

November 2000 Newsletter

Potomac-Pautxent Chapter



Chosen Frozen

by Larry Coburn and Charlie Gelso

Wednesday, November 15

Our infamous chapter members Larry Coburn and Charlie Gelso have agreed to chair an interactive round table discussion regarding winter fly fishing. Aren't we timely? This can be the best time of year to wet you lines. Crowds diminished, not as hot, a good break from the short and dark drearies days. Charlie and Larry have been fishing together for a great many years, both together and as professional guides.

They will provide an insightful, informative and in some cases innovative approach to fly fishing areas that are within a days drive. This easily includes most of Mary-land and certain parts of Pennsylvania. Expect to hear a knowledgeable discussion on selection of your fishing destination based on weather conditions, terrain, stream type, available food (spelled hatch), etc.; rather than the proximity of good local eateries for the fishermen. If you think that the tactics used in the winter are the same as those of the spring and summer, well please come to find out.

Everyone may catch fish on a bright sunny day in No-venber when it's 50 degrees. But just because it might in the 30 degree range doesn't mean that you won't be successful with you catch or you won't be that uncom-

fortable. Dressing for the occasion, and safety, will also be covered. If you haven't heard these guys speak before, please mark it on your calendar in ink. Their excitement and enthusiasm can't help but draw you in. If you know them, you know what you are in for. If you haven't read the book that Jim and Charlie co-authored you might want to get your hands on a copy (available at chapter meetings). They have really done a great job in providing a lot of useful information, pre-sented very well.



November PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

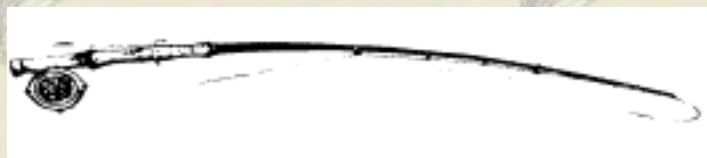
By Jim Keil

For some members of this chapter, past and present, it was some pressing conservation issue that drove them to become involved and take on some responsible role in the chapter and in protecting our watersheds, and for others the responsibility they took on came to them less insistently, perhaps out of a simple desire to help preserve and protect the fishing they enjoy. Whatever the reason, they chose to volunteer a few hours a month for a prescribed period of time to help the chapter fulfill its mission to conserve, protect, and restore coldwater resources regionally and, to a lesser extent, nationally.

I invite you to consider whether there isn't some desire within you to do something more to preserve our fisheries than pay your \$15 each year. I know you're all very busy, but I want busy people involved in our conservation efforts because busy people get things done. If you wait until there's time in your schedule, you might never be able to say to your family and to yourself that you played a personal role in protecting some watershed from deterioration. There's no time in my schedule--or Val's, Jay's, David's, Dave's, Charlie's, Jim's, Len's, or any number of other men and women in this chapter--for what we do for these watersheds, and there never will be. Still..

Consider volunteering a couple hours a month or one day a year to these conservation efforts. It doesn't have to be as a board member or committee chair. It could mean organizing a one-time tree planting. It could mean coordinating the stream monitors. You tell me (contact info's on the last page) what time you think you can afford and how you want to spread it out, and, trust me, I'll find something for you to do. I'll make you another promise: it's a rewarding way to spend time you don't have. Enjoy the winter holidays. Remember that the next newsletter and meeting will come in January.

PATUXENT REPORT



Jay Sheppard

The Patuxent Special Trout Area has been stocked this fall with 500 rainbows and 500 browns. The most

heavily stocked section is between Annapolis Rock bridge and Hipsley Mill, with a few going in at Howard Chapel. The only real problem with fishing this stream at this time of the year is that much of the upper Patuxent is a public hunting zone. Some sections are closed, but much of the park is open to public use for hunting. Call the Park office at 301-924-2127 or stop by on Clopper Road in Gaithersburg (Seneca Creek State Park is responsible for Patuxent State Park) to obtain maps of hunting zones within Patuxent. Some of the local sport shops may also have this information. The firearm season for deer is about to start, but other firearm hunting (e.g., squirrels, woodcock), as well as archery season for deer, will be running now through early February. Suggest weekdays or Sundays AND a bright-colored hat- Saturdays, in particular. Also, if you have a whistle, carry that around your neck to alert hunters to your presence. The most hunted area is between Hipsley Mill and Howard Chapel Roads. As an alternative, try the Middle Patuxent Delayed Harvest section, which has also been stocked but where fire-arms are prohibited.

