

# The Conservationist



PPTU.org

## Potomac-Patuxent Chapter Trout Unlimited

October 2013 • Published monthly except June, July, August and December



## Seth Coffman, Trout Unlimited Brook Trout conservation in Virginia– October 16<sup>th</sup>

This month we welcome Seth Coffman as our guest speaker. Seth is the head of TU's Shenandoah Headwaters Home Rivers Initiative. This initiative, under Seth's leadership is working to protect existing strongholds of brook trout, reconnect, restore and improve marginal brook trout, and to restore severely degraded streams so that one-day brook trout can be reintroduced to these historic waters.

Brook trout is the state freshwater fish of Virginia and an example of an iconic, recognizable creature that people immediately associate with clean cold water, and healthy watersheds. But brook trout in Virginia face many threats to their future existence and have been lost from far too many streams and rivers. Seth will give a summary of the threats facing brook trout, an overview of the programs goals and approach to conservation along with some specific examples of recent restoration projects.

Seth has a degree in Fisheries Science from Virginia Tech and a Masters in Biology from James Madison University. He has been at the helm of the Shenandoah Headwaters HRI since its inception in 2008. He has increased the presence of TU in the Shenandoah Valley and built a strong reputation among TU's partners and farmers. Seth is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Shenandoah Headwaters HRI, landowner outreach, volunteer coordination, monitoring efforts, and project implementation. Seth works with landowners, farmers and homeowners in an effort to find real solutions to conservation problems and to enhance the native Brook Trout populations.

Please join us on October 16th at 7PM at the Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center, (1000 Forest Glen Road, Silver Spring, Maryland) to welcome Seth Coffman.

***On the Bench*** – Dennis Covert will be masterfully tying the Bead Head Copper John.



– Marc Hutzell

### Monthly Chapter Meetings

Time and Day: 7:00 PM, Third Wednesday except June, July, August and December  
Place: Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center, 1000 Forest Glen Road, Silver Spring, Maryland

#### DIRECTIONS TO THE SENIOR CENTER

From Capitol Beltway: North on Georgia Avenue (Rte. 97). First Right on Forest Glen Road, then go past Holy Cross Hospital and across Sligo Creek Parkway. The Center is on the right.

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

## **OFFICERS and DIRECTORS 2013 – 2014**

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Northwest Branch: Jim Keil 301-588-8375  
Middle Patuxent: Jim Robinson 301-490-5358  
Patuxent: Jay Sheppard 301-725-5559

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## **Presidents' Column - James Robinson**

### **Volunteer Burn-out**

This is my second column in the *Conservationist* and you might notice a theme developing – volunteers. As I sit at the monthly meetings of the Board of the Chapter, one of the recurring discussions is the need for volunteers. If you attended the September Chapter meeting, you might have noticed that a couple of the regular features of our Chapter meetings (Refreshments and Videos & Books) were conspicuously absent due to the absence of a couple of our key volunteers. My last column listed several volunteer opportunities for you, the members of the Chapter, to assist with the many activities of the Chapter.

The Directors & Officers of the Chapter spend many hours each month organizing fishing opportunities, preparing the *Conservationist*, coordinating fund raising activities, attending meetings with State & governmental agencies, working with recovering military personnel & teachers in the Trout in the Classroom program and providing informative meetings. All of these hours spent by a handful of dedicated individuals who recognize the benefits realized by hundreds of people in our State. I sometimes think that they're over worked & I know that they're definitely UNDERPAID. They are, of course, doing something they love to do. My main hope is that they don't get burned out.

So here's this month's list of opportunities cures to prevent burn-out of these hard working people:

1) Run the Barrel Raffle: For several months, we've been looking for someone to run the monthly Barrel Raffle. Did you know that this activity brings enough average income into the Chapter to pay for the room rental for Chapter & Board meetings? It takes about 1 hour per month. Contact me if you can help with this.

2) Hot Dog & Bratwurst Sale October 26th: Started by previous President Dennis Covert, this twice annual event has become one of our largest fund raising activities but it takes 8 or 9 people to run this operation efficiently. Several people have spent the day (9 AM until about 4 PM) but even a couple of hours of your time would be greatly appreciated. Unfortunately, I will be out of town that day so I know we'll be at least one person short. The income has supported (among other things) our program at Ft. Meade, Casting for Recovery, and our efforts to improve the cold water releases below Brighton Dam. A sign up sheet was passed around at the September meeting & will be repeated at the October 16th meeting or you can contact Dennis or me.

