
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 HOLIDAYS!

ELECTION NOTES

At the November chapter meeting the group elected the following officers and new members of the Board of Directors:

President: Hank Theiss
Secretary: Justin Seeley

Vice President: Joe Reina
Treasurer: Dave Rudloff.

New members to the Board of Directors: Wendy Neefus, John La Rocca
Past President, Lynn Lee, will now serve *ex officio* on the Board.

Congratulations to all of you, and best wishes for a continued strong chapter.

Dick

CATALOGUE NIGHT

'Tis the season...the catalogue season, that is. Day after day my already-leaning mailbox strains under the weight of catalogues, which arrive in increasing numbers and heft. The north woods bio-mass that supports the paper mills that crank out coated papers is shrinking while my living room magazine baskets grow to overflowing with glossy mounds of catalogues. The good news is that many of these slick publications are sporting goods, hunting, fishing and outdoor gear stores right there by our Lazy-Boys and kitchen tables. The bad news is we can't afford half the stuff that is on their shelves.

So let's have some fun with all this paper. Bring your favorite catalogues to December's TU meeting on December 20th...old and new, common and unique...all catalogues are welcome. When the business meeting is complete we will take some collective and social time to explore the catalogue shelves, share our own fantasies about rods and flies and equipment with "brothers of the angle," and maybe make some holiday wish lists.

John La Rocca

AVALANCHE NAMED “TOM” HITS TU CHAPTER MEETING

Unlike hurricanes, avalanches are not named, but this is an exception. It was named by me, not by any official name-giving organization. This was not a traditional avalanche that comes streaming down a mountainside destroying just about everything in its path. This was “an avalanche” of information and personal memories told by Tom Mikulka, our guest speaker at the November meeting, as he narrated the story about the evolution of an idea developed by his Father, Doc Sneed.

Doc Sneed was a talented individual and an accomplished artist despite his lack of advanced education. He had an idea of making a simple chart or “pocket computer” that could be used by novice, as well as advanced fly fishers. Doc drew lifelike versions of mayflies, caddis flies, stoneflies, terrestrials and others that he used, along with other factors such as temperature, time of year, time of day, etc., to enable fly fishers in selecting a proper fly. He developed a wheel with much of the above information on it and attached it to laminated paper with windows punched out at strategic locations. When you turned the wheel, after viewing a brown fly near the stream, and lined up “brown” properly, the windows would then lead you to other factors and possible flies to use for fishing that day.

Over the years, Tom and his family researched, updated, and refined the idea eventually developing a guide using modern, tough, plastic materials but keeping the same principal of a wheel with drawings sandwiched between two plastic cards (also with drawings) with a window. As you turn the wheel and line up the information, based on your observation of an insect, it will guide you to possible flies to use that are pictured on the cards. This brief description of how a sort of crude idea evolved over many years, into a high-tech reality has left out the memories of humorous childhood battles with siblings, and adult stories, with their own set of unique circumstances, that accompanied Tom’s presentation. This was indeed a wonderful “avalanche” and we are grateful to you Tom for such a personal view, and your fond memories of an idea that turned out to be a kind of family project, complete with a happy ending...Doc Sneed got to see the final product.

For those who missed this terrific presentation but are interested to see and learn more about the Fly Fishing Guide, go to the website www.docsneed.com or go to Google and type in (using the parentheses) “doc sneed”. There you will find 1050 references to the guide. Dick

FROM THE EDITORS: Hank’s Thought for the Month

*The true fisherman approaches the first day of fishing season
with all the sense of wonder and awe as a child approaches Christmas.*

ROBERT TRAVER

MARK JANUARY 7th ON YOUR 2006 CALENDAR!!!

First Annual C-G Trout Unlimited Banquet - Freehold Country Inn

COCKTAILS: 6:00 p.m. DINNER: 7:00 p.m.

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

BERT DARROW, GUEST SPEAKER "Fly Fishing the Catskills"

Bert has fly-fished for over 35 years and has spent over 25,000 hours on rivers and streams in both the Northeast and West. He has been involved in many conservation activities throughout the years...because of all the work he has done he has received the New York State Individual Conservation Award.

Bert has been a member of the Catskill Mountain Trout Unlimited Chapter for over 25 years, and has been a longtime member of the Theodore Gordon Flyfishers where he is on the board of directors.

He has been teaching fly-fishing since 1978 to all, from beginners to expert fly anglers, and is a NYS fishing guide. He is very active in the Catskill Fly-fishing Center and is currently the director.

As a well-known author he has been asked to speak to many groups and has appeared on numerous TV shows such as "Good Morning America" and "In Search of Fly Water", which aired on ESPN.

He has also been on the Outdoor Network, as well as Fox News and PBS.

Bert and his wife Shirley live in Tillson, New York.