MORE GUNPOWDER TROUT MARKED

The fisheries biologists for Maryland DNR are continuing an experiment in marking some of the trout in the Gunpowder River. Movement of fish, growth rates, and survivorship are just some of the topics of interest to them. A very small colored, plastic tag has been inserted right behind the LEFT eye of the trout. The skin at this point is transparent, and a tagged fish can be spotted if one looks carefully for the tag. Some fish have also had their adipose fin removed. The tags are about 1 mm x 3 mm and come in several bright colors (e.g., orange, chartreuse). They have a single letter and two numerals imprinted on their surface, but due to their small size some fish-ers will need to use some source of magnification to be sure of reading the numbers correctly.

Trout that were smaller than about 8" in early October of this year (expected to be more than 9" next summer) have not been tagged. The four locations where the trout were marked are as follows: just above Masemore Road, about ½ mile below York Road, about ½ mile below Blue Mount Road, and about ½ mile below Moncton Road. However, one fish has been found several miles from its original marking site, so some trout may move. If you spot a fish with such a tag, please record the location and date where you caught the trout, as well as the number and color of the tag. You can notify DNR by a postcard (17400 Annapolis Rock Rd., Woodbine, MD 21797), by E-Mail (cgougeon@dnr.state.md.us), or by phone (301-854-6060 or 410-442-2080).

The DNR is interested in several aspects of the wild trout fishery on the Gunpowder. When you report the location of a marked trout, try to be as precise as possible (e.g., 600 yards below Masemore Bridge). Some 1600 trout have been marked. When initially marked, each trout was carefully weighed and its length measured.

REMINDER

The next issue of the Conservationist will be in January. There is no December issue or monthly meeting. Have a safe and Happy Holiday!



HATCH TALK

Jay Sheppard I have not yet received many questions from our members regarding this discussion on hatches and insects of importance to trout fishers. Actually, I have had only one, which I will discuss below. The January column is going to be fairly sparse unless I hear from a few folks (EM: jmsheppar@aol.com). I want to first finish the general discussion of the various groups of insects that trout are eating on a regular basis. Last month I discussed the four major groups of aquatic insects that are important to trout: mayflies, stoneflies, caddises, and midges and their relatives. Each of these groups composes an order in the class Insecta. Orders are groups of animals that have a common ancestry and large similarities in their overall structure and methods of reproduction and development.

Fishing with terrestrials is almost completely over for this season, so be sure to save this issue for next spring. When the trees are green, there are many kinds of insects that are also eaten by trout besides the four major groups listed above. These are the beetles, ants, grasshoppers/crickets, caterpillars, and dragonflies. Actually most terrestrial insects will find themselves floating down a trout stream at some point, so almost any insect is fair game. I have seen wood moths fluttering across the stream and land briefly on the water only to get crashed by a trout. Aphids, cicadas, and other insects will also find their way to a trout's stomach. The one group of insects that probably is seen regularly on the water but that rarely gets eaten is the bees and wasps. A trout only has to try a live bee or wasp once to quickly learn to never try that particular insect again!

Beetles and ants are the two largest groups that fall into the water during the summer. Beetles are the most diversified group of animals in the world. There are more than 30,000 kinds of beetles in the U.S., compared to less than 800 kinds of birds. They come in all sizes from very tiny black dots less than a 16th of an inch long to some very husky types that may reach 2½ inches and as big around as your little finger. Beetles are easily identified in the adult stage by the hard pair of front wings that cover the more fragile second pair. The latter pair is what actually gets the beetle flying. Most beetles are somber in overall coloration, but if they have any color it is usually their underside, which can be a bright metallic green, copper, blue, or some other color. Everyone has seen a June beetle bashing into the lights at night or the infamous Japanese beetle in their garden. Ants are also as ubiquitous as the beetles but are not as varied.

However, they make up for the smaller number of species in any given area with their large numbers of individuals. One oak or maple tree may have thousands swarming over it on a summer day. With a small gust of wind, many will fall to the ground or water. In addition to these mishaps, ants also have a reproductive behavior that also can dump thousands of them on the water in a brief time. Like their relatives, the honey bees, ants have a very social life style. The adults swarm out of their colony as if by some magical signal in a matter of 20-45 minutes when the weather and other conditions are right. I have seen millions in the air and on the water when all the colonies of one species erupt on a warm, moist summer morning. For an hour or two, the trout will be gulping the winged ants that flutter to the water by mistake, and then, as if by magic, the flight is over and within 15 minutes the water calms with no further rising trout. I have seen a fairly reliable hatch of large flying ants on the Gunpowder most summer mornings start at dawn and stop about 7:45 AM. Fishers arriving at 8 AM see placid water with no visible trout rising where many dozens had been feeding only minutes before.

