

# The Conservationist



PPTU.org

## Potomac-Patuxent Chapter Trout Unlimited

May 2024 • Published monthly except June, July, August and December

## “TU Western Maryland Initiative” With Ben Harris TU's Western Maryland Initiative Program Manager May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024

We are pleased to welcome Ben Harris as our May speaker. Ben is Trout Unlimited's Western Maryland Initiative Program Manager.

The TU Western Maryland Initiative (WMI) was formed in 2019 with seed funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). Since its formation, the WMI has focused on implementing habitat restoration and conservation measures for Eastern Brook Trout in the state of Maryland. TU Western Maryland Initiative (WMI). The foundation for these efforts has been implementing riparian plantings, livestock exclusion, and in-stream habitat improvement projects in the Savage and Casselman watersheds in Garrett Co., MD.



With continued funding secured from NFWF Small Watershed Grants, the TU WMI is planning to reinforce efforts in the Savage and Casselman rivers, while expanding conservation projects to the North Branch Potomac, Youghiogheny, and Monocacy watersheds. Projects are ramping up to include significant fish passage barrier removal, instream habitat restoration, and large-scale upland and riparian plantings. Ben will discuss the TU Priority Waters Initiative, past projects implemented by the WMI, plans for the near future, and ways that the TU grassroots membership can lend support.

**About Ben:** Ben grew up fishing for trout in eastern WV and has been the Program Manager for TU's Western Maryland Initiative (WMI) since the Fall of 2022. He holds a BS in Fisheries Biology from Humboldt State University, and a MS in Wildlife and Fisheries Resources from West Virginia University. Ben's Master's thesis research studied Brook and Brown Trout movement in restored Appalachian watersheds, tracking fish via radio telemetry through main stem corridors and headwater tributaries. Ben has worked for fisheries conservation nonprofits on the west coast for over 6 years- focused primarily on the restoration of endangered steelhead and salmon in Central California. Ben has been employed as a fisheries biologist with the National Marine Fisheries Service, CA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, and NC Division of Marine Fisheries. His career has been focused mainly on the conservation of listed & endangered fish species, with particular emphasis on Eastern Brook Trout, Coho Salmon, and Steelhead. Ben is dedicated to preserving native trout & salmon through habitat restoration/conservation, public outreach, and advocacy.

– *Scott Cernich*

**May 15<sup>th</sup> Chapter Meeting**  
**Mid County Community Center**  
**2004 Queensguard Rd, Silver Spring, MD 20906**

Time and Day: 7:00 PM, Third Wednesday of the month except June, July, August and December

[Chapter Meeting Link](#)

Visit our website: [www.pptu.org](http://www.pptu.org)

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## Presidents' Column - Joe Taylor



Can't believe that May is here already! Arriving hot and heavy with activities.

Our chapter outing for May will be at Spring Creek near Bellefonte, PA to fish the famous Sulfur Hatch. If you've never been to Spring Creek you're missing out on one of PA's best trout streams. This always makes for a great outing. Spring Creek is PA's premier brown trout fishery with more wild fish per mile than any other stream in the state! The outing is currently scheduled for May 24-26. Keep an eye on your emails and sign up.

Many thanks to folks that turned out for the Casselman outing, even braving in the rain. A fun time was had by all and a few new folks got to explore one of the more popular Western MD fisheries, guided by a few long term members.

May 16<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> will have us hosting Fly Fishing 101 with Howard County Parks & Recreation at Centennial Park in Columbia. If you've ever considered volunteering and mentoring new people, stop by and help out or just have a look at one of the local volunteer options we assist in offering to the community. Contact Ron Briggs if interested.

Get June 20<sup>th</sup> on your calendars! Especially if you're considering buying any new equipment. PPTU will be holding a Gear Swap meeting at the Waredaca Brewery that evening. Here's your chance to get some good gear! Keep an eye out for the announcement and come get some good stuff cheap.

