

The Conservationist



PPTU.org

Potomac-Patuxent Chapter Trout Unlimited

May 2025 • Published monthly except June, July, August and December

“Fly Fishing for Smallmouth” Guest Speaker: William Heresniak of Eastern Trophies Fly Fishing

May 21st, 2025

Our May speaker is William Heresniak, owner of, and sole guide for, Eastern Trophies Fly Fishing <https://easterntrophies.com>. His background is in education and coaching. With that experience, guiding comes naturally to him. William's main objective is to teach his clients everything he can when guiding. He wants his clients to be able to fish more efficiently and effectively so that they can catch more and larger fish. William keeps things simple and direct so it's easy to understand.

His true passion is working with the Veterans of Project Healing Waters, where he was one of the first volunteers starting in 2006. William is a Century Club Member and a proud recipient of the Patriot Award. Outside of guiding, William is a full-time Elementary Physical Education Teacher in Alexandria, Virginia, and he coaches Varsity Field Hockey for TC Williams High School.



– *Scott Cernich*

May 21st Chapter Meeting

Laurel Volunteer Fire Department

7588 Van Dusen Road, Laurel, MD 20707

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

[Online Chapter Meeting Link](#)

Visit our website: PPTU.org

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Contact Us:

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Presidents' Column - Craig VanderKolk



As I write this column, I'm in California visiting grandchildren over Easter. I'm reflecting on all the various holiday celebrations that have just occurred, Easter, Passover and Ramadan. What they all have in common is spring, renewal and faith. And so, this column is about those things.

While not particularly religious, I believe I feel a spiritual connection in the world that I often reflect on while fishing. Getting outdoors has always been important, and it gives me a chance to see nature – the sky, clouds, trees and meadows and most important to a Dutchman, water. Whether it's a creek or river, a spring, a pond or a lake, an estuary or an ocean, we have it all in Maryland. Fishing brings it all together for us to enjoy and most importantly preserve.

Spring is the renewal of life along the rivers that we hold in reverence as anglers. These rivers come alive as the sun gets higher and the temperatures rise. Spawned eggs hatch into small fry and grow. Aquatic insects begin to hatch and also start a new life cycle, some forms of which we mimic with flies. As I spend time on the water enjoying nature, I love that it also includes actual fly fishing. And here is where faith comes in. I have faith that there are fish in the streams that I'm fishing. I often don't see them and when I get skunked, my faith is tested a little that they are actually there. But really, it's my faith in my fishing ability is what is shaken.

Our recent speaker, Mike Kashiwagi, spoke about the trout population and the health of our nearby coldwater fishery, the Catoctin Mountains. Since I often get skunked on Big Hunting Creek, I asked how many fish he sees in the length of the elbow pool sampling section. I was pleased to hear it was 40 – 50 since it seems I never catch any there.

Unfortunately, he also told us that there have been some concerning signs of changes in these trout populations. Recent fluctuation in flow and the underlying low rainfall has resulted in some lower numbers for a couple of years. I learned that we need rain in the fall but not too much rain in the winter since it washes the spawned eggs and fry out of the fishery. These water changes challenge us nationally and globally. Everywhere we see drought and low

flows followed by flooding. Each of these are threats to the trout we love, angling and our world at large.

I do have faith however, that we can continue to preserve our environment and reverse these changes despite the headwinds that we are encountering. TU and PPTU will continue to work to preserve and improve the environment. We have a long history of volunteerism through tree planting and float stocking along with educational programs like Trout in the Classroom, each of which we need to continue and expand.

So go out and fish and observe the renewal of spring, but also renew your commitment to the environment and TU and have faith that we can make a difference individually and as an organization.

Craig VanderKolk
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



When Rising Fish Don't Take Your Fly - PPTU

If you come across a pod of rising fish and they refuse or don't take the fly you've been fishing, try taking a deep breath and follow these simple rules.

1. **Try not to disturb the fish** – If the fish are still rising after a few attempts, take a short break and watch them a little.
2. **Back out of the way** – If the fish stopped or paused rising, get out of their way. Move yourself into a better position to make the next cast.
3. **Observe the fish feeding** – Try to see what they are taking. Is it a fly on the water, are they going after emerging insects? Getting the right fly is half the battle.
4. **Change flies to match what's on the water** – A simple change to a slightly smaller fly often does the trick. If you observed a fly being eaten, try to find something similar in your box.

Patience is a virtue. Taking the time to rest the fish, observe their feeding patterns, and identify what they are taking will make a big difference in your ability to get one to the net.

