

# TROUT UNLIMITED MINNESOTA

The Official Publication of Minnesota Trout Unlimited - February 2019



**GREAT WATERS  
FLY FISHING EXPO**  
Presented By Minnesota Trout Unlimited

March 15th-17th, 2019 • Tickets on Sale Now!

**Shore Fishing Lake Superior**  
Coaster Brook Trout: The History & Future  
Artist Profile: Ted Hansen  
Swinging for Steelhead  
MNTU Year in Review  
Tying the CDC & Elk

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Minnesota Trout Unlimited  
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## ON THE COVER

A coaster brook trout from Lake Superior is ready to be released. Learn about coaster brook trout, their challenges, and current work on their behalf on page 4. Photo by Scott Thorpe.

## IN THIS ISSUE

- Swinging for Steelhead
- Artist Profile: Ted Hansen
- MNTU Year in Review
- Youth Series
- “Imagine It” by Larry Gavin

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Advertising rate sheet available on request. Send all editorial and advertising correspondence or other inquiries to the editor:

Carl Haensel  
2067 E. Pioneer Rd.  
Duluth, MN 55804  
218-525-2381  
[editor@mntu.org](mailto:editor@mntu.org)

Send address changes to:

Trout Unlimited,  
1550 Wilson Boulevard  
Arlington, VA, 22209.

# MINNESOTA COUNCIL UPDATE

## Meet You at the Expo!

By Steve Carlton, Minnesota Council Chair

**H**appy 2019! May the new year bring more fish and more fishing opportunities...in more fishy places! Since our last newsletter, I have not had the time to get out, so all I can do is look forward to my next opportunity. Luckily, my next shot to wet a line will be in Maui chasing monster Hawaiian bonefish. Hopefully, I'll be able to share some good stories at the Expo. I know every year we make plans to fish more often, but sometimes life, work and family get in the way. Now that my daughter, Quinn, turns eleven in May, it's time to drag her with me/us more often.

One of Minnesota Trout Unlimited's highlights this year is our Trout in the Classroom (TIC) Program. In the Summer of 2018, MNTU hired Amber Taylor and Evan Griggs to run our education

program. The program had a very impressive first half of the school year. Fish tanks in schools around the state are now filled with young trout growing toward release in the spring. Our education program can always use your help and support. Please read their articles in this issue and get involved by donating time, money or resources. You might even get to help tie some flies in a classroom, or release trout in April or May!

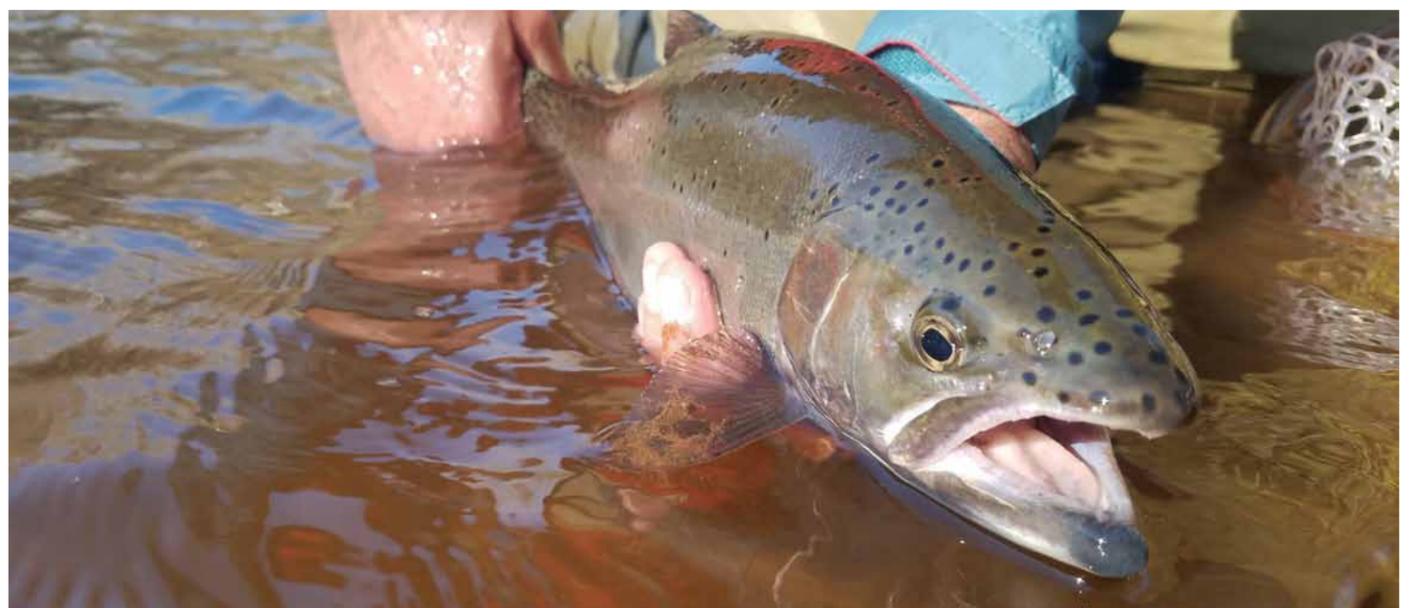
By now, I hope you know that the Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo is hosted by Minnesota Trout Unlimited, through the efforts of Carl Haensel, Jade Thomason, and dozens of hard working volunteers and partner organizations in conservation. The Expo is MNTU's main fundraiser and I hope you all can attend at least one of the three days of the event.



It's bigger than ever with so much to see and try out. Please stop by the MNTU booth and say “hi.” Oh, and don't be afraid to buy a raffle ticket to win a new set of waders or even a guided drift boat trip. I hope to see you March 15th-17th!

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ITCHING TO CATCH A STEELHEAD IN MINNESOTA? THERE ARE TWO STEELHEAD-SPECIFIC ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE, LEARN ABOUT HOW TO RIG FOR STEELHEAD (PAGE 24) AND HOW TO SWING A FLY (PAGE 8).

# FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## MNTU's Strategies for Climate Change

By John Lenczewski, MNTU Executive Director

Old Man Winter gave us something to think about during the last week of January, as temperatures around the state fell below minus 20 degrees everywhere, and slipped below minus 30 in many places. Despite the recent cold snap, observant outdoor enthusiasts know that our winters are getting warmer and shorter, and runoff from snowmelt is occurring earlier. Northern Minnesota trout streams have less groundwater, and this reduction in stored runoff later into the summer puts a strain on coldwater fisheries.

Climate and weather scientists confirm that Minnesota winters are getting milder. But, perhaps more disturbing, is data compiled by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) showing that we now have more storms that produce heavy rainfall, and more "mega-rain" storms which drop 6-8 inches, or more, of rain over a short time period. The severe flooding produced by these storms are the most damaging for trout streams.

MNTU has been closely tracking this issue for years. Beginning in 2014, we have required the professional environmental firms we hire to help develop habitat restoration designs to utilize the data in NOAA's updated Precipitation Frequency Atlas, covering Minnesota. This "NOAA Atlas 14" was updated in 2013. The design firms typically model flood flows for each watershed, using regional flow curves developed by USGS and the DNR, as well as the NOAA Atlas 14 data. Projects are then designed to withstand flood flows exceeding an updated understanding of what a "100 year flood event" looks like.

Reconnecting streams to as much of their floodplains as is possible is a top objective of every habitat project. Ensuring that even moderate floods (which happen every year or two) get out of the stream channel and onto the floodplain, dissipates flood energy and preserves stream banks and instream habitat.

While reconnecting floodplains increases



es flood resilience, reducing the impacts of "mega-rains," so that they do not produce "mega-floods," requires increasing the water storage capacity of the land within the watershed, and slowing the flow of water over the land into tributaries. This requires that we continue educating and advocating for better land use practices, such as vegetated buffers, perennial cover crops, reduced drain tiling, and better forest management. We all must lend support to measures that halt and hopefully reverse climate change trends.



## MNTU CONNECTIONS

### Executive Director

John Lenczewski  
jlenczewski@comcast.net  
612-670-1629  
www.mntu.org

### Minnesota Council Chair

Steve Carlton  
scarlton1@gmail.com

### TU MN Editor

Carl Haensel  
editor@mntu.org  
218-525-2381

### TU MN Copy Editor

Jade Thomason  
jade@greatwatersflyexpo.com

### TU MN

### Communications Coordinator

Dan Callahan  
may.fly@comcast.net

### Gitche Gume Chapter

Brent Notbohm, President  
blnotbohm@hotmail.com

### Headwaters Chapter

Bob Wagner, President  
bob@riverwooddesign.net  
218-586-2798

### Hiawatha Chapter

Phil Pankow, President  
pankow.phil0615@gmail.com  
www.hiawathatu.org

### Mid-Minnesota Chapter

Micah Barrett, President  
mab83\_2002@yahoo.com

### Twin Cities Chapter

Janine Kohn, President  
j9kohn@yahoo.com  
612-564-TCTU  
www.twincitiestu.org

### Win-Cres Chapter

Dr. Chuck Shepard, President  
shepard@hbc.com  
www.wincrestu.org

www.mntu.org



CHARLIE PARSON AND VAL WAGNER OF THE HEADWATERS CHAPTER HELPING YOUTH TIE THEIR FIRST FLY AT THE TRAVELING "WE ARE WATER" EVENT IN BEMIDJI.

## EDITOR'S ANGLE

### The Land of 4,000 Miles of Trout Water & Editorial Changes

By Carl Haensel, Editor

Like many of you, I try to escape Minnesota from time to time in the winter. As I write this, it's 17 degrees below zero at my house, and it seems like a fine time to head to warmer environs. The grass, however, is not always greener on the other side. Surprisingly, there are plenty of times when I'm fishing elsewhere, I think about how good the fishing is back at home. While there are plenty of other states, regions and countries that offer fine trout fishing, the resources that we have here in Minnesota are amazing.

Hosting nearly 4,000 miles of designated trout streams and rivers in MN, it's hard to imagine finding time to fish even 5% of the water. From limestone spring creeks emerging from the bedrock of the southeast, to raging steelhead rivers

on the North Shore, there is something for everyone in the state. To highlight these quality resources, we are offering a new version of our photo contest this year, called "Home Waters." While we don't want the coordinates to your secret fishing hole, we do hope you can share a photo of a special place. Look for details on page 19 to learn more about entering, and how you can share why you love trout fishing in Minnesota.

After six seasons and 19 issues of TU MN, I will play some different roles for the publication, beginning with the next issue. My wife, Jade Thomason, will be taking on the role of editor, and I will serve as an assistant. We've worked together on the publication for years, and we look forward to continuing to collaborate. I will be working with our adver-



tising, which you will see has expanded in this issue. Everyone who works on this newsletter is a volunteer, and we'd love to have your help in the future. Look for continued growth and new series, concepts, and content as TU MN continues to prosper and expand under Jade's competent leadership in the next issue and beyond.

# COASTER BROOK TROUT

## The History and the Future

by Scott Thorpe



LEFT: ANGLER-CAUGHT COASTER BROOK TROUT.

RIGHT: COASTER SHOCKING 2018, KADUNCE RIVER. LEFT TO RIGHT: MNDNR STAFF KEITH REEVES, MNDNR JOSH BLANKENHEIM, VOLUNTEER SCOTT SORENSON, VOLUNTEER LLOYD HAUTAJARVI, AND MNDNR STAFF CHRIS PALVERE. PHOTOS BY SCOTT THORPE.