Sulphurs are starting to appear on the Gunpowder and soon more flies will be hitting the air on both our local and distant streams. Time to sort your dry flies and practice your presentation. A good presentation to actively feeding fish can bring on an adrenaline rush. Funny how a small rising fish can leave you feeling anxious, nervous, or just bursting with pure excitement as your body and mind are preparing for the take and hookup. The hairs on my arms are standing up just thinking about it.





Practice makes perfect! Get out in your yard or at a local ball field and get your presentation technique down pat before you hit the stream. The last thing you want to do is cast toward a really nice fish and not be prepared to give it your best offering. Sometimes you only get one shot at a really nice fish. Tie a piece of yarn to your tippet and pick some targets to cast to, casting just 20 minutes now and then is better than nothing. Hula hoops make great targets to cast to. Add some obstacles to cast around. Cast from different angle and distances until your yarn fly drops exactly where you want it to without thinking too hard about it. When you do get on the stream all your practice will pay off.

Hope to see you on the stream soon!

Joe Taylor  
President, PPTU



## PPTU Mentor Program Beginners & Beyond

PPTU provides one-on-one streamside fly fishing instruction to PPTU members. Participants must show commitment by having waders or hip boots, a rod and reel outfit, and leader. Discussions will include equipment, knots, casting, flies, dry fly and nymphing techniques, entomology, reading water, conservation, etc. all on nearby streams. Instruction will be tailored to individual needs. Members who have not made an **Annual Supporting Contribution (ASC)** will be asked to contribute \$20.

Contact us by e-mail: [mentor@pptu.org](mailto:mentor@pptu.org)



## Changes to Fishing Regulations - MD DNR

The state fishing regulations have changed a bit and we encourage you to read through the changes that were implemented. One of the main things for trout fishermen is the use of barbless hooks. Crimping the barb down before fishing satisfies this requirement. Its always been a good practice to crimp down the barb anyway. Instead of trying to list all the changes and the streams they apply to, feel free to explore all the revisions at the web site.

[Fishing Regulation Changes](#)

## Mentors Still Needed - PPTU

We could still use a few extra mentors for our Mentor Program. The program we offer is unique to the many chapters in Maryland and other chapters across the country.

It doesn't take a huge amount of time, maybe once or twice a year you'll be asked if you can take a new person out and cover the basics with them. Walk them through the necessary gear, basics of casting, reading a stream, selecting flies to imitate what the fish may be eating, etc. The main thing is to introduce them to the sport and have fun. If they catch some fish, it's a bonus!

Contact Ray Miller if interested in mentoring:  
[rmiller220@aol.com](mailto:rmiller220@aol.com)



*"In every species of fish I've angled for, it is the ones that have got away that thrill me the most, the ones that keep fresh in my memory. So I say it is good to lose fish. If we didn't, much of the thrill of angling would be gone."*

~ Ray Bergman



## Reminder – Last Chapter Meeting and Newsletter Before Our Summer Break - PPTU

Just a reminder, especially for our new members, this will be our last chapter meeting and the last issue of the Conservationist until the summer break is over. We'll return to action come September!

Make sure you still check your email, the web forum, and visit the PPTU website to stay up to date on upcoming outings and events.

Our outings coordinator Lou Reichel will try to keep us busy fishing over the next three months. Maybe even throw in some summertime hotdog action streamside!

We hope many of you keep posting notes and photos from all your fishing adventures.

Vacation notes are welcome as well. Its always fun to see all the places our members go.



## Cassed Caddis - Andy Grosko

Found this article that may explain why nymphs worked and few risers were seen on the Casselman this past weekend. American Grannom Caddis.

[Explanation of their lifecycle.](#)

Thanks Andy! And if anyone else ever has any interesting subjects, pass them my way!