3) Trout in the Classroom: Our Chapter has provided most of the volunteer support for this state-wide program, primarily in Montgomery & Howard Counties. In the entire United States, Maryland is the only state where this program is run entirely by volunteers. Although most of the financial support has been assumed by the Mid-Atlantic Council of TU, it still takes a lot of people to make it run smoothly. Last year, 65 (+/-) schools participated. Jim Greene, the founder & driving force of this highly successful program, expects 80 or more schools in 2014. Training for the teachers in the program is coming up on November 23rd at the Robinson Nature Center in Columbia. This is a great opportunity to learn about the program. The real person power needs happen in January with the delivery of the Rainbow Trout eggs and then in mid-April until mid-May with the release of the fingerlings into our rivers. Contact Jim Greene or me if you're interested in learning more or want to help. 🌸

Tight Lines, Jim R



## PPTU Mentor Program Beginners & Beyond

Ken Bowyer 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. at nearby streams. Instruction will be tailored to individual needs. Members who have not made an **Annual Supporting Contribution** will be asked to contribute \$20.

Contact Ken 301-627-7154 or E-mail: [kenbowyer@verizon.net](mailto:kenbowyer@verizon.net) 🌸



## Tying Mayfly Spinners - Jay Sheppard

Last month I described a simple recipe for tying parachute patterns for mayfly duns. This month I will finish up the short series with the really simple spinner pattern that has been very productive for me over several decades. I picked up on this style from Hatches by Al Caucci and Bob Nastasi. Not only is this a very effective style to imitate the dead mayfly spinner on the water, but it is very durable and will float almost forever! It is also a very simple pattern to tie that even the beginner can quickly create at his tying bench.

The first step is to tie in the hackle about half way back from the eye to the end of the shank. The hackle needs to be of good quality and have the fibers approximately equal to the length of the shank. White, grizzly, and dun are the most



frequently used colors, but ginger is also commonly needed. The hackle butt is tied in forward towards the hook eye and set at right angles to the shank, pointing directly away from the tyer with the dull side forward. The thread is passed back to the rear of the shank.

The tails do not need to be divided like in the dun, but it is nice to do so for your own satisfaction. Tails should also be about equal to the length of the shank. Dubbing is now placed on the thread to wind forward. If an egg ball is desired at the tail end of the body, one can add the yellow or pink ball before returning to the main color(s) for the rest of the body. Some spinners have the abdomen one color and the thorax and head another. Check your references for such details. The dubbing is kept thin for the rear half of more of the shank and slightly thickened in the forward third of the body. When finished dubbing the body, the thread will be hanging behind the hook eye.

Now the hackle is brought forward in about 6 or 7 palmered turns to the eye, keeping the dull side facing forward. A good quality hackle will easily make two spinners, so I typically tie pairs of them at a time. After tying off the hackle and allowing the head cement to dry, comes the final step: trimming the hackle. This is done with a pair of very sharp scissors. Turn the fly so the eye is facing directly at you, head on. All hackle fibers that have tips below the plane of the body are trimmed off flush with the hackle stem. No hackle points should be below the body at any time in the finished fly. PERIOD! NO EXCEPTIONS!! Next, most of the fibers above the body are also removed. I have carefully counted the remaining fibers and found only 16–19 are all that are required on each side to make a very effective dry fly. Remember, most naturals have crystal clear wings with a bunch of veins running through each wing. When floating, this pattern give the impression of only those veins with the crystal clear wings laying between them.