In 1875, British-born photographer William H. Illingson Jr. left his St. Paul studio and journeyed north to Duluth, Minnesota. There he boarded a steamship and sailed up the north shore of Lake Superior. He eventually disembarked at the fledgling village of Grand Marais, founded only a few years earlier. At the Devil Track River, three miles further up the shore, he made a series of remarkable photographs. Although undoubtedly staged, he hiked upstream, photographed the rugged canyon and an unidentified angler, fishing the rapids for brook trout with a simple wooden pole. Several of the photographs show the angler with his catch, an impressive stringer of brook trout displayed upon a rock. Many of the brook trout are massive.

The catch was not that unusual. In fact, in the 1860s, Lake Superior was already a national destination for the pursuit of trophy brook trout, both in terms of numbers and size. Robert Barnwell Roosevelt, a New York politician and Teddy Roosevelt's uncle, chronicled his adventures fishing Lake Superior shores in his 1865 book, *Superior Fishing*.

Roosevelt writes of chartering a schooner so he and his cronies could explore and fish at the mouths of rivers and streams along the Canadian shore of Lake Superior. Other anglers preceded them, and Roosevelt's party fished according to their recommendations. They camped at the Agawa, Batchawaung and Neepegon (Nipigon), among others. Their fly fishing catches were exceptional. From an unnamed brook, Roosevelt describes catching dozens of brook trout averaging three pounds apiece. Although the group did not go there, the book promotes the Bayfield area as the best of fishing where

“two hundred and fifty pound weight of speckled trout have been killed in one day by one good angler and one bad angler.” The Brule and nearby tributaries “although often choked with drift, are filled with fine trout.”

Historic commercial fishing records document that coaster (coastal) brook trout spawned in at least 30 U.S. streams, including 11 in Minnesota. Undoubtedly, they spawned in most streams. So good was the fishing that when a wagon trail was established in the 1880s along the Minnesota shore, with it came an influx of sport fishermen and the construction of fishing resorts. One such lodge was the Baptism River Club founded in 1886 at the mouth of the Baptism River by Duluth resident Charles H. Graves. Guestbook comments from the period record numerous brook trout in the five-pound range. However, by the 1920s, the fishing was well in decline. The club responded with repeated stocking of brook trout, Rocky Mountain trout (rainbow trout), Loch Leven-strain brown trout and steelhead-strain rainbow trout.

The culprits for the decline were numerous. The high gradient streams of Minnesota's North Shore still have a tendency for spate conditions of high flow in spring runoff and summer rain events. This was exacerbated as logging converted primarily coniferous forest of white and red pine into second growth cover of aspen and birch. Where winter snow cover was once shaded by pine, the bare-leaved deciduous cover accelerated spring runoff. Preferred brook trout habitat of cold, shaded water disappeared. Retired Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources fisheries specialist and brook trout expert, Dennis Pratt, has been able to correlate the decline

of brook trout along the South Shore in Wisconsin with the march of logging operations across the watersheds by comparing angler reports in local newspapers. Once the loggers went through, brook trout disappeared, and sport anglers moved on. Few commercial fisheries specifically targeted brook trout but overfishing by sport anglers must have played a significant role, as catch-and-release was unheard of. Competition from other introduced species played a part as steelhead filled the niche created when lake trout were decimated by invasive lampreys. In the 1930s George Shiras, photographer for National Geographic Magazine, lamented about the decline of coaster brook trout, attributing the decline to logging, habitat degradation and impoundments. Although not significant on the Minnesota shoreline, the 1920 and 30s saw dams built on the mightiest of coaster rivers, the Nipigon.

In Minnesota, coasters probably were never as plentiful as they were along Ontario, Wisconsin and Michigan shores. By the 60s and 70s, coaster brook trout were a rarity in Minnesota. Remnant populations hung on in the waters of Isle Royale, along Canada's North Shore, specifically in the waters of Nipigon Bay, and near Michigan's Salmon-Trout River, west of Marquette. Here, in a battle against proposed mining in the Huron Mountains at the headwaters of the Salmon-Trout River, the Sierra Club and the Huron Mountain Club in 2006 unsuccessfully sued the Bush administration to list the coaster brook trout under the Endangered Species Act.

The late 1990s was a watershed moment in coaster brook trout rehabilitation efforts. In 1999, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission produced “A Brook Trout

Rehabilitation Plan for Lake Superior,” which organized and coordinated brook trout rehabilitation efforts in Lake Superior. Participants included the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, the Department of Natural Resources in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, tribal agencies in the Lake Superior basin, Minnesota Trout Unlimited, university researchers, and Minnesota Sea Grant. The most immediate result was an initiative to identify and protect remaining populations through restrictive harvest regulations. In 1997, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources implemented a “one fish over 20 inches” minimum size limit, along with a closed season below the barrier of Lake Superior tributaries.

Various stocking and rehabilitation efforts were initiated in the late 90's, primarily by the Grand Portage Band, the Red Cliff Band and the Keweenaw Bay Bands of Ojibway. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service began stocking programs in 2001 at Pictured Rocks National Seashore and Isle Royale. The Department of Natural Resources made various stocking attempts to rehabilitate coasters in Minnesota, from the mid-1900's thru 1987 with minimal success. The Grand Portage Band program has been the most extensive. In 2007, the Grand Portage Band built its own fish hatchery with a vision of creating a self-sustaining run of about 20 pairs of adults in three streams on the reservation.

In 1997, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources began collecting data on brook trout in the tributaries below the barriers. Electro-shocking below the barriers has been conducted in the fall during the spawning run about every five



RIGHT: "BROOK TROUT FISHING AT DEVILS TRACK RIVER," W. H. ILLINGWORTH 1875. USED WITH PAID PERMISSION OF THE MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

years. Around two dozen streams are assessed from Duluth to Grand Portage, although some streams are skipped, and some are visited more than once in each survey cycle.

The most recent assessment was autumn 2018, when Nick Peterson, Migratory Fisheries Specialist with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Lake Superior Area Fisheries, led a group composed of fellow staff and volunteers from Trout Unlimited, Minnesota Steelheader, the Lake Superior Steelhead Association and the Greater Lake Superior Foundation. Together they sampled 12 streams, many more than once.

Comparing year-to-year results is difficult. The migratory nature of the population, fluctuating river levels, and water temperatures affect the efficacy of the survey methods. Thus, these surveys are not estimates of a population but more of a snapshot. Roosevelt found the same phenomena, even when revisiting a river just a few weeks apart. He would have excellent fishing one day, leave and come back a week later and find the trout had vanished.

Rivers that have been less productive in previous surveys, such as the Cross and the Gooseberry, held more fish in 2018. Fewer fish than were expected were found in other rivers, such as the Kandance and the Kimball.

Nick's summary of the 2018 survey is that "Coaster brook trout populations on the North Shore have sustained or increased in abundance over the past two decades (at least since the first survey in 1997). The capture efficiency and abundance of coasters at each river sampled appears to be influenced greatly by the local stream and environmental conditions each fall. The most recent surveys in 2013 and 2018 showed that coasters are reaching older ages than were found in the first surveys (1997 and 2003), and that the brook trout are increasing in size over time, which correlates with increasing age structure over time."

From an angler's perspective, it is becoming apparent that in the past decade the numbers, size, and range of brook trout along the Minnesota north shore of Lake Superior have improved. Coasters are now being caught as far west as the Knife, although midshore streams such as the Poplar and Baptism are better rivers for finding coasters. Steelhead anglers catch coasters that are feeding

behind spawning steelhead. Shore casters working river mouths have been catching coasters, and even mid-winter anglers, targeting Kamloops are catching a few. They are showing up in Grand Marais Harbor. They range in all sizes, but 12 to 16 inches are possible, with a very few over 20. Coasters are being caught in the lower pools of rivers in mid-summer, especially after high water events. Granted, the probability of catching a coaster is still slim, but it is possible. The increase in number and size is likely the result of the 20-inch minimum size limit introduced in 1997. The apparent increase in success may also, in part, be from an increased awareness due to social media and advocacy from groups like the Greater Lake Superior Foundation and others.

Some caught fish are fin-clipped, which indicates that they are strays from stocking programs in Grand Portage or Redcliff. Many could be brook trout which were hatched above the upstream barriers and have migrated out for reasons unknown, such as high-water events or environmental conditions. If this is the case, upper river habitat projects like those sponsored by Minnesota Trout Unlimited on the upper Sucker, and those by the Lake Superior Steelhead Association on upper Knife tributaries, may have beneficial consequences. Some may be the progeny of coasters that are successfully spawning below the barriers in the larger streams.

To answer these and other questions to help advance rehabilitation efforts, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources initiated a Coaster Genetic Study in 2018. Also led by Nick Peterson, this study uses trained volunteers to catch, sample and release coasters using angling techniques. The anglers measure the fish, take a scale sample and finally clip the left pelvic fin to take a tissue sample for further genetic analysis by Dr. Loren Miller of the University of Minnesota.

The study will determine the genetic contribution to wild fish from coaster hatchery strains and splake (brook trout X lake trout hatchery hybrid). This is a growing concern among Lake Superior management agencies. The ongoing genetic evaluations will also meet multiple objectives defined in the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Lake Superior Management Plan for coaster brook trout, help monitor impacts of various stocking strategies by other agen-

cies, and support research on coasters in Lake Superior.

Fishing for coaster brook trout has not been better in generations. Although

challenging, you can again – after decades – catch, admire and release one of these beauties in Minnesota tributaries to Lake Superior. But that doesn't mean the future is guaranteed. Dedicated interest in coasters by both anglers and fisheries managers is expanding our understanding of the factors that influence their abundance. As Lake Superior and its tributaries reflect changing temperatures and precipitation patterns, experts expect this iconic species and other coldwater fish to live under increasing stress. Although we may never be able to achieve a return of Lake Superior coasters to the numbers seen by Illingson or Roosevelt, preserving a beautiful native fish in Lake Superior for future generations to hold seems our duty and an aspiration that can excite and unite anglers.

## EVER SEEN ONE OF THESE?

### Coaster Brook Trout Research Unit

[www.thegreaterylakesuperiorfoundation.org](http://www.thegreaterylakesuperiorfoundation.org)



If you fish Minnesota's North Shore, you might have noticed a vehicle or two sporting a fish-themed decal proclaiming "Coaster Brook Trout Research Unit." This is a sign that a fan of coaster brook trout, and a supporter of the Greater Lake Superior Foundation (GLSF), is afoot.

Founded from an initial gift from the Lake Superior Steelhead Association, the Greater Lake Superior Foundation has built a modest endowment. To stretch the impact of the endowment, it awards small grants to support graduate student research on coaster brook trout, with the hope that student's will work on, or at least knowledgeably communicate about, coasters for the rest of their careers.

Since 2012, the GLSF has helped support six graduate students in their research. Thus far, students have been from Northern Michigan University and Michigan Technological University, reflecting the research interests of faculty at those two institutions: Dr. Jill Leonard and Dr. Casey Huckins, respectively. To qualify for the grant, students must be from an institution within the Lake Superior watershed and focus their studies on coaster brook trout. In 2018, the grants enabled three students to attend the ninth International Charr Symposium in Duluth, Minnesota. Since coasters, as well as lake trout, are the two native charr species in Lake Superior, there was much interest in coasters at the symposium. The Greater

Lake Superior Foundation board member and Minnesota Sea Grant senior science communicator, Sharon Moen, gave a presentation titled "Hooked on Coasters," while one of the sponsored students, Chris Adams from Michigan Technological University, presented on brook trout movement in the Pilgrim River.