Bob O'Donnell – TroutWrangler@Yahoo.com



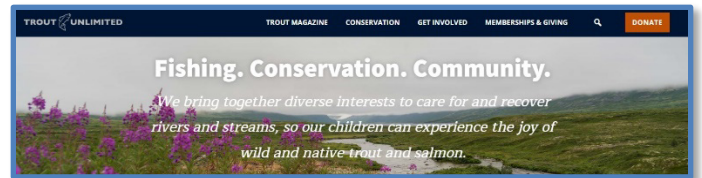
If you spot poaching please call or text:



**Maryland Wildlife Crime Stoppers  
At 443-433-4112**

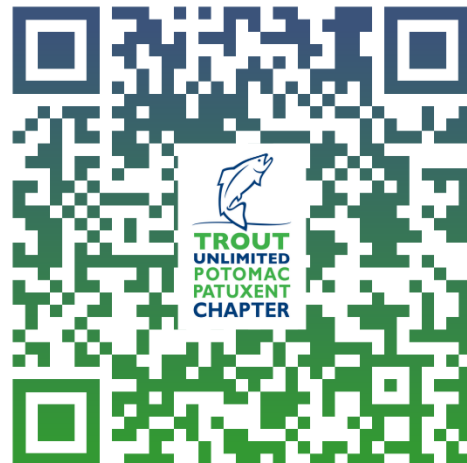


*Add this number to your cell phone contact list!*



## FREE Trout Unlimited Membership! - PPTU

If you have ever wanted to join Trout Unlimited, let PPTU cover your first year's membership! FREE! No cost except your time to send an email to [membership.pptu@gmail.com](mailto:membership.pptu@gmail.com). You will become an active TU member almost in the blink of an eye. The only requirement is that you have never been a member of TU. Optionally, you can sign up on line directly at Trout Unlimited's web site for half price - \$17.50. Scan the QR code below. Join now!



## **PPTU Swap Meet – June 20th - Jim Senker**

The Potomac-Patuxent Chapter of Trout Unlimited (PPTU) invites you to join the fun!

PPTU is once again pleased and excited to team up with the [Waredaca Brewing Company](#) and offer a “Fly Fishing Gear Swap” event on Thursday, June 20th from 5-8pm.

We have a TON of new and lightly used gear, fly rods, gadgets and flies that will be up for sale. If you’re considering buying some stuff, hold off until this event! You may find what you need for cheap.



Waredaca is Montgomery County's premier farm brewery, committed to sustainability, local ingredients and brewing beer using the best practices possible. Waredaca shares some of same ideals as TU as they strive to maintain or enhance a stewardship mindset with focus on the environment and our limited impact to it.

## **PPTU Outings - Lou Reichel & Ron Kerrick**

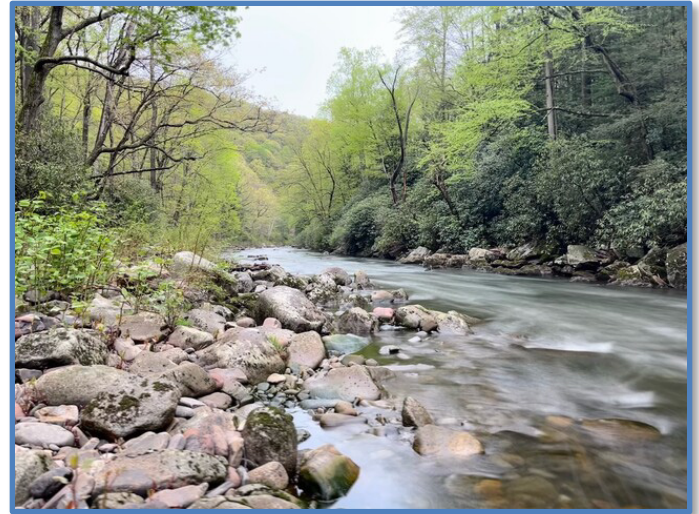
Here’s our outing lineup for the next couple of months. If you have any suggestions for the summer months, please let Ron and I know.

**May:** Sulphur Mayflies, Spring Creek, State College, PA, 2 nights, 3 days. Date TBD (tent May 24-26).

**June:** One-Fly Contest, Gunpowder Falls, date TBD, early June. Winner will have bragging rights for 1-year and name inscribed on Winners List posted on PPTU website. (contest time may be late afternoon 3-6 pm hoping for sulphur mayflies).