Ron Urban, TU State Chairman, wrote..."We now ask you to help us and your chapter by attending this fundraiser for the chapter to do needed conservation and educational activities throughout the coming year. This is a means for us to raise needed funds for operation also. We currently have a successful fly-fishing and a fly-tying class each year, attend outdoor events, stock local streams and participate in conservation work with the Greene County Soil and Water District as well as other activities.

Your Banquet Committee has worked diligently and hard to make this event successful for your chapter and you. We hope you can take the time to attend and meet some of the members that make C-GTU a welcomed organization in Columbia and Greene counties."

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).

FROM THE EDITORS: Justin's Chuckle for the Month

Two old guys are fly fishing on a river when a funeral procession passes over a nearby bridge. One of the fishermen stops fishing and takes his hat off until it passes. The other fisherman notices and comments on how impressed he is by the other's display of respect. The first fisherman replies, "Heck it's the least I could do, we would have been married 35 years next week."

FROM THE INTERNET

FLY TYING & CASTING INSTRUCTORS NEEDED

The planning and scheduling for our chapter's winter fly-tying and fly-fishing classes are almost complete. The wet and dry hackle, dubbing, fur, thread and hooks have been sorted and additional materials ordered. Arrangements for the classroom for fly tying and the gym for casting have been made with the local community college.

But the most important ingredient cannot be sorted or ordered from a fly shop - the volunteer instructors!...instructors who guide the students thru the intricacies of picking wet and dry hackle, of winding floss and Mylar, of the side arm cast, roll cast, the single or double haul...volunteers who show how to tie a fly to the tippet, the tippet to the leader and the leader to the fly line...and volunteers who explain where the trout lie in the riffles or bends and why, which fly to try and how to present it.

Volunteer instructors are needed for both courses...please give the chapter a hand.

To volunteer contact

George Goth (622-0837), Hank Theiss (851-9442) or Dick Riccio (851-7002).

The fly-tying class is scheduled to begin on Thursday, January 12th with 5 more classes following on January 19th, February 2nd, February 9th, February 16th and February 23rd. The course includes one-on-one instruction to tie streamers, nymphs, wet flies, dry flies, foam flies and deer hair flies. The cost of the materials to tie the 12 flies described in our chapter's fly-tying booklet is included in the class fee.

The fly-fishing class begins on Monday, February 27th with the remainder of the classes to follow on March 6th, March 13th, March 20th, March 27 and April 3rd. (Please note the Monday change from the previous fishing course.) The course explains the equipment, applying knots, reading a stream and choosing a fly, as well as the basic forward, back, roll and side casts.

Both classes begin at 7:00 p.m. and will be held at Columbia-Greene Community College. The fly fishing course will be divided into two segments to facilitate the use of the gym. The fee for the fly tying class is \$75.00 and for the fishing class is \$50.00. George Goth

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

“All my life's a circle...sunrise and sundown...” So go the lyrics of a fairly modern folksy song written, I think, but performed for sure, by Harry Chapin, one of my favorite musicians, singers and storytellers. For many years we – Nancy, Mark, Beth and I – would travel to Saratoga on a summer night to watch Harry perform at SPAC. It was something we did every year, an event in the regular cycle of a year for us.

THE PAINTED PONIES

I can't remember when we started, but a long time ago we began to send a “holiday newsletter” to family and friends. Nancy and I always collaborate on it...which means that I write an initial “draft” and then she edits it to put in all the important things that I leave out. Well...not quite, but there's more than “some truth” to looking at it that way. I found a couple of methods for organizing the writing of these letters, but the default is to trace the family's year. I've defaulted

many times; why not? It's a common approach...maybe a little dull, but handy when you can't figure out a better way. After a few years of composing these missives I was struck by how the years seem to repeat themselves. Sure, there were lots of things that were different, but many of the events that we wrote about repeated themselves...year after year.

One explanation for the repetition is living in the country and the strong influence that has on following the seasons: gardening in the spring and summer, harvest and woodcutting in the autumn, plowing and shoveling snow in the winter, and for some, tapping trees and cooking sap just before it's time to think about gardening again. Other recurring events start as one-time endeavors but are so successful for any number of reasons that they are reproduced over and over again, and without real thought or design, they become traditions. Unsuccessful endeavors aren't likely candidates for tradition. Our family, three generations of them, held what became known as the "La Rocca Farm Picnic;" in the last ten years of *the picnic's* twenty-two year life it never had fewer than 400 people – family, friends, business associates and colleagues, and neighbors – in attendance. We've rented the same house on Cape Cod for two weeks every summer for twenty consecutive years. Many families do those kinds of things...there's no magic...it's tradition.

Trout fishers have their own recurring themes and events and timing; hunters too follow patterns through the year almost as tightly as do the quarry they seek. Fishing writers often default to the same method of organizing their manuscripts as I do with the Christmas letter. You would need the fingers of both hands and the toes on both feet to count the number of fishing books, even in my small library, that are organized around the seasons of the year. "An Angler's Year"... "Seasons of the Fisherman"...*exciting* titles like that are very common...although I sense a little less so of late. Traditions play a role in these lives too. There are the "annual Ausable trip," and for some, the days or week at the deer camp every year.