The Greater Lake Superior Foundation is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit private foundation, meaning it does not have members. The governing board consists of Scott Thorpe, former board member and newsletter editor of the Lake Superior Steelhead Association and a retired fly fishing guide; Andy Burda, pilot with the Minnesota Air National Guard and board member of Minnesota Steelheader; Maria Manion, architect and board member and newsletter editor of the Kiap-Tu-Wish chapter of Trout Unlimited; Mike Sierszen, retired limnologist who specializes in the Lake Superior food-web, and Sharon Moen (mentioned above). All five are serious anglers and "hooked on coasters."

Visit the Greater Lake Superior Foundation online: [www.thegreaterylakesuperiorfoundation.org](http://www.thegreaterylakesuperiorfoundation.org), or visit them on Facebook.

The Greater Lake Superior Foundation mission: "To protect and enhance the cold-water resource and sport fisheries of Lake Superior and its tributaries through education, advocacy and research."

# FOSTER THE OUTDOORS

## A Growing Program for 2019

By Tim Hemstad, Volunteer Mentor Coordinator

The summer of 2018 was a blast! We connected thirteen Minnesota youth/adult pairs with fly fishing mentors. We started them down the path of becoming future anglers and worked to ensure that the streams we care deeply about today, will continue to thrive tomorrow. With a commitment of roughly 4-6 hours every few months, we invite you join us for 2019's new year-long format.

Here's how it works:

### May 2019 – Mentor Match-Up

As a volunteer mentor, we pair you up with a local Minnesota youth and a guardian. We meet as a group for introductions and catch a few sunnies on a local lake to break the ice. MNTU provides two fly rods for each mentee pair to use for the year. We also have donated flies for you to use. Panfish-sized poppers are in especially high demand for this program. See Tim's information at the end of this article to donate.

### Summer 2019 – Go Fishing!

Set dates for two or three outings over the course of the summer. Continue the pursuit of sunnies or bass on local lakes or raise the bar and shoot for a trout stream. After exchanging contact information, the fishing schedule is yours to coordinate.

### October 2019 – Fly Tying

After school is back in full-swing, we meet as a group for a fly tying session with the Laughing Trout group. If you are not already familiar with Laughing Trout, I strongly encourage you to attend one of their weekly 6:30pm Wednesday night gatherings at the American Legion – Post #118 Wayzata. For more details, contact Paul Johnson 952-334-4688 or email paul-waconia@gmail.com

### January 2020 – Shop Tour

The holidays are crazy for everyone, so take a break and loosen your belt. After New Year's, we get back together for a tour of Bob Mitchell's Fly Shop. We introduce the newbies to some gear options and a chance to ask shop owner Robert Hawkins questions in a group setting.

### March 2020 – Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo

What better way to introduce a newcomer to the community of fly fishing?! If you have never been to the Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo, you don't know what you are missing! We have incentives in the works for this fantastic annual event.

### April 2020 – End of Season

We end the program with a final group outing to a trout stream. Bring your flies and your A-game, we're looking to land a few trout today! We formally thank our mentors and look forward to seeing our mentee pairs at TU meetings, future Expos and as future mentors themselves.

**May 2020** – The fun begins again with a new group of mentees. But don't take my word for it. Here is a testimonial from one of our mentors.

"Growing up, neither of my parents were that outdoorsy. But our next door neighbor, Brian Grivna, was. When I was in third grade he took me to the local pond and caught a bass on a fly while I watched. He asked me to touch the slimy, scaly creature and I cried. Been hooked ever since. Through trips to northern Wisconsin, to the Driftless Area in Wisconsin and Minnesota, Brian's mentorship created a passion for the outdoors that has deeply influenced my life.

"I joined the mentor program to repay, in some small part, what Brian gave to me. My experience this summer was really challenging and rewarding. First the challenging part: I discovered that it's really difficult to tell someone how to cast with a fly rod. But I tell you what, I should've just put the rod in my mentee Isaiah's hand because he intuitively picked it up faster than I could explain it! The entire experience was rewarding and reminded me of the joy I experience fishing, from losing a sandal in the muck of Lake Hiawatha to Isaiah out-catching all of us on Lake Nokomis. Sharing this hobby and re-experiencing it, as I did when I was young, was so much fun!"  
-Kevin M. Krueger

Fellow anglers, I urge you to give this program a try. You may discover that you receive more than you have to give throughout the year. I sincerely want to get a few female mentors on board this year! Sharing the tranquility of a trout stream, the camaraderie of a group of fishing buddies, and the chance to swap fishing stories over a beer with the mentors, is reason enough for me to continue coordinating this ridiculously awesome program.

Many thanks to those of you already teaching your kids, neighbors and co-workers how to fly fish. Keep on chuckin' feathers and praying for a rise.

Contact: Tim Hemstad  
Volunteer Mentor Coordinator  
612-247-1536  
fostertheoutdoors@hotmail.com



LIKE FATHER LIKE SON – YOUTH MENTEE BILLY AND HIS FATHER CHARLIE WORK AT THE KNOTS THEY LEARNED FROM THEIR MENTOR, MICHAEL RUMINSKI, AS THEY PREPARE TO ENTER THE WATER IN PURSUIT OF SUNNIES.



ABOVE: HELPING OUT – BILLY HANDS THE ROD TO FATHER CHARLIE TO HELP LAND THE FISH HE CAUGHT ON LAKE PHALEN ON A WARM SUMMER EVENING.

BELOW: BILLY WITH A GRIN EAR-TO-EAR, EXAMINES HIS FIRST CATCH ON A FLY ROD. MENTOR MICHAEL RUMINSKI AND MENTEES BILLY AND HIS FATHER CHARLIE SIGNED UP FOR THE MENTOR PROGRAM DURING THE 2018 GREAT WATERS FLY FISHING EXPO. CONTACT TIM HEMSTAD TO JOIN THE FUN FOR 2019!





# FLY TYING

## With Laughing Trout Fly Fishing

By Paul Johnson



### The CDC & Elk

This fly is really just a simple modification of a standard Elk Hair Caddis. I have found this fly to be very effective in the spring when we can get some gray caddis hatches. It is an easy fly to tie and only uses two different materials.

#### Contact Information:

Paul Johnson  
Laughing Trout Fly Fishing  
Paulwaconia@gmail.com  
952-334-4688

Just a friendly reminder that CDC feathers can be a little finicky to fish with. CDC will float really well until a fish slimes it all up (is that a bad thing?). To dry it, you will need to use a desiccant powder like Frog's Fanny.

If you have any questions on this pattern or other patterns, do not hesitate to contact me.

Materials List	
Hook:	Standard Dry Fly Hook, size 14 to 18.
Thread:	8/0 Uni Iron Gray
Abdomen:	CDC Feather
Wing:	Elk or Deer Hair



Step 1. Insert the hook into your vise. Here I am using a Dai Riki #300, size 16. Start your tying thread at the 3/4 mark and wrap a smooth thread base back to the bend of the hook.



Step 2. Select a single CDC feather. Pull the fibers down and tie the feathers in by its tips at the bend of the hook.



Step 3. Palmer (wrap) the CDC feather around the hook shank up to the 3/4 mark. Secure with your tying thread and clip the excess.



Step 4. Clean and stack a clump of elk hair and tie in at the 3/4 mark. The elk hair should extend back just to the bend of the hook. Secure the hair with six or seven tight wraps of thread.



Step 5. Lift about 1/3 of the clump of hair and make a single tight wrap of your tying thread. Repeat two additional times. Make a wrap of your tying thread around just the hook shank directly behind the eye of the hook.



Step 6. Return your tying thread to the spot where you originally tied in the elk hair and make two or three tight thread wraps. Return your tying thread to the front of the wing and make a wrap of two of your tying thread just behind the hook eye. Whip finish.



Step 7. Lift the butt ends of the elk hair and clip the excess to form the head of the fly. Go fish!



On the Water: A brown trout that took a CDC & Elk caddis in southeast Minnesota. Photo by Brian Schumacher.

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# STEELHEAD ON THE SWING

## Learning the Art of the Spey Cast and Swung Fly

by Paul Sandstrom

Simply catching a steelhead is a challenge. Catching one on a swung fly, even more so. There's a special thrill when you feel the line going tight, hard and fast in a straight link from your hand to the fish. The grab, that's what it's all about. There are other methods to take steelhead very effectively and efficiently using floats, bobbers, lures or bait with spinning gear or centerpins. Make no mistake, each method is fun and has its devotees, but put a fly rod with just a line, tip, leader and fly in anyone's hand and have a big hot steelhead take that fly hard on a straight line, they will reevaluate their devotion.

There's a long road between holding a rod and having a big silver fish grab the bits of feather and fluff on the end of the line though. The road takes you on a journey of equipment selection, casting prowess, learning the ways of the swing, and learning the ways of the fish. This story is just an introduction to some of the fun parts of the journey, the ways of the fish and the swing.

### The Ways of the Fish

You'll never stop learning the ways of the fish unless you quit trying. After 50 years, I'm still trying. There's a school of thought that steelhead don't feed when on their spawning run and that they only bite out of instinct and reaction; maybe so. The important thing is that they will bite. Trouble is, finding the fish willing to bite may take just a few, or more likely a few hundred, casts. What generates the reaction that drives a steelhead to chase a fly? Good question. I like to think some are like cats that can't help themselves stalking and striking a feather on a string.

Steelhead are the most likely to bite when they're on the move and resting during their migration. Seems like a contradiction, on the move and resting, but that's exactly when they're most apt to bite. A fresh fish resting in a new spot after a move or position shift is often the one that will chase and grab. They move at dusk, at night, early in the morning or on a rainy cloudy day. They move when the water is rising or falling. They move when the water temperature goes from cold to warm or from too warm to just right. They move when the sun swings around and shines in their eyes.