**October:** Savage River and Western Maryland Campout, dates Oct 12-14, 2 nights, 3 days in Big Run State Park.

Keep an eye on your email and the website for any updates/changes to the outings list.



## **Tips and Tricks – Drag - Bob O’Donnell**

Flies are now hatching and drifting silently and slowly downstream in the current. Once the trout key in on this food conveyor belt and start rising at will, the action for fly fishermen can be exhilarating. To fool these fish into taking your fly offering, there is one thing you need to avoid – drag!

Drag on a fly causes more rejections from trout than any other issue. You can pick the right fly, size, color, etc., but if your presentation is bad and the fly drags, the fish will most likely ignore it. Yes, there ARE times when you want to impart drag to a fly, but that’s for another article. Here we’ll focus on the basics of how you can achieve a drag free drift.





The elimination of drag, especially when dry-fly fishing, is an important skill to learn. The fly must come to the trout as naturally as possible. A drag free drift is when the fly floats gently downstream without giving the trout any clue that it is attached to a leader and fly line. The best drifts come from putting slack in the line and leader before (and after) it hits the water. There are numerous ways to add some slack to your cast. We'll cover a few of the basics.

### Long Tippetts

Make your tippet long, three feet, perhaps even four, and it'll want to drop on the water in curves; curves of slack. Slack is the primary cure for drag. A slightly high forward cast promotes slack in tippet. When the tippet starts to drop, it lags behind the leader, angles, and then makes its waves of slack when it lands. These waves of slack give your fly a chance to ride free in the current.

### Slack Line Casts

There are a few standard casts that force slack into your fly line, even into the leader and tippet. The most common slack-line casts are the Serpentine or Wiggle, the Reach, the Pile, and the Parachute cast which is primarily used to present a fly drag-free downstream. Downstream dry fly presentations are uncommon, but under the right conditions, deadly.



The Serpentine cast is made by wiggling the rod tip back and forth as the line goes out. The Reach cast is made by an upright forward cast followed by lowering the rod to one side or the other, the Pile cast starts as a high forward cast and then the rod tip is hurried down to the water as the line follow. The Parachute cast starts with a high forward cast, the rod remains high, and the line and fly drop and drift off downstream as the caster lowers the rod-tip to feed line.

### Mending

Just before the currents take away the last of the slack and start dragging your fly, you can mend. A mend is a lift of the line and then a flip of it, so that whichever way it was curving, it's now curving in the opposite direction. Some dry-fly aficionados may mend two or three times during a fly's drift.

Mending is a technique that the vast majority of anglers do incorrectly. They make a decent cast, get the fly lined up for an effective drift, and then they mend the entire fly line, and by doing so, they "pull" the fly out of the "lane" they were trying to cover. Mending without moving the fly is VERY important. You only need to mend the line that is 5-10' outside your rod tip. By only mending a short section of the line you'll keep the fly where you want it to go. Finally, when you mend and get some line set in an upstream belly, remember to move your rod downstream at the speed of the current. Do not hold the rod still. Holding the rod in a static position will shorten the drag free drift considerably. Remember, to "Mend and follow." This will dramatically extend a drag free drift.

Adding slack to your casts in one of these manners should do the trick for you and improve your game. Don't forget to play with your rod a little while on stream and get to fully understand how it works best for you. Try out different casts and techniques while fishing. You may surprise yourself and even hook up with a fish!

To learn more about slack casts and mends, check out these great videos from Carl McNeil:

[Pile Cast](#)

[Wiggle Cast](#)

[Reach Cast](#)

### How to Match the Hatch by Observing Flight Patterns - Peter Sticher

Although you won't be able to narrow things down to a specific species, the flight patterns of the three major orders of aquatic insects—mayflies, caddisflies, and stoneflies—are distinctive enough that an angler can identify the type of insect from as far as 50 feet from the river. These are the things you need to look for if you want to match the dries by the way bugs fly.

