

# The Conservationist



PPTU.org

## Potomac-Patuxent Chapter Trout Unlimited

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

## “Fishing Western Maryland’s Savage River”

Matt O’Neal

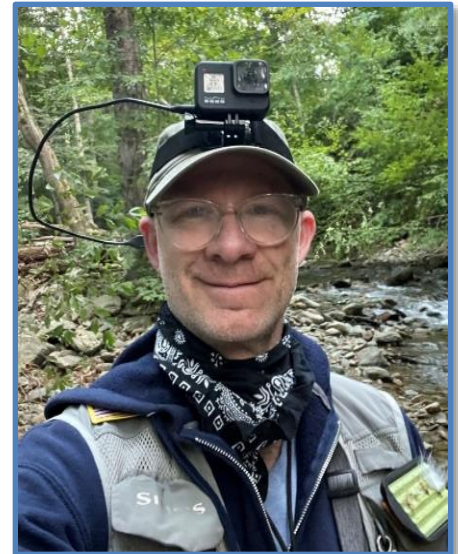
October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Our speaker for October is PPTU member, YouTube fly tyer and educator extraordinaire Matt O’Neal (@SavageFlies). Matt will be sharing his expertise on fishing one of Maryland’s premiere trout streams the Savage River.

Matt grew up in the mountains of north Georgia. He attended college at The Citadel in South Carolina and then spent ten years as a Naval officer in Rhode Island, New York City, Norfolk, Monterey, Seattle and Washington, DC. He currently works for the Navy as the Public Affairs Officer of the Naval Surface Warfare Center in Indian Head, MD.

He began fly fishing in the 1980s with an old Cortland rod/reel combo from K-mart. Mostly targeting bass and panfish on the local farm ponds. He fished off and on for the next 20 years and after his stint in the Navy and moving back to Maryland, he picked it up for good and has been fishing as often as possible since about 2015.

In 2018 he and his wife bought a farm near Cumberland, MD. That it was near the Savage River was a happy coincidence! He considers the Savage his homewater and fishes it 20-30 times a year but spends plenty of time on the Gunpowder as well. He's lucky enough to get 2-3 fishing vacations a year where he'll make the trip down to the Great Smoky Mountains or the Catskills. His future plans are to keep creating fly tying videos for [Savage Flies](#) until he can retire to his farm and hopefully start writing fly tying books. We hope to see many of you for this interesting and informative presentation by our own Matt O’Neal.



– *Scott Cernich*

**November’s Speaker:** Monte Burke, author of *Lords of the Fly: Madness, Obsession and the Hunt for the World-Record Tarpon*, [MonteBurke.com](#)

### Oct 16<sup>th</sup> 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

[Chapter Meeting Link](#)

Visit our website: [PPTU.org](#)

## OFFICERS and DIRECTORS 2023 – 2024

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Past-President: Joe Taylor  
Vice-President: “Open Position”  
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Secretary: Pete Anderson  
Directors: Ron Briggs  
Tom Brosnan  
Bob Bokulic  
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Librarian: Lou Reichel  
Mentor Program: Ray Miller  
Membership Secretary: Jay Sheppard  
*Conservationist* Editor: Bob O'Donnell  
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### Stream Committees:

Paint Branch: Joe Robinson  
Northwest Branch: Joe Robinson  
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### Mid Atlantic Council Delegates:

Alan Burrows  
Bob Dietz  
Randy Dwyer: Council Chair  
Marc Hutzell  
Lou Reichel  
Joe Taylor  
Nick Weber

### Contact Us:

[mail@pptu.org](mailto:mail@pptu.org)

## Presidents' Column - Craig VanderKolk



The feel of fall is in the air. Days are shorter, it's not quite as hot and the rivers are cooling down. A great time to get out and fish all the great streams we have nearby or within a reasonable drive.

It's also time for PPTU chapter activities to begin in full. We just had a great meeting at our new location the Laurel Volunteer Fire Department Meeting Hall, 7588 Van Dusen Rd, Laurel MD 20707. Four of our members shared their fishing experiences in Belize, the Smith River in Montana, Iceland and Central PA (Penns and Pine Creek). Lots of variety and bucket list type destinations. Good fishing but even better scenery and experiences.

The next two meetings are also going to be great. October will be Matt O'Neal, well known fly tier/owner of “Savage Flies”, on fishing the Savage River. In November, Monte Burke will speak to us about the early tarpon fly fishing experiences chasing trophy tarpon by Lefty Kreh, Joe Brooks and a colorful cast of other characters. We hope you will come out and take advantage of the opportunity to meet other members and enjoy the speakers.