Steelhead will grab a swung fly when they're triggered. Fly selection for swinging and tripping the trigger runs a spectrum from classic traditional patterns like the "Lady Caroline" to Dave Pinczkowski's modern, innovatively-wild creation named "Bad Hair Day." The most important fly selection criteria? Use a fly that you like and have confidence in. I don't think the fish care all that much. If they're in the mood and you make a good presentation, they're going to nail it. That said, water conditions and weather have the greatest impact on which fly I pull from the box on a given day. High, colored water: Go with a large dark pattern. Cloudy day: Smaller dark fly. Bright day:

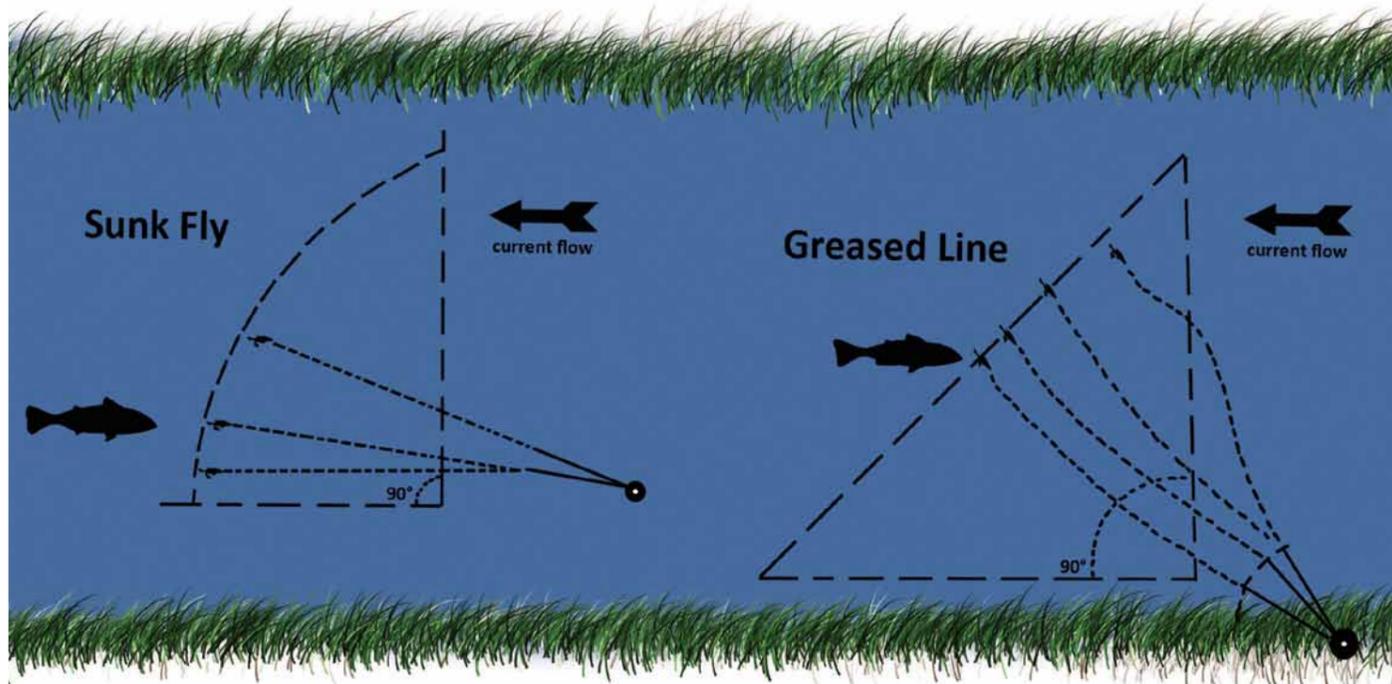


ILLUSTRATION OF THE "SUNK FLY" AND "GREASED LINE" METHODS FOR SWINGING FLIES. NOTE THAT THE "GREASED LINE" METHOD PROVIDES THE FISH A BROADSIDE ANGLE OF THE FLY WHILE THE "SUNK FLY" TECHNIQUE PROVIDES A REAR VIEW OF THE FLY. "SUNK FLY" SWINGING ALLOWS FOR CASTING IN TIGHT QUARTERS WHILE THE "GREASED LINE" CAN ELICIT MORE STRIKES.



A HEFTY STEELHEAD HOOKED ON THE SWING.

Bright fly. Clear, cold water: A smaller fly. Whatever the fly though, the presentation you make or the swing of the fly rules.

### The Swing

The book "Greased Line Fishing for Salmon (and Steelhead)" is Jock Scott's compilation of Arthur Woods notes on fishing for Atlantic salmon in Scotland from 1914 to 1934. Reprinted in the U.S. by Frank Amato Publications, this book is considered by many of the old masters to be the Holy Grail of technical instruction to the art of fly presentation. The illustration "Sunk Fly vs. Greased Line" shown above is an adaptation from this book, and shows a comparison between the two techniques. This drawing cap-

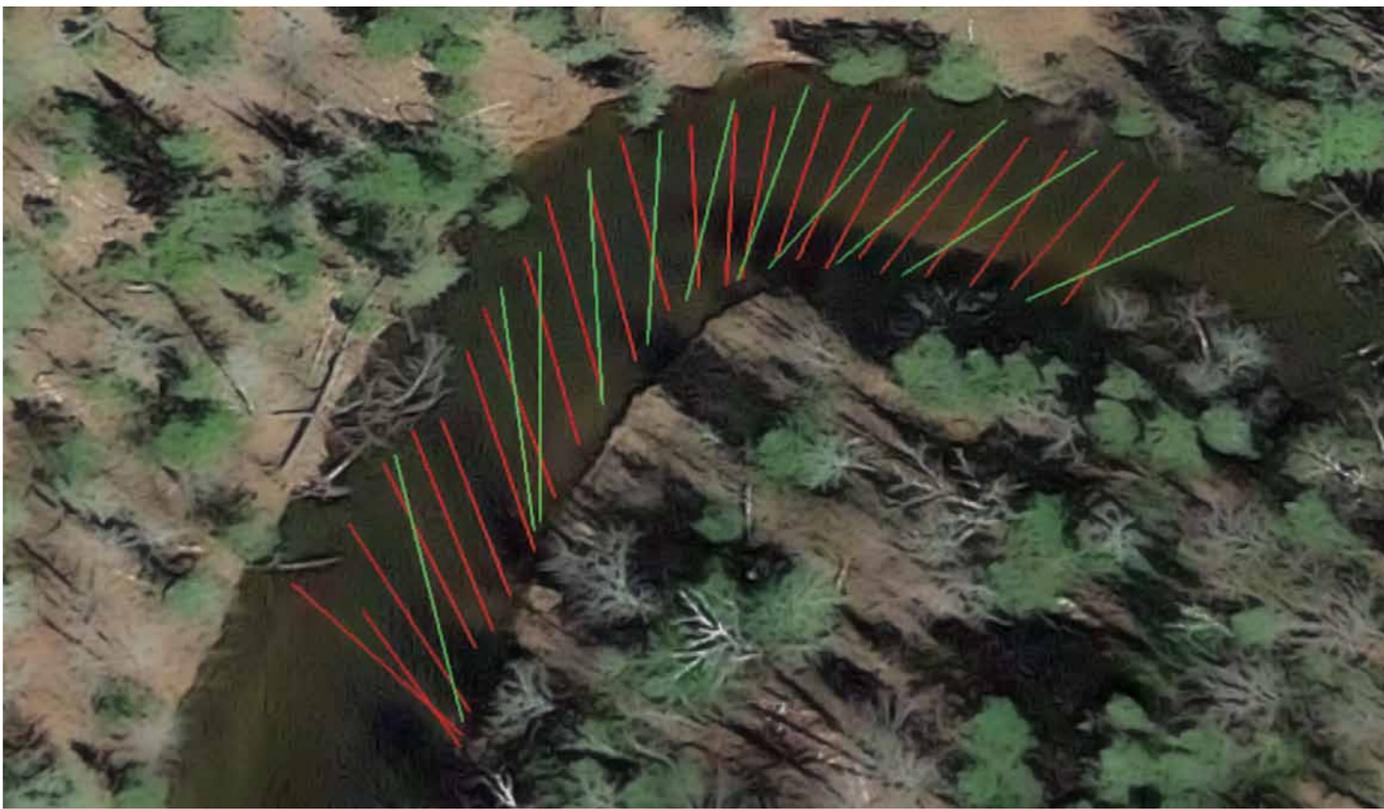
tures the essence of the art. Both presentations will prompt a strike; the greased line, however, will trigger more.

On our small Midwestern steelhead streams like Wisconsin's Brule, the sunk fly method is the most common technique you'll see swinging anglers use. The caster stands out in the stream away from the bank. The fly is cast at a tight angle nearly paralleling the flow. A very long cast downstream may even cross the river. The signature of this presentation is that the fish see a rear view of the fly as it swings across their vision window on a straight line. It works and a fish in the mood will be triggered to grab.

In contrast, an angler on the illustration employing the greased line technique

stands on the bank, casting across the stream with a much wider angle across the flow. Line control and mends are employed minimally and only as needed to present the fly under control at more of a broadside angle, offering the fish more of a side view of the fly. Fly control is maintained with a straight line from the angler's hand to the fly. The fly swims slightly slower than the speed of the current. The window of opportunity to trigger a fish is wide and a broadside exposure of the swimming fly is very tantalizing to the fish.

So why not use the greased line presentation all of the time? The answer is usually trees. Add trees on both sides hanging out over the banks to the illustration and you'll see that standing on the bank



A BEND OF THE BRULE RIVER IN WISCONSIN IS SHOWN ABOVE WITH LINES DEPICTING THE PATTERN OF CASTS TO BEST COVER THE STRETCH OF WATER. RED LINES ARE CASTS LESS THAN 50 FEET LONG WHILE GREEN LINES ARE CASTS GREATER THAN 50 FEET.

and casting across the flow can often be impossible. Trees hanging over the opposite bank block fly placement. Trees on the bank you're casting from interfere with the back-cast or D-loop. It's rare in our region to find a place where you can stand on the bank and cast across the flow to the opposite bank.

A hybrid of the two methods is often the one to strive for. Try to stand in the water as close to the bank as you can to make the cast. Unnecessary deep wading is always counterproductive. You'll find spots where a classic greased line swing is possible: Places where you can stand in the water close to the bank and cast across the flow where there are gaps or clear zones to place a fly on the other side. Learn to go with the presentation the river will allow, but try to present the fly as close to greased line as possible.

Laying the cast out straight is the most important element of success. The fly should land at the end of the cast and

be the most distant point laying on a straight line from the tip of your rod. The fly should start swimming and fishing as soon as it hits the water; again this is one of the most critical keys to success. A mend to straighten out your line as a result of a piled cast is counterproductive. A mend to maintain a straight line that was laid out right to begin with is the essence of the greased line art.

Swimming the fly through the swing is important; think of yourself as a horizontal puppeteer. You can give simulated life to the fly with very subtle movements of the hand and arm. If you've ever fished through the ice with electronics and a jig you know what I'm talking about. Wild motion often scares fish away; subtle movement draws interest and triggers strikes. Be ready when the fly reaches the end of the swing or the dangle and when cross-current movement stops, especially when the stop occurs in holding water. A fish that's interested often grabs as the fly stops. A little swimming action

at the dangle is a powerful trigger.

If you can find a run or pool unoccupied by other anglers during the steelhead season, you're either lucky or have walked a good distance. Start your casting and swinging at the top of the pool and work your way through. Cast and swing, then take a step or two down and cast again. Cover the pool working your way downstream. Steelhead like to hold in certain spots that change with flow level, water temperature, and water color. You'll find over time that certain zones are the prime holding spots, and excitement builds when you swing through a prime slot in a pool that regularly produces.

The above Google Earth photo illustrates the casts one would make when working through a pool on the Brule. The red lines are all casts less than 50 feet long and the green lines are casts all greater than 50 feet. Look at the angles and study the greased line illustration again. This is important when picking out the fly line,

sink tips, and leaders you plan to use. My favorite combination has evolved to a 12.5-foot rod, 15-foot shooting head, 12-foot sink tip, with a 4-foot leader to the fly which totals about 41 feet from your hand to the fly when ready to start a cast. I don't have a favorite rod brand to recommend, they're all good. Olympic Peninsula Skagit Tactics (OPST) shooting heads are, however, the gold standard as far as I'm concerned, as are their sink tips.

One should have an arsenal of sink tips. A steelhead in the mood will move to a fly it can see and will move farther in 50 degree clear water than in 34 degree colored water. In general, use a slow sink tip in warm, clear water and a fast sink tip in cold, colored water. Success is often fly presentation at the right level in the water column for given conditions and moving through the holding water.