[Bug Flight Patterns](#)

## Fly Anglers Fishing Club Brew & Ties - Great Feathers Fly Shop

We are incredibly happy to announce that the Fly Anglers Fishing Club is getting back together after the long hiatus due initially to Covid restrictions, and shutdowns.



The club will meet the last Thursday of each month at Pipe the Side Brewing Company in Hampstead, Maryland starting around 5:30 PM. Please feel free to arrive later.

Pipe the Side Brewing has also made a special brew called Dubbing Loop.

Join us starting at 5:30pm at Pipe the Side Brewing located at 721 Hanover Pike Suite 147, Hampstead, MD.

Bring your own vice and tying materials, hang out and talk all things fly fishing, and meeting fellow fly anglers - and there's beer!



## Making Your Own Poppers - Sean Beck

For folks who might be painting their own poppers, or may be interested in painting their own poppers, I figured it might be fun to discuss Copic sketch markers. If you've explored the aisles of Michaels or Joann's enough you've likely encountered the marker aisle filled with a variety of markers, with some behind glass in the middle. At \$8 each, the Copic markers tend to disappear into

pockets, so you have to find an employee to get them for you. With the various coupons the hobby stores provide you often will pay less than \$8 each, but as you acquire more colors you'll find it can get quite expensive. The markers are great for drawing if that's what you're into, but I like them for painting poppers or other similar add-ons to my flies. You can even color chenilles or feathers with them! There are 358 different colors for you to choose from, so you can get that perfect shade of olive or gray.



As you use the markers you will find they run out of ink faster than you would prefer for the cost, but not to worry! You can buy refills for the specific colors you need at around \$5, and each refill will top the marker off around 8-10 times. This makes it feel less bad when you're coloring and find the marker is running low. I have read of people using the same marker for 15 years! You can also replace the two different nibs if need be. I buy my refills from BLICK Art in Baltimore, but you can get them online as well. Sometimes you just can't beat seeing all the colors in person.



I enjoy making lighter Game Changer flies using Chocklett's finesse chenille from Hareline. You can use it as a support material for palmered feathers as well, but I like it on its own, trimmed to shape. This material colors very well with the Copic markers, allowing me to take an all-white fly and turn it into a proper shad imitation with a dark back and even a little blue spot along the sides. This can be done by hand in short order.





Another favorite "material" I use are the Spawn Heads from Spawn Fly Fish. They are injection-molded plastic heads that you can fit over the end of your fly, making for a more realistic profile. They have a number of neat options, but I mostly use the "Kestrel" heads to make a diver fly, which is a favorite of mine for smallmouth. While there are options for pre-painted heads, I prefer to buy the blanks and paint them myself using the Copic markers. This can be done by hand, but I've found on both these heads and on popper bodies that the tips have a tendency to leave streaks in the color job.



To remedy these streaks, I use the Copic Airbrush system. Copic makes a device designed specifically to hold their sketch markers which you can connect to your air compressor and use to effectively airbrush your flies. I find I get a much more even coloring job doing this rather than coloring by hand. Copic calls it the [ABS 3](#) system, which comes with an adapter can and a grip. You can get it for about \$40. Copic sells compressed air cans which fit the grip, but the more economical choice in the long term is to combine it with an air compressor. Some of you may already own an air compressor, which is great. I bought a [Central Pneumatic airbrush compressor kit](#) from Harbor Freight for \$80 a number of years ago, and unlike many other items in our hobby, it has not changed in price. They are in stock in a number of Harbor Freights around us right now! The air compressor is very quiet and has yet to fail me. It also comes with a proper airbrush head should you desire to use that with acrylics instead.

As far as a finishing coat for your hard work, I insist that you use [Liquid Fusion](#). One 2 oz bottle is relatively cheap at about \$11, and it will last you a long while. Some fly tyers will use it in place of other adhesives for general use, such as [Paul Monaghan](#) on Youtube. UV resins over your coloring will crack

and pull your colors with it. Loon Soft Head will peel after just a few fish, taking your colors with it. A thin, double-coating of Liquid Fusion with 24 hour cure times will stay rock solid for you, allowing you to fish your creation for a long while. As evidence of the Soft Head's failure, note the frog pictured above and then look below for how it looked after just two small bass (kudos to anyone who can name the lake!).