Our fall outings are also great, Lou Reichel and Ron Kerrick just finished the outing to Big Spring Creek and are planning our annual outing to Big Run State park over Columbus Day weekend. Always a great time to hang out and learn new techniques to fish the Savage and other great cold water streams. Also during that trip, Ben Harris “TU Program Manager for Western Maryland Initiative” will be conducting a tour of conservation projects that have been completed and are planned for the future. This will be a 10am on Saturday October 12th starting out from the Big Run Monroe Pavilion. December 6-9 will be our 3rd annual Steelhead trip to Pennsylvania's Elk Creek. Finally, Bob Bokulic has arranged a social outing for September 26 at Jailbreak.

When I think of PPTU, I think of these as pillars of activity that have defined our chapter's culture through the years. These include the outings and the speakers mentioned above. But it's also about our members volunteering to make a difference helping new anglers learn to fly fish with our mentor program. Teach a variety of courses on fly fishing throughout the area like Howard County Fly Fishing

101. Float stocking our local streams for everyone to have a better experience fishing for trout. Educating the next generation about the environment that trout inhabit, how they grow and develop in healthy cold water streams. Our Trout in the Classroom (TIC) program run by Alan Burrows is the largest in the country. We also have projects monitoring our beloved Patuxent River.

These pillars of PPTU activities cannot continue without the hard work of our current leaders. However, we need you, our membership, to step in and help. Each one of these activities is looking for volunteers to donate a few hours of time to help contribute to PPTU's mission and that of Trout Unlimited – to conserve, protect and restore North America's coldwater fisheries.

In addition to this plea for more help for these PPTU activities, we are looking for a new plan for conservation projects are in the coming year. To start this process, we are looking for members to join our Conservation working group. Anyone can volunteer to help explore and review new conservation activities for the chapter. Tom Brosnan is heading the group and looks forward to new input.

Let's all get out and fish and also volunteer to help a few hours for PPTU, so we can all enjoy healthy streams and better fishing for years to come.

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](mailto:mentor@pptu.org)



## **NEW Meeting Location - Reminder!!! - PPTU Board**

Reminder that we have a new meeting location. The previous room wasn't quite working out. All of us like to talk and BS both before and after the meetings. Our [new location](#) gives us flexibility.

**Laurel Volunteer Fire Department**  
7588 Van Dusen Road  
Laurel, MD 20707



## **Request for Conservation Committee Members - Tom Brosnan**

Conservation brainstorming volunteers wanted!

We are looking for a few volunteers interested in brainstorming on what conservation priorities, opportunities, and ultimately actions are out there that PPTU might want to engage in for the future. The focus will be the enhancement, protection and/or restoration of cold-water fisheries in MD. This group will discuss and explore options and make recommendations to the PPTU board.

If interested, please send an email to Tom Brosnan: [brosnan.tom@gmail.com](mailto:brosnan.tom@gmail.com).

Please put "PPTU Conservation" in the Subject line.



*"There is only one reason in the world to go fishing: to enjoy yourself. Anything that detracts from enjoying yourself is to be avoided."*

~ Leigh Perkins

## Upcoming PPTU Outings - Lou Reichel & Ron Kerrick

Our next scheduled outing will be the Fall campout in Western Maryland. Its great time to visit Big Run State Park and enjoy a few days with your fellow PPTU members. The fishing can be great and its always fun to come back at the end of the day and relax by the camp fire. Check our website out for more detailed information. More to follow on line.

**Oct 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>** - Savage, Western MD

**Dec 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>** – Erie, PA for Steelhead

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!



## Just for Fun - Pete Yarrington

A great fishing quote, from my all-time favorite fishing story - *The River God*, by Roland Pertwee, 1928. The story's narrator, then a young boy in the early 1900's, is on his first big fishing trip, to the River Lledr in Wales. He is fishing and his father comes to find him.

"Come along. Food's ready. Done any good?" said he.

Again it was to his discredit that he put food before sport, but I told him I had a wonderful morning, and he was glad.

"What do you want to do this morning, old man?" He asked.

"Fish," I said.

"But you can't always fish," he said.

I told him I could, and I was right and have proved it for thirty years and more.

"Well, well," he said, "please yourself, but isn't it dull not catching anything?"

And I said, as I've said a thousand times since, "As if it could be."



## Fly Line Cleaning Hack (Armor All) - Guide Recommended

Want to improve your fly casting and catch more fish? In this video, I show you a quick and easy hack for cleaning your fly line using Armor All Wipes—something you probably already have in your car! A clean fly line makes a huge difference in casting distance, drift control, and overall performance. Watch as I wipe down my fly line, show you the simple steps, and then catch a brown trout just minutes later!