Years ago, Midwestern steelheaders traveled to the West Coast where they were introduced to the techniques and methods that had evolved and developed for ocean-run fish. These "Old Masters" refined the techniques, developing versions that fit our smaller Great Lakes tributaries. Drifting small yarn flies became a local angling art and specialty of western Lake Superior steelheaders. A key method these masters brought back to the Midwest was to fish holding water from top to bottom, working their way downstream through the pool or run. Moving through holding water is also the key to success when swinging a fly. Moving will help you learn the river, find new spots, and find those special fish who want to play. Consider trying the ultimate challenge with the greatest reward: Swing a fly, and you'll reevaluate your devotion.

*Paul Sandstrom is a guide and custom rod builder from Duluth who operates PVS Angling. Catch his spey programs coming up at the Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo on all three days of the event. More information on PVS Angling can be found at [www.pvsangling.com](http://www.pvsangling.com)*

## REMEMBERING MARY OLIVER

By Bob Wagner

Mary Oliver, winner of the American Book Award, Pulitzer Prize, and one of America's all-time great poets, would enjoy how I was introduced to her, I humbly believe. This introduction, rather appropriately, happened four years ago, on the morning of summer solstice. My wife Val and six other summer solstice ladies always paddle canoes and kayaks at first light, June 21, to the north end of Long Lake to greet the rising sun. It's an annual event the ladies enjoy to celebrate our longest day. The women knew I had an ulterior motive (fly fishing), when I suggested Jim and I would be the rescue boat on the lake, in case a canoe flipped over.

I was excited to share some excellent top water bass fishing with Jim, who was new to the lake. The ladies paddled two miles north, to a favorite spot to celebrate sunrise. Jim and I ran the 30-horse Johnson to my favorite bass spot. Large-mouth were shallow and hungry and gave our poppers several eats in the first half hour. About the time we realized it was going to be a great bass morning,

we noticed a small rowing pram heading north to catch up with the ladies. Surprisingly, it turned 30 degrees and headed straight towards us. We were frustrated and surprised because when catching bass, especially on top water, the last thing you want is a boat approaching your boat. Jim and I sat, holding our fly rods, quite perplexed, when the pram pulled up to our boat. I recognized Diane, a petite elderly lady, as one of my wife's friends. She quickly handed Jim and I an energy bar and a card. Diane simply said, "I thought you would enjoy this," and immediately rowed away. The card contained the poem "Why I Wake Early" by Mary Oliver. Our early morning frustration turned to amazing surprise, as we both read the poem and realized the act of kindness and appreciated the illuminating words by Mary Oliver. That morning was my introduction to the words of Mary Oliver, an unexpected catch, if you will. This poem, like all great poetry, opens a door to your feelings and soul. Mary Oliver's words have opened a door that has brightened my life and added layers of enrichment to my fly fishing adventures.

### "WHY I WAKE EARLY"

BY MARY OLIVER

Hello, sun in my face.  
Hello, you who make the morning  
and spread it over the fields  
and into the faces of the tulips  
and the nodding morning glories,  
and into windows of, even, the  
miserable and the crotchety--

best preacher that ever was,  
dear star, that just happens  
to be where you are in the universe  
to keep us from ever-darkness,  
to ease us with warm touching,  
to hold us in great hands of light-  
good morning, good morning, good morning.

Watch, now, how I start the day  
in happiness, in kindness.

# ONE FLY

## One Lake, Seven Years, Huge Rainbows

By Bob Wagner

Okay, if I read this title I would need the term “huge rainbows” defined. Is this a brag-fest or is there substance worth reading? I don’t pretend to be a great trout fisherman, but when the fish are between 4 and 6 pounds, I call them huge rainbows. The notes I kept on seven trips state that in total, 14 anglers caught more than 120 fish, with 42 each weighing more than 4 pounds. Again, I’m no trout expert, but, to me, that is a lot of big ‘bows. Regarding the question of substance worth reading, in this article you will discover the specific fly and tactics that were so consistently successful.

Flyfisher friends are always sharing stories about flies, streams and lakes, and this is one of the characteristics of this sport that I treasure. Friends talking fishing is where this story started more than 30 years ago. My friend, Peter, isn’t really a fisherman but knew I loved the sport, so he enthusiastically shared pictures he had seen of monstrous rainbows that were caught near the Red Lake Indian Reservation. Some twenty years after hearing the story from Peter, I called Darwin Summer, the Ojibwe guide who had caught the big rainbows in the pictures. Darwin is an avid fisherman and historian of native culture and medicine. He also started the first Red Lake Youth Bass Fishing League, and native cultural youth retreats. Darwin is a tribal chief on the Tribal Council and a great friend.

I have fished the small, isolated, ice block lakes 11 times. However, seven of those times I went to a particular lake, with a particular fly, and always with Darwin. Please note that it is mandatory to hire a native guide and buy a \$10 daily permit to fish on the reservation. Pat Brown is the Red Lake fisheries manager. This is a federal fisheries program that Pat started in the mid-1980s. After research and inventory work, Pat decided five of the 20 ice block lakes qualified for trout stocking. You may be wondering why they are called “ice block” lakes. Roughly 10,500 years ago, the last retreating glacier stalled just south of Lower Red Lake for 500 years. The stalled glacier would freeze and thaw, freeze and thaw, which caused large ice blocks to break off and eventually form lakes. Of the five lakes, three of them were stocked with rainbows and brook trout, one with only rainbows (the lake of this article), and one lake was reserved for lake trout. The name of my favorite big ‘bow lake is Squaw Smith.

My first time on Squaw Smith was in 2010, and it was then that I established two tactics that I never changed. The first was the fly. A few of my friends call it the Squaw Smith Special (go figure). You can see by the picture that it is a modified articulated rabbit strip leech pattern. The fly, paired with a T400 Jim Teeny sinking line on a 9’ 8wt fly rod, dominated in catching the biggest rainbows seven years straight. This fly always competed against some-

other fly anglers trying alternate colors, sizes or designs of streamers. This was hands-down acclaimed by Darwin and five different fly casters as the #1 lure on the lake. I always gave a Squaw Smith special to the other fly casters to compare.

My analysis of the fly identified six characteristics that make it a great pattern. First, the color: a flesh-tone pink to crayfish-orange rabbit strip, as well as two or three orange beads on the PowerPro connection to the stinger hook (a red Gamakatsu Octopus #6). I noticed on the second trip to Squaw Smith while fileting a few of the fish to take home, that they were filled with orange-colored scuds. I would like to say that I matched the hatch on the first try, but the truth of the matter is that it was a perfect accident.

My second tip is to get the line depth right. Darwin used a basic electronic fish indicator that displayed the fish at various depths from 4 to 12 feet. With my T400 Jim Teeny sinking line, combined with waiting 5-10 seconds before stripping, my fly was at the correct depth. The fly also includes medium-weight dumbbell eyes, which help contribute to a deeper run.

The third key aspect of the fly is one-and-a-quarter inch of rabbit strip extending beyond the stinger hook. This provides a great swimming action to the fly. It is critical when connecting the PowerPro line that the hook is not tight, but loose enough to allow the up-and-down swimming motion to occur after each strip-pause of the retrieve. Fourth, I always use UV chenille in copper olive for the collar of three or four wraps. I like the flash and the color that the UV gives and the kaleidoscope-esque display in water.

I believe that there is an important connection between how the fly is tied and how aggressively the rainbows hit, often multiple times on the same retrieve. It became apparent on these trips that it was harder to get a good hookset on Rapalas and similar crankbaits, and that the fly always out-fished other tackle, which astonished our guide Darwin. I believe that the answer goes back to underwater research done by Carl Richards and Doug Swisher on how trout feed in their



THE FABLED FLY OF THIS ARTICLE, KNOWN AS THE “SQUAW SMITH SPECIAL.”



THE AUTHOR WITH ONE OF THE IMPRESSIVE ‘BOWS OF SQUAW SMITH LAKE.

book *Selective Trout*. Research indicated that trout have sensitive taste, and can feel if an object is food. I always palmer the rabbit strip around the shank of the front hook. I believe when the big ‘bows grabbed the hard plastic lure, they spit it out as soon as possible. When the fish hit the fly, it felt soft, like it could be something edible. If they didn’t get hooked, they would hit again and again. Multiple strikes by the same fish obviously improves your catch rate. This fly also has worked well for bass and pike.

It was an amazing one fly-one lake-huge rainbows-seven times experience I will

always be thankful for. I hope these tips can be of help in your fly tying, and future fishing adventures.

I wrote the poem below about Squaw Smith Lake and for Mary Oliver, who, as of January 17 is flying with geese. In a world of lies and destructive words, Mary’s words enlighten and inspire all people.

*Editor’s note: Bob Wagner is the president of the Headwaters Chapter, and is a devoted contributor to this publication. He resides in Bemidji, MN with his wife, Val. Both have been instrumental in the growth of Trout Unlimited in the Northland.*

### SQUAW SMITH LAKE

BY BOB WAGNER

Always this mysterious beauty on Squaw Smith:  
As if she is there watching with a hidden smile.  
As if she knows about sun, rock, wind and ice, 500-year struggle.  
As if she knows they agreed the Glacier did not have to die.  
As if she knows these Ice block lakes gem stones of glacial sacrifice.  
As if she knows it’s small and deep with Rainbows swimming in pristine presence.  
As if she knows Darwin, our native guide, talks of mysteries, eagles and healing plants.  
She knows somehow the Rainbows connect the sun, rock, wind, Darwin and us on  
the waters of Squaw Smith.

# MNTU EDUCATION UPDATE

By Amber Taylor, MNTU Education Program Supervisor

After a fun-filled fall of collecting macroinvertebrates and learning about watershed ecology, students began helping teachers prepare tanks for the arrival of their trout eggs. On the morning of December 6, 10,000 rainbow trout eggs safely landed in Minnesota after an overnight trip from the state of Washington. In Bemidji, MNTU member and long-time TIC volunteer, Steve Young, and Tony Standera with the DNR sorted and transported 1,500 eggs to schools throughout northern Minnesota. In the Twin Cities, the other 8,500 eggs were sorted and transported to schools in Duluth, Stillwater, Owatonna, St. Michael, Rochester, Winona, and throughout the metro area. The precious cargo made it safe and sound to their new homes with the help of many wonderful volunteers including teachers, principals, friends, family, and even parents of students in the TIC program. A huge and heartfelt “Thank You” to those who helped us out that day!

Once the eggs arrived, it became the job of student helpers, aka. trout technicians, to care for them each day by testing the tank’s water chemistry, removing any dead eggs, and watching closely for hatching eggs. Shortly before going on holiday break, students were able to meet all of the newly hatched alevin, watching their yolk sac heavy little bodies awkwardly swim around at the bottom of the breeder net. Upon returning to school after break, students found that the yolk sacs had been consumed, and the alevin had grown into happy, and very hungry, trout fry. They were released from the net and are now swimming freely throughout all 32 MNTU TIC tanks! A teacher at Stillwater High School has a live camera feed of his trout tank. A link can be found on our MNTU Trout in the Classroom website if you would like to check in on how they’re doing: [mntu.org/trout-in-the-classroom](http://mntu.org/trout-in-the-classroom).

There is a lot happening in TIC this winter! Trout technicians will continue to test water chemistry each day in addition to feeding the fry, vacuuming the tank, removing dead fish, cleaning the filter, and performing weekly water changes. Through these routines, students not



TROUT TECHNICIANS AT THE SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING AND ARTS TESTING THE WATER CHEMISTRY OF THEIR TANK.

only become invested in the well-being of their fish, but also learn about the nitrogen cycle and trout biology. In addition, this winter the MNTU education team and volunteers will be working with students as they try their hand at tying flies, experiment with stream tables, and learn all about trout and various fish adaptations through fun and hands-on activities. TIC high school students will receive visits from DNR representatives in order to learn about exciting careers in natural resources.