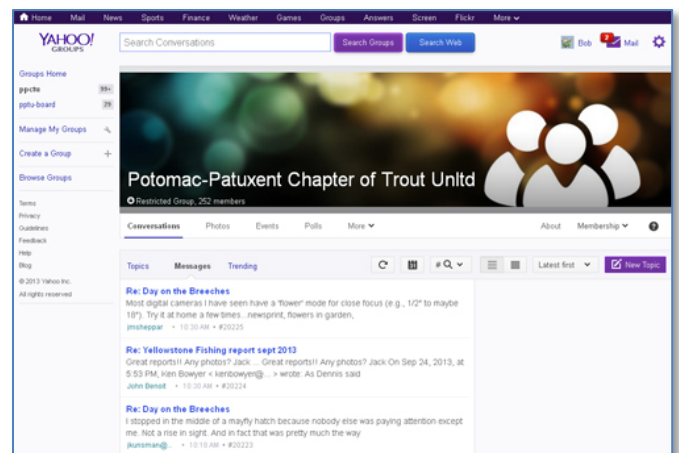
When I have been in the middle of a spinner fall and had my tying materials and tools with me, I have made some very fast and serviceable spinners by tying in the tip of the hackle at the bend and lashing it down with the dubbing of the abdomen to the mid point of the shank and then continuing the dubbing with the rest of the hackle left free for the later wrapping. The tip of the hackle point is

trimmed with a razor blade so only a few fibers are left for the now divided tail. Quick and effective in a pinch!

This spinner pattern has only one small drawback. It is tough for the angler to see when it is laying on the water. I rarely have to cast it very far, so I can usually see it landing on the water and know approximately where it is floating. When the spinner fall is starting and even when there are some cripple duns drifting along, this is the go to pattern in my arsenal of dry flies. For drawing of this pattern and the parachute from last month go to: [www.pptu.org/Fly-Tying/MayflyPatternsSimplified.pdf](http://www.pptu.org/Fly-Tying/MayflyPatternsSimplified.pdf).

## Tackle & Tactics - Jay Sheppard

If you are not a member of the chapter's list serve, you are missing a large amount of current fishing information on the Web. The list serve may have discussions about almost any trout fishing topic one can imagine, as well as a few that you would not expect. I can only relate a few topics from time to time in this column in the Conservationist. If someone has a query on tackle, guides at a distant destination, or recent fishing conditions on local waters, this is the place to ask them. To subscribe, send an email from the address you wish to use for this purpose to: [ppctu-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:ppctu-subscribe@yahoo.com). This service has become a real asset to the local trout fishing community. I learn a lot every day I open my email! There are many varied topics every week. The list serve is open to any person interested in the sport.



## Patuxent Report - Jay Sheppard

There is one small piece of equipment I usually carry with me when fishing: a small pair of waterproof binoculars. Everyone probably knows I am also a bird watcher, so this would seem a natural thing for me to carry on a trout stream. Actually these binoculars are used more often for trout watching than bird watching! Watching trout is a very important exercise in trout fishing. One can see what they are doing much easier. Are they simply resting behind a rock or are they actively feeding? If the latter, how often are they taking something and what are they taking? Is it on the surface or is it below the surface? Can I identify the prey? Knowing what the trout are chasing is very useful information. It certainly is a lot better than choosing a series of flies based mostly on guess work that may or may not produce any takes by the trout.

The second use is identifying what is actually drifting on the water. I am always amazed at how many insects floating on the water seem to drift by me at more than an arm's reach! Those bugs must know I am there waiting to capture them for closer inspection! With the binoculars I can look across 50–100 feet of water and get a pretty good idea what is floating along. If I am really lucky, I can get into a good position to watch an actively feeding trout and see precisely what he is taking. I can look up ahead at the drifting material coming into the feeding lane of the trout. I can see the trout is not interested in a single midge, but if two or more are mating or fighting, the trout will rise and take them—two for the price of one! I can see that it is not taking every mayfly going by but only a particular kind or stage. I have watched green drakes float past a trout untouched, but every 30–40 seconds the trout will rise and take another #14 sulfur dun that is passing.

Look in the larger sporting goods stores and catalogues for a reasonable pair of waterproof binoculars. They need only be about 8 power and be compact. You do not want to lug a heavy pair around! They are a fine investment for any trout fisher working fussy trout. 🌸

As we go to press we are about to help DNR do some electro shocking surveys of the Brighton Dam tailwater on the Patuxent River. We will report the results on the PPCTU list serve and in the next issue of the Conservationist. Hopefully, we will find more than a few trout. We hope that DNR will find a few hundred fresh stockers to go in the river sometime in October.

