shelves for good reason.

Regrettably, a number of prominent figures in the Catskill tradition have left us without passing on their knowledge. Thankfully, this is not the case with the Dette family.

Leiser's choice of an informal and conversational tone to recount the story of the Dettes seems to put the reader in their fly shop on Cottage Street in Roscoe, NY picking their brains for the latest fishing tip or tying technique.

Between the covers of this book is a wealth of information. Walt, Winnie, and daughter Mary give a superb biographical account of how they, along with the Darbees rose to prominence in the realm of fly tying, all told in the context of the "golden age" of fly fishing in the Catskills. The cast of notable anglers and writers who sought the Dettes for flies and knowledge is impressive. Walt, along with Ernie Maltz, studied and developed some of the early caddis patterns before Gary LaFontaine came along. Walt and Ted Townsend were also instrumental in developing the Coffin Fly, to represent the spinner of the elusive green drake. Oddly enough, the name was conceived by Townsend, who attended a funeral that morning, yet still managed to test the new creation later that day. One could also consult this title as a reference for a well-rounded selection of flies to carry, with detailed tying steps for many of the patterns.

Eric Leiser sums up the value of this book best in the introduction, writing, "...their story is a part of us and their contributions will be passed on to our children, and theirs, for hundreds of fishing seasons to come." The Dettes are a vital link in the great chain of Catskill fly-fishing history, and those of us who still enjoy tying and fishing the traditional patterns both honor and perpetuate their contributions to the sport.

### **FROM THE EDITORS: Justin's Chuckle for the Month**

"How was the fishing today Adrian?" asked his friend Stan back at the marina. "Not very good, I only got fifty bites; one small fish and forty-nine mosquitoes."

FROM THE INTERNET

### **HANK'S FLY BOX – Royal Coachman Parachute**

**OLD IS NOT ALWAYS BAD!**

In recent years many new recipes for flies have been introduced in our fly-fishing magazines. We sometimes forget the old reliable flies that have been around for one hundred years or more. The Royal Coachman has been changed slightly and improved over the years but remains essentially the same and continues to be a great searching pattern in our local waters. Ask



## AND THE OCTOBER WINNERS ARE...

...**Lou Martins** who won a FREE door prize of flies tied and donated by Hank Theiss, and **Rich Forlani** who won a second FREE door prize of flies tied and donated by Bill Millard.

Those wishing to donate flies or other door prizes for the free monthly drawings should contact **Dick Riccio**. **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, November 15, 2005 – Elections

**NEXT MEETING:** Tuesday, December 20, 2005

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

#### Chapter Officers

President	Lynn Lee	(518) 828-5402	<a href="mailto:president@cgtu.org">president@cgtu.org</a>
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## KEEP CURRENT...WITH THE CURRENT!

**Dick Riccio, Hank Theiss & Justin Seeley (Editors)**