Your Most Underrated Fly Fishing Tool? A Thermometer. - Headwaters Bamboo

A simple thermometer tucked into your vest or pack can tell you more about your day than a dozen guesses. By checking the temperature when you arrive and again after a few hours you'll understand feeding patterns before you choose a fly. It's a small tool that makes a big difference.

When you know the temperature, you can predict where trout are likely to be:

In cooler conditions, they seek slower, deeper water to conserve energy. As water warms, they move into mid-depth seams, riffles, and feeding lanes. During extreme heat, they seek the coolest areas: spring seeps, shaded banks, and deeper pools.

Matching your presentation to the water temperature, not just the calendar, puts you in tune with how trout behave day by day.



Trout are cold-blooded, so their metabolism and energy are directly tied to the water around them. Here's a simple breakdown:

Below 40°F:

Trout are sluggish and conserve energy. Feeding windows are short, and flies need to be presented slowly and close to them.

Tip: Fish deep and slow with small nymphs right along the bottom.

40–50°F:

Activity begins to increase. Expect feeding on midges, nymphs, and early-season emergers. Presentation still matters — trout are cautious but hungry.

Tip: Focus on slow, natural drifts near current seams and softer edges.

50–65°F:

Peak feeding zone. Trout metabolism is at its best. Dry fly hatches are strong, and aggressive takes become common.

Tip: Match the hatch with dries, emergers, and active nymphing and move between methods as needed.

65–68°F:

Fish begin to stress. They may still feed but should be handled carefully.

Tip: Fight fish quickly, land them fast, and keep them in the water during release.

Above 68°F:

Fishing should slow down or stop to protect trout health. Warmer water holds less oxygen, and trout are highly vulnerable.

Tip: Seek cooler tributaries or consider giving the fish a break until temperatures drop.

Caddis Fly Discovered Micro Plastics - ZME Science

In the spring of 1971, an entomologist scooped a small insect from a seemingly pristine creek in the Netherlands and pinned it in a museum drawer. The larva—a species of caddisfly—had stitched together a casing from scraps it found in its freshwater world.

It was a normal act of insect ingenuity, nothing that would raise an eyebrow at the time.



But fifty years later, researchers took a closer look. Wedged among the usual grains and leaves were bright yellow fragments that didn't belong. Under a microscope and the gaze of energy-dispersive X-ray spectroscopy, the truth snapped into focus: the insect had used plastic. Specifically, microplastic.

A single insect casing from 1971 might seem like a minor detail in the grand scheme of things. But it's a smoking gun in the timeline of pollution—one that reveals how early and how deeply microplastics invaded ecosystems.

Microplastics are now among the most pervasive materials on Earth. They've been found in clouds, soil, sea ice, and rain. They're in the deepest ocean trenches. They drift across mountain air. And they're in us: we eat, drink, and breathe them.

Microplastic particles have been detected in human blood, breast milk, and even the brain. Recent studies estimate that people may ingest tens of thousands of plastic particles each year. One paper pegged the amount to the equivalent of a credit card every week.

So when a caddisfly larva unwittingly used plastic to build its protective casing in 1971, it wasn't just an ecological oddity. It was an early warning sign of a global cascade. If plastic reached the base of freshwater food webs that long ago, it's been filtering up ever since—from bugs to fish to us.

We were here and we were plastifying the world for over 50 years. We just didn't notice.

[Read the full article here.](#)

[Watch the video](#)





"I salute the gallantry and uncompromising standards of wild trout, and their tastes in landscapes."

~ John Madson

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!



Good Fishing Mnemonic(s) - Bob O'Donnell

There was a small discussion on our list serve recently regarding where fish can be found. Then the mnemonics started showing up. Here's a few to remember when on stream looking for fish:

Foam is Home

Rocks Rock

Wood is Good

Made in the Shade

Climate Corner - Jim Irons

April 22 marked the observance of the 55th Earth Day. That day came amongst many threats to progress on addressing and adapting to climate change. The Director of the Office of Management Budget stated this month that all federal funding for climate change research would be cut. That statement comes amongst cuts to the workforce of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, a threat of a more than 50% cut to NASA's Earth science budget, and a further threat to close NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center where NASA's only climate model is maintained by the Goddard Institute of Space Studies.

On the good news side, several helpful bills passed during the Maryland legislative session that ended April 07: the RENEW Act Study Bill (HB0128/SB0149); Renewable Energy Certainty Act (HB1036/SB0931); Energy Resource Adequacy and Planning Act (HB1037/SB0909); and Next Generation Energy Act (HB1035/SB0937). Read a description of these bills [here](#).

Unfortunately the Better Buildings Act (HB0973/SB0804) bill did not move forward in the State legislature. On the more local level the Howard County Council held a hearing on CB24-2025, Adopting - Howard County Building Code, on Monday, April 21. As of this writing the outcome is not yet known. The Environmental Protection Agency reports that the building sector accounted for 31% of total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions in 2022!