[Watch here!](#)

## Fall Trout Stocking 2024 - Ray Miller

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is making changes to trout stocking in 2024 into 2025 in response to survey feedback from trout anglers and heat and drought-induced challenges faced at the hatcheries over the summer.

Fishing and Boating Services periodically surveys anglers to receive feedback on their preferences and opinions. Results from these surveys help guide our management approach and the services provided. A recent survey of Put and Take trout anglers suggested that many anglers would prefer to catch larger trout, even if they caught fewer trout overall.

In response, we will be implementing a number of changes to the trout stocking program:

For the fall of 2024, the hatcheries will stock approximately 3,000 brown trout and 12,000 rainbow trout. This represents a 30% decrease from 2023, but the trout will be larger, averaging slightly over a pound each.

Additional fish will be held from the fall to the spring of 2025 to increase the number of trout available in the spring and to allow for several more months of growth in the hatchery. Hatcheries staff are working to increase the number of trophy-sized trout stocked, mostly with trout in the three to four pound range.



DNR is also planning to stock more brown trout in the future. Anglers can look forward to approximately 12,000 brown trout during the spring 2025 season. An additional 2,000 “holdover” brown trout that will average about a pound each will be new for 2025.

[Fall trout stocking](#) will begin in early October as soon as water levels and temperatures are acceptable for trout.



## October Outing and Campout - Lou Reichel and Ron Kerrick

The October Outing and Campout in Western Maryland will be from October 11th to 15th, 2024. Friday (2 pm set up) thru Tuesday (1:00 pm pack up), 5 days and 4 nights. This is one of my favorite trips. Join us for one or all days, and fish the wonderful Savage River, North Branch of the Potomac and the many other mountain brook streams in the beautiful autumn foliage of Western Maryland. You may camp with us or stay at other facilities or lodgings in the area, but everyone should join us for the evening campfires.

For those interested, we also plan on meeting Ben Harris (TU program manager) on Saturday at 10:00AM for a tour of the current western Maryland TU conservation projects.

To [sign up](#), head over to the PPTU web site. If you have any issues signing up for this outing just reach out to us.

## Congratulations and Thank You! - Craig VanderKolk

It seems like its been a long time coming, at least to Joe, but congratulations are in order to Joe Taylor for finishing his term as PPTU’s president.

Under Joe’s direction, the chapter moved forward and continues to thrive. All of us at PPTU congratulate Joe for a job well done!

The outgoing president was awarded with a box of flies noting his tenure as PPTU’s leader. Enjoy all the flies Joe!

A side note “thank you” shout out to Sean Beck for tying that white monster fly for Joe!



**How to Use the “Elimination Diet” to Catch Educated Trout**  
**- Evan Jones**

Ever since moving back home to the Front Range of Colorado, I’ve been re-learning just how selective and “technical” some trout can become under constant fishing pressure. Their ability to pick out minute details is downright uncanny, even when you’ve achieved a drag-free drift. Some trout are so good at ignoring flies, anglers can get the impression they’re only looking for one very specific thing which must be matched exactly in order to catch fish.

In my experience, however, it’s more likely that overly-picky trout have simply learned to focus on a few specific aspects of flies that help them to identify fakes from a mile away.

Figuring out which aspect(s) of your fly the trout are recognizing and rejecting can be tricky, especially since it can vary so much by location or seasonal timing, so using a consistent and replicable approach is important. In order to stay organized, I came up with a two-step system that I call the Elimination Diet, which has been remarkably effective. Here’s how it works:

**Step 1: Strip It Down**

The first step is to distill your fly down to the bare essentials by removing beads, flash, wing cases, tails, legs, and all other “extras” that trout might be noticing and avoiding. The resulting “fly” is now just thread wrapped around a hook. (I add a black head with a marker, and seal the thread with clear nail polish.) This plain, slim pattern may not be the most accurate insect imitation, but at least it won’t raise any suspicions. Try these stripped-down patterns in the same colors and sizes as the flies that were rejected, and see if the reaction is different.

If you still don’t catch trout, then fly design might not be the issue, and the Elimination Diet might not be the solution.

However, if you do catch trout with the basic thread fly, then there’s something about the more complex flies you were using earlier that the fish have apparently learned to avoid. Time for step 2.