If you've made it this far then you probably would like to see an example of using the airbrush system. Lots of folks have demonstrated it on YouTube before, but I offer up myself in a short-form [video painting](#) a very large popper.



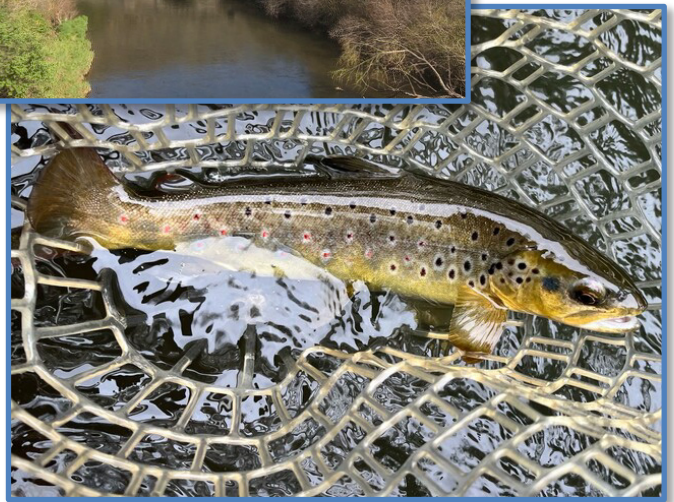
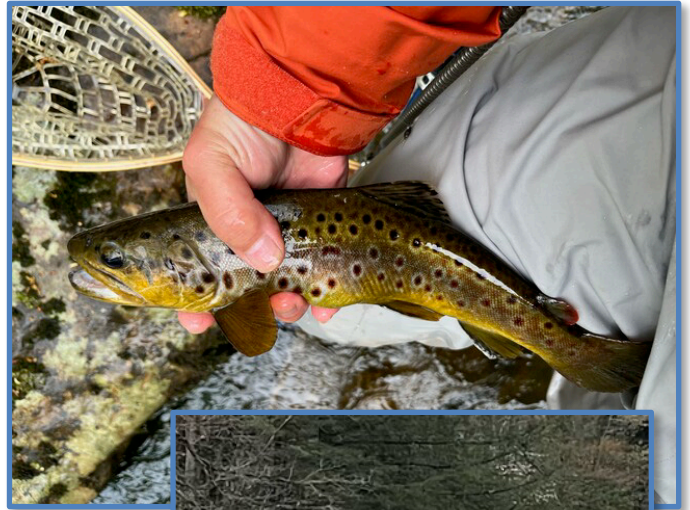
With just a few markers you can start making your own imitations of all sorts of forage using poppers, chenilles, or even foam "stick baits."





## Members Catch - Bob O'Donnell

We had a really nice turnout at our Casselman outing in Western MD. Glad to see some new faces at one of our events. Speaking of... if you've never gone, please try to take the time to do so. Meet up with some of your fellow members, swap stories and enjoy the outdoors.





## Contributions & Questions Welcome!

Send your contributions, article suggestions or fly fishing questions to the Editor in an email. Deadline for submissions is typically the twelfth (12th) day of the month prior to the month of publication.

This newsletter is available online at [PPTU.org](http://PPTU.org)

**Editor: Bob O'Donnell**

Email: [TroutWrangler@Yahoo.com](mailto:TroutWrangler@Yahoo.com)



## Sulphur Usual

Rumor has it that the Sulphurs are starting to hatch on the Gunpowder; most likely other rivers as well. You definitely need to have a few different patterns and colors in your box to match the hatch. The fish can sometimes be picky with both size and color.

This pattern is a fairly easy tie and a good fly to have with you when the bugs are drifting downstream.

[Sulphur Usual](#)



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