Visdeurbel (Fish Doorbell) - Bob O'Donnell

Just for fun! I saw this report and thought it was both interesting, captivating and hilarious all at the same time. So – I'm sharing.

Every spring, thousands of fish swim through Utrecht's canals and waterways, searching for a place to spawn and reproduce.

In the heart of the city lies the beautiful Weerdsuis, a manually operated lock. When the lock gates are closed, fish are forced to wait, wasting valuable time and energy – making them easy prey for birds and predatory fish.

To help the fish, an underwater camera is installed at the lock. If fish appear on screen, you can press the doorbell! This alerts the lock keeper, who will open the lock when many fish are waiting.

You can “ring” the Fish Doorbell from early March to late May. Go ahead – check it out!

[Ring the Bell!](#)

Using Your Phone with Satellite - Harry Steiner

I know some places in western Maryland have no phone service but if you have a newer cell phone you can use satellites to send SMS or iMessages. This does not make your phone a SAT phone but can be used if you need help or to communicate with another person via messaging.

Below is a link that explains how it is done and which phones offer this free feature.

[Phones with Satellite Messaging](#)

June Outing – Catskills! - Ron Kerrick

For our chapter outing in June, we will be heading to the Catskill Rivers near Roscoe, NY to fish the famous birthplace of American fly fishing.

The outing will be for 4 days, 3 nights, June 5, 6, 7, 8, Thursday – Sunday. It takes about 5 ½ - 6 hours to arrive at Roscoe, NY.



There are at least 5 main streams to fish; Beaverkill, Willowenoc, Neversink, East Branch Delaware and Callicoon. Other rivers of interest can be fished. The trout streams of The Catskills are considered the birthplace of the American style dry

fly fishing and the Catskill fly tying style and fished by the old timers like Theodore Gordon. These streams are accessible from a centralized town of Roscoe, NY. Roscoe has been designated as “Trout Town USA”. How can any true fly fisher not experience these trout streams of the Catskills where history was made?

We will stay in Roscoe, NY, at either The Rockland House (www.rocklandhouse.com, 607-498-4240) as the primary place and the Roscoe Motel (www.roscoemotel.com, 607-261-0874) as the secondary place. Roscoe is home of 2 Fly Shops and the famous Dette Flies close by in Livingston Manor. Also nearby in Livingston Manor, NY, is the famous Catskills Fly Fishing Center and Museum. More details on travel plans, directions, if a car caravan is wanted, and meeting place details, will be provided later.

If you have any questions, please contact me for more information. Hope to see you there!

Ron



Shop and Fish Local - Bob O'Donnell

The Backwater Angler is a full service fly shop thirty-five minutes from downtown Baltimore, Maryland and steps from the Gunpowder River. Backwater Angler is proud to offer a top-notch fly fishing guide service that specializes in the pursuit of wild brown trout.