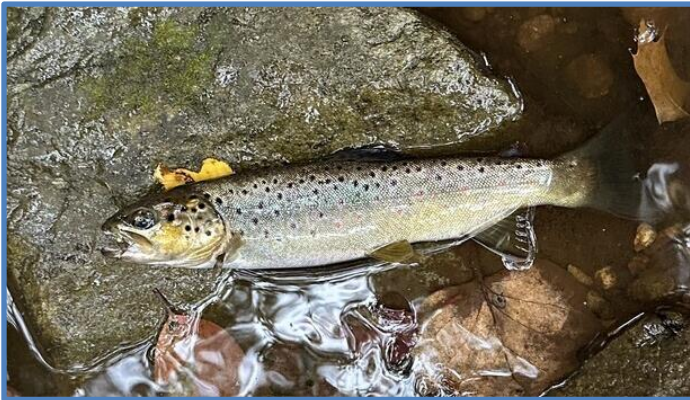
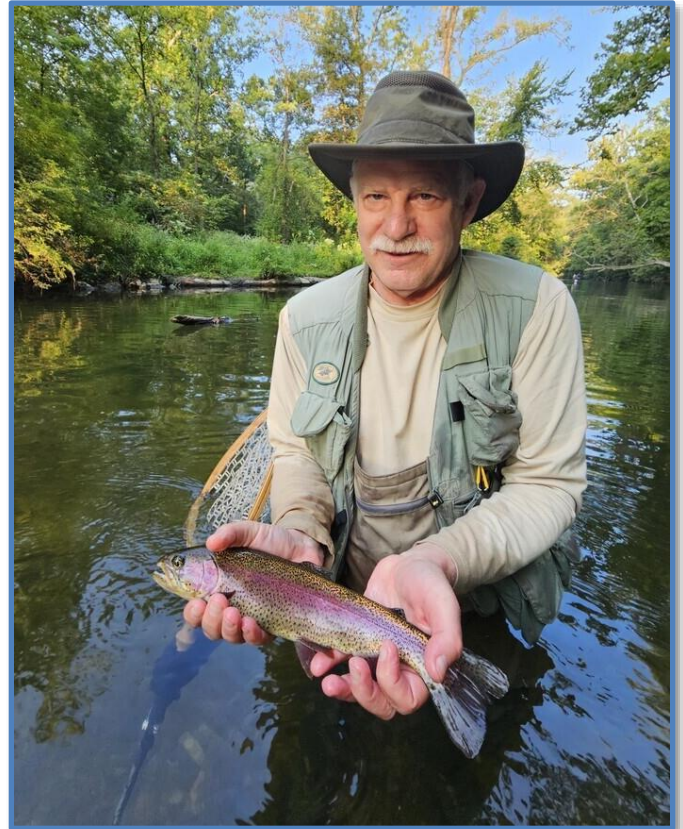


**Step 2: Build It Better**

If you caught fish on the plain thread midge, you can start reintroducing design elements, one at a time, to test whether each one makes the fly more or less effective. So far, I’ve noticed that wing cases and tails rarely lead to fewer strikes, while flash is the cause of the most refusals, followed closely by brass bead heads. Your mileage may vary, but by testing each fly design element individually, you’ll come to understand exactly what the fish in your area will tolerate, and maybe even what they prefer.

## Members Catch - Bob O'Donnell

Nice to see many of you out there sharing your adventures with the group. Keep the stories and photos coming! Some days when I'm tired of being chained to my desk your stories and photos help revive me.



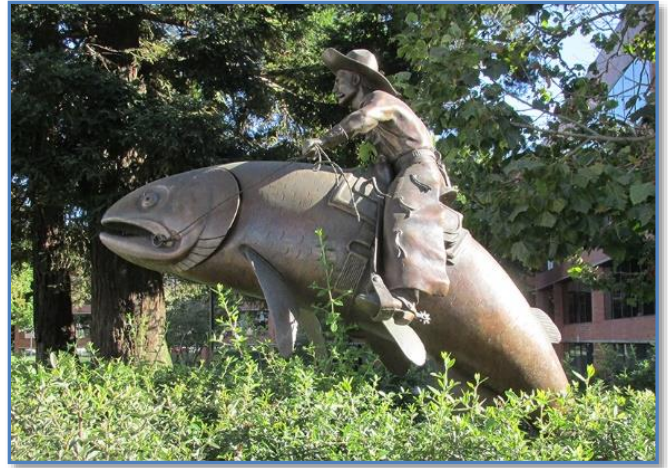
## Contributions & Questions Welcome!

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)



## Savage Flashback Pheasant Tail Nymph

Since Matt O'Neal is our speaker this month, I thought it would be fitting to show another one of his fly patterns.

Matt demos tying a nice PT Nymph variation and then proceeds to show you how productive it is on the Savage River by landing a huge, gorgeous brown trout. Make sure you watch until the end.

Tie some of these up, they obviously work!

[Savage Flashback Pheasant Tail Nymph](#)



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Wheaton, MD 20915