Crickets and grasshoppers are fairly common prey of trout in Maryland, although the far west and some other

eastern waters have far more suitable conditions for the hoppers. The common black cricket we see around our homes in the late summer and fall is what we often want to imitate. They actually grow from small flightless replicas of the adult all summer. In the late spring we need to use a very tiny cricket (or hopper) pattern (e.g., #16) and gradually use larger and larger ones until the adults mature to the flying stage (#10 or larger). They are one terrestrial pattern that can be actively twitched, since the naturals will swim to shore if they find themselves in the water. The large hind legs are a very important component of any pattern used to mimic them. Although the adult moths and butterflies are not important to fly fishers, the larvae are. The larvae or caterpillars fall from the tree or other streamside vegetation. Butterfly caterpillars do get taken, but the really large numbers are usually from various species of moths. Caterpillars range from less than ¼ inch to over 3 inches and in various shades of brown, gray and green to camouflage themselves on the foliage they feed upon. Caterpillars can be active from the first signs of green plant growth in late April until the leaves fall in October.

One of my favorite fly patterns at this time is the chartreuse San Juan worm about 1.5" long and dead drifted near the bottom. I have seen large browns charge several feet to grab one of these just as it hits the water on the Savage, Big Hunting, and Gunpowder. I once had two 17" trout on two consecutive casts with this pattern on the Savage several years ago! What a thrill! Dragonflies, and their close relatives the damselflies, are aquatic insects that live primarily in slow or still water as a nymph. They are predaceous in both the nymph and the adult stages. They are of relatively minor importance on most of our waters, but it is fun to fish the adult on the surface of a heavily fished stream. Few fishers ever use them, but, if they find some trout that has eaten a bright blue or green dragonfly, the trout will crash the imitation as soon as it hits the water. The real importance of this group is when the trout are found in ponds and lakes. The nymphs are very abundant, as well as the adults, in such waters. If you are planning any trip to still or slow waters to the west or north, be sure to have a few nymphs and adults ready.

The one question I did receive was about midges. I will get into some of the basics in this issue and try to get more detail into the January issue. First, midges are several closely related or similar groups of flies (order Diptera). They closely resemble mosquitos, except that they do not bite and are usually smaller in size. They are active every month of the year in this region. Most importantly, even on a cold winter day, they can be found on open water, especially the warmer spring creeks and tailwaters. Except for the winter stoneflies and a mayfly or two, they really offer the only potential surface food for trout from first freeze until mid-March. Midges and all flies have a complete metamorphosis. The aquatic midges live as tiny worm-like larvae that have tiny filaments to breath and capture food. After several molts, the larva pupates into an inactive stage. The adult emerges from the pupa and flies over the stream feeding and mating. The whole life cycle may take place in a week from egg to adult to egg, depending upon water temperatures. Midge fishing is a true art form of fly fishing. Patterns are typically size 20 or much smaller. Most are very simple in construction: a winding of thin material for a body and some sort of hackle wrapped behind the eye of the hook. Some can be effectively fished with a 6X tippet, but most are best fished on 7X. (Or even 8X, which is hopeless when a 19" trout inhales the invisible fly!)

The larva, pupa and adult stages are important to the fisher. The larvae are usually found crawling around rocks and other submerged structures where they sometimes become dislodged.. Pupae often ride just under the surface film prior to emerging. Although they come in a range of colors, most seem to be in shades of gray from black to white. What they lack in size, they make up for in vast numbers. In colder weather, they offer trout a good and consistent source of energy. .

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Paint Branch Report

By David Dunmire, Paint Branch Chair

Confirming Oil Spills into Paint Branch

On August 31, 200 a heating fuel truck leaked several hundred gallons (according to the Washington Post) of oil into a waterway that flows into Paint Branch. This is in the 11500 block of Stewart Lane, which is just down-stream of the old Wall Street Journal buildings off Route 29 in White Oak. Crews placed three booms in the stream to contain the leak. State investigators are determining the environmental impact of the spill, which left a trail of oil one-half to one-third of a mile long.

The spill reportedly occurred around 1:30 p.m. during heavy rain, and resulted from a tank overflowing during filling. One account claimed that the worker responsible for the spill waited for his boss to arrive from Northern Virginia, and only then contacted the fire department. The fire department said they arrived around 4:00 p.m. The smell was very strong and the water looked cloudy with the fuel oil when they arrived. Two hazmat units and an engine responded. While the fire department placed booms and absorbent material, it appeared that most of the oil was already downstream. They sent an engine to try to intercept the on the main stem, but the results of this effort are not known. A visit to the site a week later revealed the under-sides of many rocks still had an oily sheen and a fairly strong oil smell.

Update on Illegal Clearing & Grading in Headwaters by Good Hope Mosque On October 3 Montgomery County court addressed the Ahmadiyya Washington Mosque case. Earlier this spring this property owner illegally cleared and graded approximately three acres of land at the corner of Briggs Chaney and Good Hope Roads. This is in the Upper Paint Branch Special Protection Area, and adjacent to the Left Fork Tributary of the Paint

Branch. In June the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services (DPS) issued a series of 14 citations for repeated violations of SPA codes and erosion and sediment control laws. The issue before the court was simply whether or not this property owner cleared and graded the area without first obtaining the required permits and water quality plans.