I grew up exploring and playing in the outdoors, as I am guessing many of you did. My childhood in Montana was spent hiking through forests and along mountain valley streams and rivers, catching frogs, turtles, and insects. I was fortunate to have had those experiences, as they allowed my passion for nature and the outdoors to become well ingrained in me at an early age. However, in our increasingly urban, developed, and technologi-

cal society, many students don’t have these same opportunities to establish and build upon their connection with nature. Educator David Sobel, author of *Beyond Ecophobia*, wrote, “If we want children to flourish, we need to give them time to connect with nature and love the Earth before we ask them to save it.” Trout in the Classroom does exactly this by providing consistent opportunities for students to connect with nature through field days, classroom activities, and caring for their trout throughout much of the school year.

Students engaging with TIC are immersed within a place-based environmental education program that allows them to establish empathy and a well-rounded understanding of aquatic ecosystems, including the essential role that trout and other organisms play within them. They also learn about their roles as environmental stewards and how their choices affect the natural world. Given

today’s delicate balance between humans and our interactions with the natural environment, this is a critical component.

It is a privilege to work with such passionate teachers, environmental educators, and volunteers in providing these learning opportunities for students throughout Minnesota. Are you interested in volunteering with this wonderful education program to help connect students with the outdoors and fishing? There are many ways to get involved! Opportunities include helping with classroom activities in February, the student summit day in March, spring release field days April-May, or fishing skills programs being held throughout the metro area June-August. Please contact me at [education@mntu.org](mailto:education@mntu.org) for more information.



RIVERVIEW STUDENTS IN FARMINGTON CONDUCTING AN ASSESSMENT OF THE VERMILION RIVER BY CHECKING THE WATER TEMPERATURE, WATER CLARITY, AND NUTRIENT LEVELS OF THE RIPARIAN ZONE.



TROUT EGGS READY TO BE DISTRIBUTED TO MINNESOTA SCHOOLS. LOOK CLOSELY AND YOU CAN SEE THE TROUT EYES.

# SUCCESS IN RESTORATION & PROTECTION

## Minnesota Trout Unlimited's 2018 Year in Review

Minnesota Trout Unlimited was busy in 2018 fighting for clean water and healthy streams, restoring miles of critical habitat, educating youth about watersheds and trout, and offering members and non-members diverse opportunities to engage in conservation.

Minnesota Trout Unlimited is a grassroots conservation organization, whose mission is to protect, restore and sustain coldwater fisheries and their watersheds across Minnesota and the region. We are passionate anglers, and that passion spurs us to action in protecting water, conserving aquatic resources and fostering the next generation of angler-conservationists.

The Minnesota Council of Trout Unlimited or "MNTU" is the statewide umbrella organization, led by volunteers from six chapters around the state, which provides leadership and a unified voice at the capitol and around the state. We fight for clean water, watershed protections, and groundwater. We restore habitat and educate youth. We combine knowledge of threats in every corner of the state and Lake Superior with a strong voice in St. Paul. We work for, and with, all Trout Unlimited members, as well as anyone else who values clean water, trout and steelhead, or the environs they inhabit.

### I. PROTECT

Protection of coldwater fisheries requires protection of the water, watersheds and aquifers upon which trout, steelhead and salmon depend for survival. Since public policy decisions have huge consequences for the health and long-term viability of Minnesota's fisheries, MNTU retains an executive director to advocate during the legislative session, keep an eye on major issues and agency actions year-round, and be a spokesperson for clean water, coldwater fisheries, and trout anglers. In 2018, we advocated on legislative and agency fronts, at local, state and federal levels. Tendencies of the legislative majorities meant that most work was strategic defense. Major federal issues included defense of the Clean Water Act, Bristol Bay, and public lands. We continued our leadership role on Great Lakes issues, including aquatic invasive species, ballast water discharges, the Great Lakes Water Compact, Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding, and preventing the spread of Asian carp into the Great Lakes. At the local and agency permitting level, the impacts of animal feedlots emerged as an area of growing concern. State legislative initiatives consumed the greatest energy in 2018. Below is a recap of some major issues worked on.

**Public Lands** - Public lands are our heritage and birthright, yet 2018 saw renewed efforts at the federal and state level to sell or trade them away, and to prevent protecting

new lands. MNTU's executive director spoke on the importance of public lands for clean, cold water and robust fisheries at the DNR Roundtable in January, spoke for TU at the State Capitol roundtable as part of the Public Lands Rally in April, and testified in legislative hearings against proposals to block future acquisitions by the DNR and nonprofit land trusts. MNTU lobbied members of Congress to renew the Land & Water Conservation Fund, which funds land protection and recreational access.

**Attacks on Groundwater Sustainability** - Groundwater is the lifeblood of trout streams, keeping them cool in summer and "warm" enough in winter. Permit applications to pump huge volumes of groundwater for irrigation have soared, and use is exceeding sustainability thresholds in many areas. State law allows the DNR to permit only amounts which are sustainable and will not negatively impact connected systems such as trout streams. A bill passed undermining sustainable use, handcuffing the DNR, and shifting landowner costs to taxpayers. We helped persuade Governor Dayton to veto the bill. The Legislature also passed a bill requiring the DNR to delay complying with the court order regarding White Bear Lake until July 2019. Expect more on this issue in the 2019 session.

**Nitrogen Fertilizer** - Nitrate levels in groundwater aquifers are rising across the state, polluting drinking water and negatively impacting trout fisheries. To protect drinking water, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) proposed a modest nitrogen fertilizer rule which will, for the first time ever, regulate how farmers use nitrogen fertilizer. The Legislature passed a bill blocking the rule and taking away the MDA's rule making authority. Governor Dayton vetoed that bill. The Legislature then invoked an obscure rule delaying implementation of rule until after the 2019 legislative session. Expect more on this issue.

**Water Transfers Between Unconnected Waterbodies** - This provision allowed water from one lake or stream to be pumped into another lake or stream without a water quality permit (and compliance with water quality standards). MNTU is concerned that source water containing aquatic invasive species or pollution could be transferred to uncontaminated waters. We helped persuade Governor Dayton to veto this bill.

**Sulfate Standard** - Sulfate plays a key role in converting atmospheric mercury into the dangerous form of mercury which makes its way into aquatic life and fish, leading to fish consumption advisories. For decades, Minnesota has had a numeric water quality standard for sulfates of 10 mg/L aimed at protecting wild rice, but also benefitting fish and other aquatic life. In 2011, the Legislature directed the MPCA to update the existing standard. The MPCA developed a new standard which utilizes an equation



ANGLERS HAVE BEEN HAVING GREAT SUCCESS HOOKING UP ON MNTU HABITAT PROJECTS LIKE THIS REACH OF TROUT BROOK IN DAKOTA COUNTY.

tailored to the characteristics of each waterbody, but a court determined this was unworkable. A bill passed barring the MPCA from enforcing either (any) standard, in violation of the Clean Water Act. Governor Dayton vetoed the bill. A second bill was hurriedly passed on the last day of session allowing future polluters (like sulfide-ore mines) to add unlimited sulfates to the water. Governor Dayton vetoed that bill too.

**Raid on Dedicated Funding** - Proceeds from the state lottery are placed in the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund and constitutionally dedicated to environmental purposes. Trust Fund money spent on natural resource projects are intended to be over and above traditional bonding dollars spent for similar projects. In the final hours of the 2018 legislative session, a large bonding bill passed containing provisions which divert millions of dollars of Trust Fund monies over the next 20 years for infrastructure projects traditionally paid for with state general obligation bonding. Governor Dayton was unwilling to veto the larger bill. MNTU is working with partners and legislators on 2019 bills to repeal and undo this raid on dedicated funding.

**Funding Secured for Education and Habitat** - Two bright spots were legislative appropriations of dedicated funding to enable MNTU to expand its youth education program (Trout in the Classroom) and to restore more habitat around the state. Details of those programs are provided elsewhere in this article.

**Feedlots** - Proposals to locate large animal feedlots in sensitive southeast Minnesota watersheds highlighted the potential impacts of feedlot operations on aquifers and trout streams. TU members and MNTU participated in public meetings and comments concerning feedlots proposed near Mabel, MN (Newburg and Wisel Creeks) and Lewiston, MN (headwaters of Garvin Brook, Rush Creek and South Branch of the Whitewater). The

future of both proposals is uncertain. MNTU is forming a Feedlot Working Group to become more deeply engaged on this issue. Members interesting in helping on this issue should send an email to [jlenczewski@comcast.net](mailto:jlenczewski@comcast.net) and put "Feedlot working group" in the subject line.

**Ballast Water Discharges** - After years fending off bad federal legislation, compromise legislation was passed which we can live with, if not learn to love. Under it, EPA retains authority to adopt new standards, "laker" vessels will be regulated, Minnesota's regulation on "lakers" remains in place until the new federal regulations take effect, and funding is available to develop and test ship treatment technologies. Visit the MNTU website for greater details about this issue at [www.mntu.org](http://www.mntu.org).

### II. RESTORE

Restoration of degraded habitat is central to our mission as Trout Unlimited. Restoring and reconnecting damaged streams has defined Trout Unlimited for 60 years. Passage of the Legacy Amendment in 2008, spurred MNTU to significantly increase its habitat work. Our success in annually securing Outdoor Heritage Fund grants has enabled MNTU, and partners, to complete more than 70 separate habitat projects since 2009, restoring more than 70 miles of stream habitat and reclaiming six trout lakes.

**2018 Habitat Restored** - The projects below were substantially completed in 2018, and will begin to look finished once grasses flourish next summer. Stream projects are unavoidably prone to high water events and susceptible to minor erosion and seed loss until vegetation becomes well established over two or three years. These projects will likely need (and will receive) minor repairs, reseeding and other adjustments before they are truly complete.

Garvin Brook (Winona County): Another 2,900 feet of habitat was restored between Farmers' Park and the railroad trestle which marks the upstream end of two contiguous miles of previously improved habitat. See the February 2018 issue of Trout Unlimited Minnesota for more about this stream.

Cedar Valley Creek (Winona): A shorter, but highly accessible, reach between two bridges on a very productive wild brown trout stream. Future work is planned upstream of this project.

Rush Creek (Winona): We completed 5,500 feet of habitat improvement on this larger stream, which has a forage base capable of growing larger browns. It is located between the two County Rd 25 bridges and near a long reach improved by the DNR in 2016-17.

Root River (Fillmore): This DNR-led project is located downstream of Preston, MN in the Old Barn Resort stretch of the river. This area is especially popular with floaters (tube, canoe, kayak or boat) and holds a mix of wild browns and stocked rainbows.

Spring Valley Creek (Fillmore): 4,600 feet of this brown trout stream was improved. The habitat work is located four to five miles east of Spring Valley, MN, and downstream from Twp Rd 418.

Vermillion River (Dakota): Another large chunk of river corridor was cleared of buckthorn and other invasives. Strong turn outs of hard-working volunteers in March, October and December brought us close to completing this phase of the project. Join us March 2, 2019 for our last buckthorn cut, and this summer for in-stream work.

Chester Creek (St. Louis): This segment of stream had been ditched, straightened, buried in 700 feet long culverts, and cut off from migrating brook trout. We restored a natural meandering channel filled with pools and spawning gravels and removed barriers so wild brook trout can spawn here again. TU volunteers planted trees to ensure shade in future years.