<https://backwaterangler.com/>

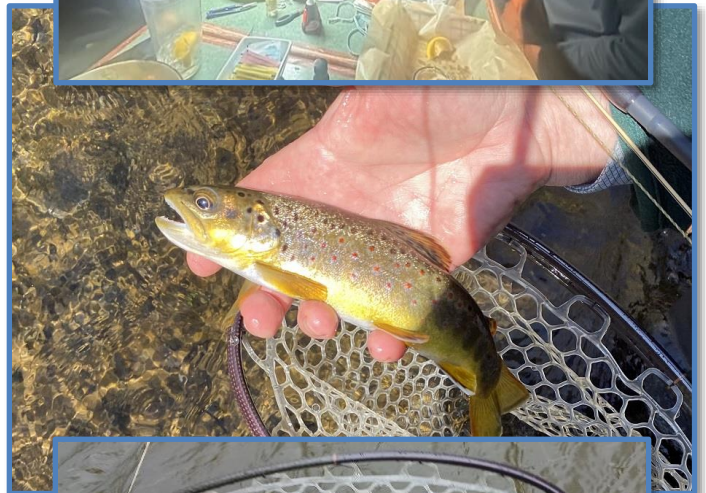
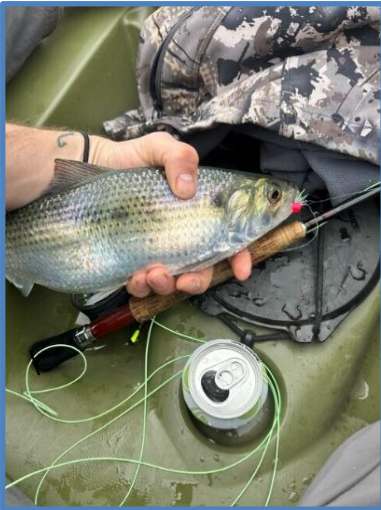
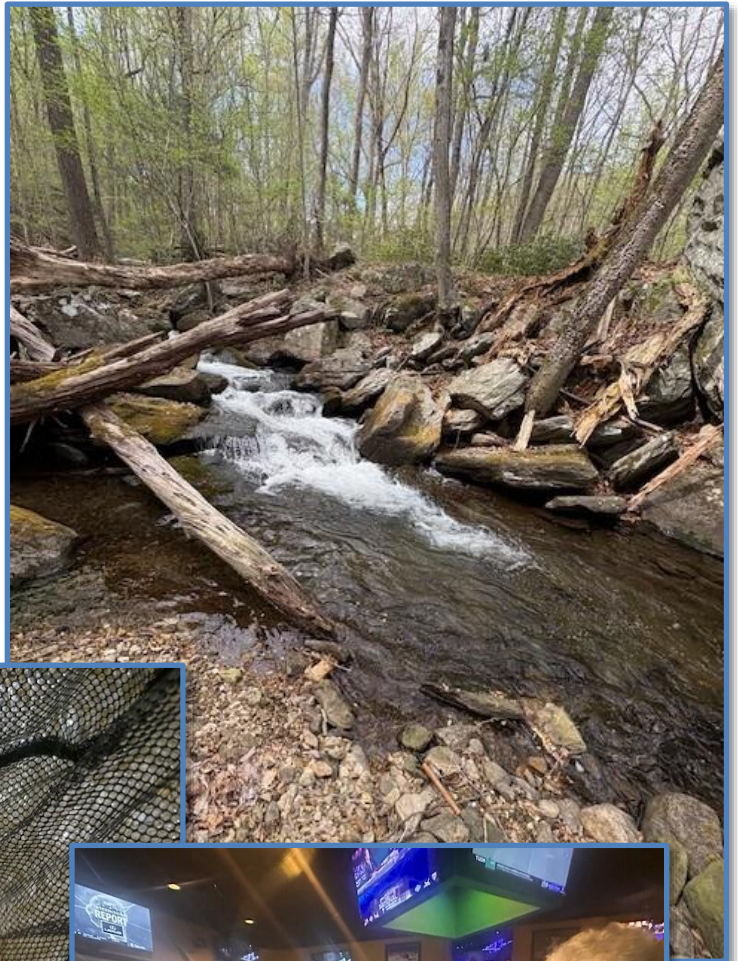
The fly shop is located at 16829 York Rd. Monkton, MD 21111.

Shop hours are:

10 AM till 3 PM Monday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday and the shop is closed on Tuesday, Wednesday and Sunday.

Members Catch - Bob O'Donnell

Loads of great shots this month. Glad our members are getting out and about. I'm jealous! I did get out mentoring a bit, watching others fish. Still fun and enjoyable. Keep the photos and stories coming.



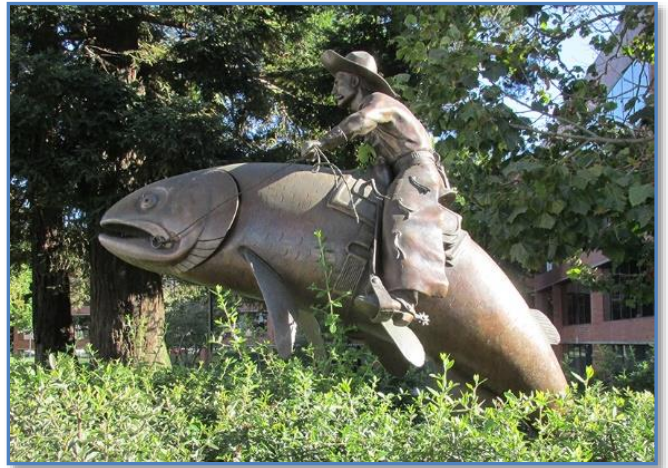
Contributions & Questions Welcome!

Send your contributions, article suggestions or fly fishing questions to the Editor in an email or as an MS Word.doc attachment. The deadline for submissions is typically the twelfth (12th) day of the month prior to the month of publication.

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Sulphur Comparadun

Sulphur Comparadun: Comparaduns are excellent slow water patterns that replicate the profile of the natural by sitting down in the surface film. The perfect match for the Sulphur hatch.

Our friend from Tightline Video, Tim Flagler, shows you how to tie this pattern with the split tails. Another good option to try is ditching the tails for an Antron or Zelon shuck, which turns the fly more into an emerger.

[Sulphur Comparadun Video](#)



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