Representatives of the mosque had already publicly admitted doing this. The judge ordered both sides to reach an out of court settlement. The County prosecutor and the mosque's prosecutor met privately, without DPS participation, and agreed that the \$10,000 in fines would be reduced to three \$750 fines, and the site is to be cleaned up within 30 days.

In addition Special Protection Area violations and the erosion and sediment control violations, the mosque also violated Montgomery County's forest conservation law. Administration of this law falls under the jurisdiction of the Planning Board. On August 3 the Planning Board conducted a hearing to determine the civil penalty for these forest conservation violations.

MNCPPC staff defined three proposed options for settling this issue. The mosque rejected all three. PPTU, the Eyes of Paint Branch, and the Audubon Naturalist Society accept any of these three options defined by MNCPPC staff, but nothing less. The Board declined to set the penalty at this hearing, and directed their staff to negotiate some more. The second round of negotiations occurred in September, and resulted in a stalemate. The mosque has hired a litigation attorney and intends to sue. This is the biggest violation in the ten-year history of Montgomery County's forest conservation law. PPTU is free of any partiality on this issue. We seek only to protect our natural resources by uniformly enforcing existing laws. However, enforcement can be a long, complex, and contentious process. In order to follow through with the appropriate actions taken by the Department of Permitting Services and MNCPPC staff in response to these violations, we need your help. The three options defined by MNCPPC staff really are moderate penalties. Given the significance of these violations, nothing less is acceptable. Send a short letter stating this message to: Montgomery County Planning Board, 8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760.

COE/DEP Stream Improvement Problems Persist

The long saga of problems with the Gum Springs Parallel Pipe project is finally over. However, we may be facing the specter of similar problems with other current and future projects. The Gum Springs Parallel Pipe project was one of several stream improvement projects being jointly conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection. This particular project was intended to reduce thermal impacts on Gum Springs, a small tributary in which the wild brown trout have historically reproduced.

However, the actual installation of 2000 feet of 36-inch concrete pipe was fraught with problems. This included repeated schedule delays, unnecessary environmental impacts, unacceptable workmanship, and general unaccountability. Repeated letters and meetings over many months resulted in a Memorandum of Understanding with the Corps, and it appeared as if the situation was improving. On October 12 DEP revealed that the DEP/COE construction at two stormwater management ponds will not pass inspection, and will require remedial repair. These projects were intended to convert existing facilities into wetlands. Apparently the earthen embankments at both Snowden's Mill stormwater management ponds (I and II) are sagging. This work was done by a subcontractor, Golden Eagle Construction from the Baltimore area, the same contractor as the Gum Springs project. An investigation to determine the details of what needs to be done is currently underway. COE/DEP are also planning in-stream modifications further downstream on the main stem of Paint Branch.

While they have assured us that they will use different procedures for selecting the contractor for this work, problems on this project already exist. PPTU and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources have both insisted for years that aquatic habitat be an equal priority with streambank stabilization on these main stem in-stream improvements.

We have similarly emphasized the importance of minimizing the impacts of this construction by carefully planning site access, limiting the use of heavy machinery, and close attention to sediment and erosion control processes and procedures.

Their response has been unacceptable, basically saying "Trust us." This in the aftermath of the Gum Springs Parallel Pipes debacle, and now the failure of both banks at the Snowden's Mill I and II sites. After these failures surely they do not expect us to go blindly into in-stream work. We may need to oppose the approval of the permits for this in-stream work until these issues are adequately resolved. As always, there is much to be done to conserve, protect, and restore the Paint Branch. If you would like to talk about these issues or to help in any way, e-mail me at ddunmire@eopb.org or call me at 301-989-0331.



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MEMBERSHIPS: The Potomac-Patuxent Chapter of Trout Unlimited has two membership categories: Regular/Family (\$15/year assessment) and **Student (free)**. The Chapter operates on a September-to-September basis. Assessment is totally separate from dues paid to Trout Unlimited National. Send correspondence or assessment payable to POTOMAC-PATUXENT TROUT UNLIMITED at the return address listed below. Your Chapter (and National TU) expiration date is indicated on the mailing label as PP-0999 or NTU-0998. First-time visitors receive two issues of this publication free.

THE CONSERVATIONIST is a publication of the Potomac-Patuxent Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Contribution in the form of fishing news, tying tips, new book reviews, articles, letters and even gossip should be mailed or faxed to the Editor. Items received by the 15th of the month will be published in the next issue.

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