Blackhoof River (Carlton): The river was moved away from an unstable valley wall to prevent huge slope failures and log jams. The deep pools, woody cover habitat and spawning riffles created will benefit a "grand slam" of brook, brown and rainbow trout.

Little Devil Track River (Cook): We employed a Conservation Corps crew to use winches and hand labor to improve a stretch of brook trout habitat. The DNR's Jeff Tilma did a great job leading this work. It is located several miles west of the Gunflint Trail off County Road 6.

**Maintaining Momentum for Trout** - Keeping our habitat restoration program going depends on effective grant writing and navigation through the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) and legislative processes. Securing construction grants takes 16 months or more, from project de-

velopment to grant writing, to LSOHC recommendation, to legislative action, and finally a grant agreement the following July. From January to May 2018, MNTU steered the previous year's LSOHC recommendation (Phase 10) through the Legislature and secured funding for habitat projects slated for 2020-2022 construction. We also worked with the DNR and our chapters to develop additional projects. MNTU crafted these into its Phase 11 proposal submitted in late May. Our September presentation went well and the LSOHC is recommending MNTU receive funding to restore more degraded streams. The Legislative journey continues through May 2019. We continue development of a monitoring program for past habitat projects. To volunteer or get more details, send an email to [monitor@mntu.org](mailto:monitor@mntu.org).

**2019 Habitat Projects** - We expect construction of these projects in 2019: Vermillion River (Dakota), Trout Run Creek (Winona), Wisel Creek (Fillmore), Money Creek (Fillmore), West Indian Creek (Wabasha), South Branch Whitewater River (Winona), Blackhoof River (Carlton), and Sucker Brook (Clearwater). Members and non-members can receive details and updates on how to volunteer on projects in 2019 by sending an email to [jlenczewski@comcast.net](mailto:jlenczewski@comcast.net) and putting "Habitat help" in the subject line.

### III. SUSTAIN

MNTU works to sustain the protection, restoration and improvements in fisheries and watersheds through advocacy, education, outreach and engagement. We do so in diverse and creative ways, but the common thread is that they raise awareness of great local resources, teach people how streams work and what threatens them, and provide opportunities to tangibly connect with trout and watersheds. Drop us an email to share your ideas for how we can do more. Following is a partial list of activities in 2018.

**Outdoor Education Program in MN Schools** - This program brings students in grades 5 through 12 outside in the natural environment to learn about watersheds and what it takes to ensure healthy aquatic ecosystems. One component of the program involves students raising trout from eggs to fingerlings in classroom aquariums, due to this, members often refer to the broader program as "Trout in the Classroom" or "TIC." The program also introduces students and families to angling. Look for angling education opportunities in 2019, including some already on the calendar in this newsletter issue. The program was restructured and began a new grant cycle in 2018, with expanded reach,



MNTU HABITAT IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS IN THE DRIFTLESS SUPPORT STRONG NUMBERS OF BIG FISH LIKE THIS WILD BROWN TROUT, READY FOR RELEASE.

more educators, and a broader presence around the state. Students and schools in the program now receive Trout Unlimited Minnesota, all program teachers are TU members, and all students now have the opportunity to sample macroinvertebrates in local streams each fall. Each participating school in the expanded program presents opportunities for chapters and members to help pass on the love of trout streams. Contact education supervisor Amber Taylor at [education@mntu.org](mailto:education@mntu.org) to see how you can get involved. Look for regular updates in Trout Unlimited Minnesota for details.

**Newsletter** - MNTU published three informative issues of Trout Unlimited Minnesota in 2018. Carl Haensel, Jade Thomason, Dan Callahan and a host of writers all volunteered their time and talents to produce a publication which unites TU members across the state and celebrates our collective progress achieving TU's mission.

**2018 Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo** - This three day get-together allows Minnesota TU and the chapters introduce TU and conservation to a passionate slice of anglers. While TU is not a fly fishing group, the Expo allows TU's conservation and education message to reach a broad audience of anglers who fish not only trout, but all gamefish species. The event helps conservation efforts around MN, the region, and much further afield. Special thanks are due John Hunt, Dan Callahan and host of other dedicated volunteers.

**Minnesota TU Fly Fishing Film & Video Showcase** - This festival of short films celebrates great local fisheries (Minnesota and Midwestern) and local filmmakers, while folks enjoy local craft brews and camaraderie. The third annual showcase was held in conjunction with the 2018 Expo, and quickly sold out the 250 seat theater. Brent Notbohm,

UWS professor of film and video, again shared his considerable talents curating this beautiful show.

**Mentoring Program** - We provide fly outfits and essential gear for mentees through MNTU's Foster the Outdoors mentoring program organized by Tim Hemstad. Laughing Trout fly tiers and TU members donated hundreds of flies this year. The program grew in 2018 and is expanding further in 2019. See the article and contact information in this newsletter, and follow its progress on [www.mntu.org](http://www.mntu.org).

**Habitat Volunteering** - MNTU works with TU members and chapters to provide opportunities for hands-on work improving trout streams. Rewarding work and the camaraderie over lunch are unbeatable. Work days around the state drew hundreds of generous volunteers, too numerous to name here. However, special kudos are due Tony Nelson, Dan Callahan and Fred Bertschinger for organizing the four metro area work days, as well as Rich Frick, Eric Caple, Mark Abner and other chefs for feeding the masses. Thank you volunteers!

### IV. LOOKING AHEAD

Everyone can help MNTU protect, restore and sustain coldwater fisheries and watersheds. As a grassroots conservation group, our goal is to provide all TU members with opportunities to directly contribute to local conservation in 2019. This can be through participation in advocacy efforts, habitat projects, education, outreach, and donations to MNTU to keep all this good work going strong. MNTU relies solely on local fundraising and receives no funding from national Trout Unlimited or your TU member dues. TU National does not fund MNTU's executive director. Grants cover most habitat work, but not all MNTU's associated costs. If you like what we are accomplishing together, please consider donating directly to Minnesota Trout Unlimited and keep us moving forward.

To share your time and talents please contact Council Chair Steve Carlton or Executive Director John Lenczewski using their contact information on page 3.

Thanks to all of you who made 2018 a good year for conservation!

## HABITAT HELPERS NEEDED

**We need volunteers to assist with maintenance inspections of completed projects, as well as numerous hands-on tasks on 2019 projects. To volunteer or receive information on opportunities to help with inspections and/or hands-on work simply send an email to: [monitor@mntu.org](mailto:monitor@mntu.org) List "inspection," "habitat help" or both in the subject line and tell us what type of things or specific streams you might want to help with. Please provide a phone number; we will not use your information for other purposes. You can unsubscribe at any time.**

# YOUTH AND FAMILY FISHING PROGRAMS

## Summer 2019 Opportunities and Dates

As a component of Trout in the Classroom (TIC), Minnesota Trout Unlimited is excited to offer Youth and Family Fishing Programs in partnership with parks and recreation departments throughout the Twin Cities metro area. We would like to invite MNTU members, Trout in the Classroom teachers and students, and their families to join us for a few hours of fun, learning, and meeting other anglers! There will be both spin and fly fishing programs that are open to the public, and will teach you everything you need to know: how to set up a rod, cast like a pro, and take fish off your hook. You'll also learn about the different kinds of fish and the various baits used to catch them. All equipment is provided. Guardians and youth over 16 years old will need to buy a MN fishing license. See below for partner contact information, dates, times, and locations. Check the MNTU TIC website for further details and how to register: [www.mntu.org/trout-in-the-classroom](http://www.mntu.org/trout-in-the-classroom).