The water was continuing to warm through mid-September in the release from the dam. It was a near constant 70–72° from late August into mid-September. Although this is not lethal to the trout, it is a major stress on them, especially if they get caught. Some mortality to the caught trout at these temps can happen, so we hope most fishers avoided the river at those times.

The upper Patuxent River (above Triadelphia Reservoir) runs completely through the State Park. It is also a public hunting area for most sections. Hunting is not allowed on Sundays on State lands. If you do go out, I suggest either Sundays or middle of the week or pick a section with NO HUNTING signs. If mid week, wear a brightly colored hat. Some large browns can often be found in the latter half of this month and the early parts of November. They will be finishing spawning and heading into the bigger pools. Those holes are also the winter homes of the all the minnows and suckers in that part of the river—winter food for the big trout. Once the leaves have fallen I usually just walk from large pool to large pool, tossing in a big streamer or similar offering.

More than a few years ago, I hooked into a very nice brown of yet unknown size, and my partner, who was high up on the bank watching the proceedings, said “You will not believe the size of that trout.....that is following yours!” When I landed my fish, it was 19", and my buddy thought the other trout was maybe 6" longer than mine! We returned a week later, and he landed the bigger trout, which was exactly as described: 25". 🌸

## Membership Reminder *Conservationist*

As a Chapter we are not allowed to assess dues or fees for membership, and therefore depend on the Annual Supporting Contribution, along with other fund raising events to sustain the chapter's administration costs (primarily room rental at the Schwienhaut Center); education programs that teach the importance of cold water fisheries to our environment to primary & middle schoolers in the Trout in the Classroom program and high schoolers who attend TU camps in Virginia & Pennsylvania, Project Healing Waters at Ft. Meade that provides recreational activities to wounded warriors, Casting for Recovery for survivors of breast cancer, and Conservation projects that restore Trout habitats in rivers & streams across Maryland.

The Conservationist is provided electronically to those members who provide financial assistance via the Annual Supporting Contribution (ASC) to the Chapter. Our fiscal year runs September to September. The date on the subject line indicates when your ASC expires and if it is 0913, it expired last month. If your check for \$20 is already in the mail, thanks for your support. If you would like to renew on-line, please go to our website. If you would like to mail a check, please send it to:

Potomac-Patuxent Chapter TU  
P.O. Box 2865  
Wheaton, MD 20915

If you have any other membership questions, feel free to contact me at: [membership@pptu.org](mailto:membership@pptu.org) 🌻

Thanks for your support,

Carl Smolka  
Membership



## Yellowstone, September 10th-17th 2013 (condensed – full report is on line) - Dennis Covert

Will Amland and I began planning this trip back in August 2010 while fishing the Lamar River. Wondering what the grass hopper fishing might be like at the end of the season just ahead of the frost. Along the way six other guys decided to join us; Ken Bowyer, Joe Robinson, Tim Bowers, and Lou Reichel all from Maryland and members of PPTU, and Jack & James Bunnell from Ogden Utah, and Denver Colorado respectively.

No getting around it, getting to West Yellowstone from Maryland is a hump. Two plane rides with a layover in Chicago, then a three hour drive from Bozeman to Blue Ribbon fly shop in West Yellowstone, or about 17 hours after meeting at BWI. We bought some flies, got licensed up for the Park, and then drove another hour to Canyon Lodge oohing and awing at the scenery along the way.

Not far into the park along the far side of the Madison River valley, a large bull elk managing his harem was drawing a crowd. Stalking up and down, head held high, he would bugle a challenge, then in mock battle lower his head and charge clumps of muck and marsh grass throwing it all into the air. Any cow that wandered off farther than his liking got the point of those massive antlers and ran back into the harem. Then driving on we spotted some buffalo browsing while Puffy clouds whiter than white played peek a boo with the mountain peaks under a sky that couldn't have possibly been any bluer.

The Cabins at Canyon Lodge are more like duplexes and are centrally located in the park. They have electric heat, private bathrooms with shower, sink and vanity. Canyon also has two eateries; a restaurant and a cafeteria that stay open till 9pm. The food is adequate, maybe a little high priced, but for the area not out of line. There is also a General Store, a Sport Shop, a back Country Information and Registration office, and a gas station. It's a convenient place for fishermen to stay if the various river systems in the park is your destination. Nothing fancy though, and maybe a little passed its prime. Works for me, but I'm not too demanding in



the amenities department, all I need is a place to clean up and sleep. Cell Phone coverage there gets a D-

The Lamar Valley was our first stop, and it looked more like summer than autumn to me; I expected the quakies to be splashes of yellow on the mountain sides, but what few of them there are were still green. Once in the valley I spotted a few bands of antelope that were scattered among the clumps of buffalo, but the antelope migration looked to be in its earliest phase. I think fall weather was at least a week behind schedule.