But basically it is a circle, and I am happy for that. The cycle provides a share of all of the emotions and feelings that make us who we are and glad to be here: anticipation, excitement and enjoyment, sadness and regret at times, and reflection. The yearly circle provides the large-scale model for the individual events that fill the circle. I think about the last trip to the river that I made. No matter how "spur of the moment" the trip may be, there is that time of planning, preparation, wondering about weather, water conditions, fish disposition and even the numbers of our brother anglers who will be on the water. On arrival there is the rigging-up, the step into the water and the reward of a good trout on the line...or not. And then comes the reflection...memories, both long term and short...and the story telling. Some would say that is the best part.

The circle for this year is closing; there is wet snow falling in Rensselaerville as I write this and the first few days of deer season have already passed. From a trout fishing point of view there are still opportunities to get out a bit if one chooses to do so. Brother Steve caught five or six trout on New Year's Day to begin this year, and my buddy Tom and I talked during our last ride home from fishing, about the Christmas Day when he caught and released a couple of dozen trout. But aren't these last sentences just the point: it is reflection and memory time. The circle is going around; it's time to look back and savor, smile to yourself, tell the stories...and then start the anticipation again.

On the fourth floor of the Empire State Museum in Albany is a beautiful, full scale and authentic carousel. It is fully operational and is free with admission to the museum. I've spent some time on that carousel with my granddaughters; they love it almost as much as I do! And maybe it is a different folk song or maybe it is another verse from that Harry Chapin piece, but it goes something like this: "and the painted ponies go up and down...we're captive on the carousel of time." And isn't that just grand.

TROUT BROOKS & TROUT BOOKS: A Look Into Justin's Bookcase

If you've got a spot in your fly box for the Catskill fly patterns, make sure to have a spot on your bookshelf for Catskill Rivers by Austin M. Francis. Originally published in 1983, a recent paperback release has made this title readily available once more.

As you wade through the pages of fine prose and photography, you'll find yourself waist-deep in the history of the Beaverkill, Willowemoc, Neversink, Schoharie and Esopus. From the days of the tanneries and river running raftsmen, and anglers' trains from New York City (the number of inns and resorts that catered to anglers is astonishing) to the present day, Francis has continued the literary tradition of this region, and in doing so, has become the preeminent chronicler of all that is Catskill fly fishing.

In these pages you'll learn of the legends – the fly tyers, rod makers, authors, and innkeepers, whose tracks you may have waded in as you cast a sparsely hackled fly that just may have been "hatched" on that very river. If you've ever given a "flick" to a Red Quill or a Dun Variant on the Schoharie Creek, you've more than likely felt a connection to the cherished history of this sport.

One of the highlights of this book is the illustrated map of each river. As the trout season slips away and the temperature drops, we can settle into "reading season"...as I like to call it... planning future trips, as many have done before us, and pursuing the trout from the comfort of an armchair.

HANK'S FLY BOX – Stimulator

The Stimulator is one of Randal Kaufmann's most popular patterns. He originally tied it to imitate an adult stonefly; however it can be fished with an occasional twitch to represent a grasshopper as well as any large flying insect. Some tyers tie it in smaller sizes to imitate a caddis fly. It can also be used as an attractor pattern. Try fishing it in a few different situations...when you don't see any rises see if you can wake up a few fish with the Stimulator.

STIMULATOR

Hook: Dry fly 3X long, size 6-14

Thread: Fluorescent orange

Tail: Elk or deer body hair, kept short

Body Hackle: Grizzly, palmered over body

Body: Yellow dubbing

Wing: Elk or deer hair, no longer than end of tail

Thorax Hackle: Grizzly, palmered over thorax

Thorax: Orange dubbing

AND THE NOVEMBER WINNERS ARE...

Wendy Neefus who won his own hand-tied flies and then graciously donated them to Tom Mikulka, our guest presenter...and Steve Matheke who won a book titled Dying To Fly Fish, which was donated by Bill Newcomb.

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

UPCOMING EVENTS!

C-GTU Banquet Saturday, January 7, 2006 Freehold Country Inn

Annual Columbia-Greene TROUT UNLIMITED Classes at C-GCC:

Fly-tying January 12, 2006 - February 16, 2006 (6 Thursdays)

Fly-fishing February 27, 2006 - April 3, 2006 (6 Mondays)

Seeking volunteers to help teach classes...please call George Goth at (518) 622-0837.

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, December 20, 2005

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, January 18, 2006

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

Chapter Officers

President	Lynn Lee	(518) 828-5402	president@cgtu.org
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KEEP CURRENT...WITH THE CURRENT!

Dick Riccio, Hank Theiss & Justin Seeley (Editors)