The grasshoppers were still there though, and once the sun was up heating the valley floor big'uns two inches long would hover a couple feet off the ground their wings making that buzzing noise. The first thing I noticed was the low water, the second was fewer fish than there were in 2010. There were some fish, and we caught some, a couple in the 17 & 18 inch range, but just not as many as I was expecting. That afternoon Will decided to fish the pocket water on Soda Butte and had a 20+ fish day, while the rest of us spread out over the Lamar/Soda Butte confluence. I can't remember who all caught what, but I do remember Jack landed an 18" Cutt that was holding under a log in a fast running elbow pool, and Joe got a 17" Cutt on a beetle just off an undercut bank that had been kissing his hopper but wouldn't take it. The rest of us got into fish, I hooked two, one a fatty I hooked on a ginger bugger from above fishing off a high bank, but lost him getting down to the water with the net. I guess I wasn't as spry as the task required. I know more fish were caught but I didn't take any notes, so others will have to chime in and provide details about how many and what on.



Next morning at breakfast, Jack had a picture of a big boar grizzly on a fresh kill in a meadow about 300 yards off the road in the Lamar valley close to its confluence with Soda Butte. Just about where we had been fishing a couple days before, but up on the

flat ground away from the bank. Jack said he thought it might be a buffalo, but wasn't sure because the bear had raked so much debris over the carcass to protect it. A sow grizzly with cubs was circling the kill trying to get in for a bite, but the boar wouldn't share. Stuff like that just reminds ya that even if ya don't see'em, they are there and not far off. Bears on a kill can really turn into a road side circus, and had traffic all jammed up in the Lamar Valley for the next couple days so we stayed away.

Over the next couple hours Tim Hooked 3 or 4 fish I can't remember exactly, I know he landed an 18" Bow and then 20" brown, then the fishing went dead. Refusing to give it up I pounded the water for two more hours, and within a 10 minute window landed an 18" bow and then hooked a 20" bow that hit so hard she pulled all the slack line out of my hand and made the reel yelp. Wasn't even sure I still had her until I got the line tight and she tore off across and down river. I did finally land her, my best fish of trip trip. Not a lot of skill involved, Ya just have to be there when fish move through. Big tough fish in heavy water, always lots of fun!

Our last day there it poured at Old Faithful, lightening striking the ground around the geysers. For the safety of the guests the park service people were tasked to keep people inside the building and off the grounds around the geysers. However, speaking slowly and clearly doesn't translate into a foreign language, and Will and I were amused watching frustrated park employees, their frustration maybe even exceeded by the bewilderment of the Chinese tourists as they were being herded towards the building while trying to wander around outside to take pictures.

For myself I would go back in September, but maybe a week or two later, and focus on the lake run fish and the Madison.

These aren't PPTU outings, just guys on a trip. Will and I are planning on going back to the YNP the second or third week in July 2015. So, if ya think ya want to go come on. We are thinking of some doing some back country fishing; maybe even do a two or three day horse pack in to Cache creek or somewhere similar. 🌸

*Note: You can read the entire report on line.*

## Reminder

If you spot poaching please place a call to the

### Catch a Poacher Hotline

At

**1-800-635-6124**

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



Contributions should be sent to the Editor as plain text in an email or as an MS Word .doc attachment. The deadline for submissions is the twelfth (12th) day of the month prior to the month of publication.

**Editor: Trout Wrangler**

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### Shooters - Take Aim!

The Isaac Walton League's Wildlife Achievement Chapter near Damascus Maryland is holding its annual Shooting Clays to Save Chesapeake Bay event October 20th at their Range. The proceeds from this event are being directed to our chapter of Trout Unlimited (PPCTU). Please come out and support them and us. For more information and directions, go to: <http://www.pptu.org/Shoot/Shoot.shtml>



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