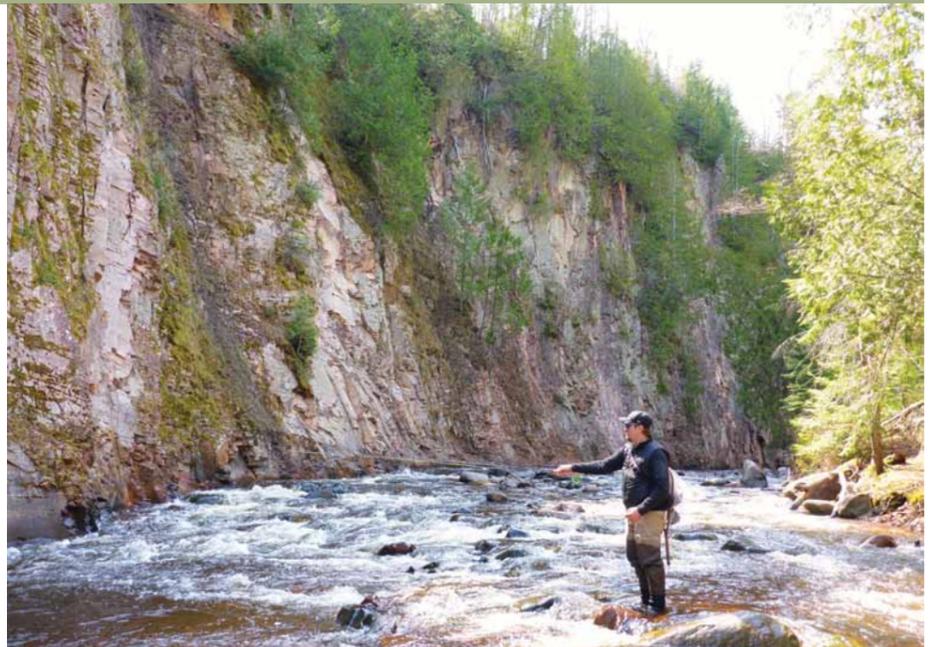
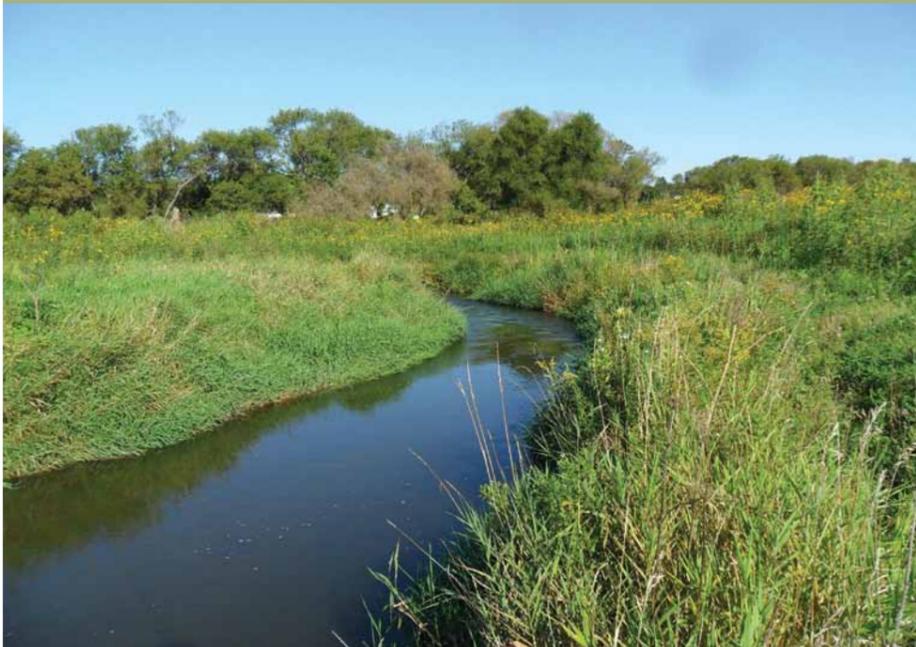
Partner Information	Date	Time	Location	Program Type
Washington County Parks 651-430-8370	Saturday, June 1	10:00am – 12:00pm	Big Marine Park Reserve Marine on St. Croix	Family - Spin
Washington County Parks 651-430-8370	Saturday, June 1	1:00pm – 3:00pm	Big Marine Park Reserve Marine on St. Croix	Family - Spin
Dakota County Parks 952-891-7000	Saturday, June 8	10:00am – 12:00pm	Lebanon Hills Regional Park – Eagan	Youth - Spin
Washington County Parks 651-430-8370	Wednesday, June 12	10:00am – 12:00pm	Square Lake Park – Stillwater	Youth - Spin
MNTU Fishing Skills Educators 952-261-2672	Friday, June 14	6:00pm – 8:00pm	Location TBD – check TIC website or contact Evan Griggs @ tic&mntu.org	Family - Fly
Minnetonka Parks and Rec 952-939-8200	Saturday, June 15	10:00am – 12:00pm	Shady Oak Beach – Minnetonka	Family - Spin
Ramsey County Parks and Rec 651-748-2500	Sunday, June 16	10:00am – 12:00pm	Lake McCarrons County Park – Roseville	Family - Spin
Burnsville Parks and Rec 952-895-4514	Tuesday, June 18	10:00am – 12:00pm	Crystal Beach Park – Burnsville	Youth - Spin
Burnsville Parks and Rec 952-895-4514	Wednesday, June 19	10:00am – 12:00pm	Crystal Beach Park – Burnsville	Youth - Spin
Eden Prairie Parks and Rec 952-949-8470	Saturday, June 22	10:00am – 12:00pm	Staring Lake Park – Eden Prairie	Youth - Spin
Minnetonka Parks and Rec 952-939-8200	Tuesday, June 25	10:00am – 12:00pm	Shady Oak Beach – Minnetonka	Youth - Spin
Wright County Parks and Rec 763-682-7693	Thursday, June 27	6:00pm – 8:00pm	Bertram Chain of Lakes Reg. Park – Monticello	Family - Spin
MNTU Fishing Skills Educators 952-261-2672	Friday, June 28	6:00pm – 8:00pm	Location TBD – check TIC website or contact Evan Griggs @ tic&mntu.org	Family - Fly
Ramsey County Parks and Rec 651-748-2500	Saturday, June 29	10:00am – 12:00pm	Beaver Lake County Park – St. Paul	Youth - Spin
Washington County Parks 651-430-8370	Tuesday, July 2	10:00am – 12:00pm	Lake Elmo Park Reserve – Lake Elmo	Youth - Spin
MNTU Fishing Skills Educators 952-261-2672	Friday, July 12	6:00pm – 8:00pm	Location TBD – check TIC website or contact Evan Griggs @ tic&mntu.org	Family - Fly
Ramsey County Parks and Rec 651-748-2500	Saturday, July 13	10:00am – 12:00pm	Lake McCarrons County Park – Roseville	Youth - Spin
Dakota County Parks 952-891-7000	Tuesday, July 16	6:00pm – 8:00pm	Lebanon Hills Regional Park – Eagan	Family - Spin
Eden Prairie Parks and Rec 952-949-8470	Saturday, July 20	10:00am – 12:00pm	Staring Lake Park – Eden Prairie	Youth - Spin
Minnetonka Parks and Rec 952-939-8200	Tuesday, July 23	10:00am – 12:00pm	Shady Oak Beach – Minnetonka	Youth - Spin
Ramsey County Parks and Rec 651-748-2500	Wednesday, July 24	6:00pm – 8:00pm	Beaver Lake County Park – St. Paul	Family - Spin
Washington County Parks 651-430-8370	Thursday, July 25	6:00pm – 8:00pm	Cottage Grove Ravine Reg. Park Cottage Grove	Family - Spin
MNTU Fishing Skills Educators 952-261-2672	Friday, July 26	6:00pm – 8:00pm	Location TBD – check TIC website or contact Evan Griggs @ tic&mntu.org	Family - Fly
Eden Prairie Parks and Rec 952-949-8470	Saturday, July 27	10:00am – 12:00pm	Staring Lake Park – Eden Prairie	Family - Spin
Wright County Parks and Rec 763-682-7693	Saturday, August 3	10:00am – 12:00pm	Bertram Chain of Lakes Reg. Park – Monticello	Youth - Spin
Washington County Parks 651-430-8370	Saturday, August 10	7:00pm – 8:00pm	St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park – Hastings	Family - Fly
Eden Prairie Parks and Rec 952-949-8470	Saturday, August 17	10:00am – 12:00pm	Staring Lake Park – Eden Prairie	Youth - Spin



# SEASONS OF A STREAM

## Youth Series: Trout Through the Seasons in Minnesota

By Evan Griggs, MNTU Environmental Education Specialist



LEFT: HAY CREEK IN SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA IS AN EXAMPLE OF A SPRING CREEK. SPRING CREEKS ARE FUELED BY COLD UNDERGROUND SPRINGS AND PROVIDE STABLE TEMPERATURES FOR TROUT THROUGHOUT THE SEASONS.

RIGHT: A ROCKY TROUT STREAM ON THE NORTH SHORE OF LAKE SUPERIOR IS AN EXAMPLE OF A FREESTONE RIVER. PHOTO BY CHERI HENDERSON.

**T**ROUT streams are kind of funny. It seems like every day is opposite day for them. For example, when it's the hottest day of summer, the water will feel ice cold. And when it's the coldest day of winter, the water is still flowing and even looks like it's steaming. When I look at a trout stream, I always wonder, "Where are the trout hiding? Why isn't the water frozen, or too hot?" The best way to find out is to jump into the seasons of a stream!

Healthy trout streams are clean, oxygenated, and cold. In the Driftless Region of southeastern Minnesota, all the trout streams "spring" from an underground aquifer. This is why we call those trout streams, "spring creeks." The springs constantly gurgle out cold, clean water. The water will typically be around 55 degrees when it comes out of the spring. Water gets oxygen by flowing over rapids, where all the whitewater catches oxygen in the bubbles. Having aquatic plants also helps put oxygen in the water and gives trout places to hide. On the North Shore, most streams flow from lakes and bogs instead of from springs. Their water levels and water temperatures are dependent on melting snow and rain. These types of streams are called "freestone." Let's check out a snapshot of a healthy trout stream's year!

In the summertime, trout are quite happy to be in their cold, clean stream. There

are lots of bugs to eat and lots of plants giving them oxygen and hiding spots from predators. Trout do best if the water stays less than 68 degrees, which usually isn't a problem in a spring creek. In summer on the North Shore, you'll find trout hiding in the colder headwaters of the streams or in deep pools below waterfalls and rapids. These areas will be the coolest and most oxygenated areas of the river.

Fall in a trout stream is an exciting time. In the Driftless, brown and brook trout make nests (called "redds") in shallow rocky areas and spawn. One brown trout can lay more than 10,000 eggs! Trout in the Driftless don't migrate to spawn. On the North Shore, salmon and steelhead do migrate. To lay eggs, they make their way up the rivers they were born in. Steelhead can migrate multiple times over their life to spawn, but salmon only return once and then die after spawning.

Do trout get cold in the winter? Spring creeks have pretty consistent water temperature. The water will be slightly colder, but not cold enough to freeze. You can even go fishing in the winter at Whitewater and Forestville State Parks! Trout like to group together in the deep, slow moving areas (called "pools"). They can stay warm and save energy in pools. In winter on the northern freestone rivers, water levels get low and slow. These rivers will freeze, and trout

must congregate in the deep pools under waterfalls and rapids. The water in those areas stays deep and flowing, and trout live there all winter.

As things warm up again in spring, Driftless trout move out of the pools and head back to their summer hiding spots. On freestone rivers, the melting snow and ice (called "spring runoff") allows the fish to move around the stream or back to Lake Superior again. There's also another migration of steelhead that will swim up the rivers to spawn.

That was a snapshot of a healthy stream. But sometimes streams can get too much mud (called "silt") in them, and can become deadly for trout. Silt enters a stream when the stream eats away at exposed soil on its banks (called "erosion"). Silt will cover up rapids, fill in pools, and choke out aquatic plants.

Without rapids, the water is less oxygenated and the trout can't make their redds to spawn. No plants or pools means less places to hide. The slow, shallow water can get too hot in summer and freeze in winter. No pools on a northern freestone river, and the trout won't survive through winter. To stop erosion, there has to be lots of plants with strong roots on land. It's also good to have boulders or dead trees on the streambanks to lock in the soil. This is what Trout Unlimited does in restoration projects on our streams! Their work helps streams stay silt-free and keeps the trout healthy.

Visit a trout stream every season and try to find the trout! In winter, look in the deep pools. In spring and fall, look in the shallow rapids. In the summer, just follow the bubbles.



TOP: IN THE FALL, BROOK TROUT LIKE THIS ONE MAKE NESTS CALLED "REDDS" IN SHALLOW ROCKY AREAS AND SPAWN.

LEFT: GRASSHOPPERS ARE A COMMON FOOD ITEM FOR HUNGRY TROUT DURING THE SUMMER.

RIGHT: MARSH MARIGOLDS CAN OFTEN BE FOUND ALONG TROUT STREAMS IN SPRING. PHOTOS BY JADE THOMASON

# TED HANSEN

## A Regional Fishing Artist Profile

By Ben Nelson • Photos by Kelley DeSmitt • Art by Ted Hansen



TED AT WORK IN THE STUDIO. HE PAINTS IN NORTHEAST MINNEAPOLIS, CONVENIENTLY UPSTAIRS FROM INDEED BREWING. HANSEN FISHES DOWN THE STREET, ON THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER, BELOW THE STONE ARCH BRIDGE.

“It’s nothing magical,” says Ted Hansen, “I got good at art by making a lot of bad art, a lot of really bad art.” Ted pauses, he raises his eyebrows. “You have to put in your time.”

Ted Hansen is a Minnesota fishing artist originally from Dillon, Montana. Dillon is between Yellowstone and the Bitterroots, between Bozeman and Sun Valley. It has fewer than five thousand people, many farm sheep and cattle. Ted grew up on a small family farm that is part of a larger extended-family farm. The Beaverhead River passes through it.

“Grandma Ruth loved fishing down on the river behind the house,” Hansen recalls. “She would bring a couple of lawn chairs down to the river and throw out a Panther Martin spinner or a worm on a sinker and sit and talk. We

would have family get-togethers at the river with a bonfire, hot dogs, s’mores etc. Some of us would, inevitably, have a line in the water.”

Hansen remembers camping and fishing with his family on Medicine Lodge Creek south of Dillon. “Medicine Lodge is where my ancestors originally homesteaded and was always an important place for our family. We’d get a willow switch and catch brook trout on flower petals.”

Uncle Eric was a trout fishing virtuoso. “His legend preceded him. He could catch a five pound trout out of a mud puddle. If you went fishing with Uncle Eric the first thing he’d make you do was go back in the house and change your clothes. He was big on blending into the background.” While fishing, Uncle Eric would watch cows in the pasture. He would fish based on which way the cows

were facing. Ted admits, “I never understood that one.”

Wade Hansen, Ted’s father, ran his own construction company. He was primarily an excavator and backhoe operator. “It was not uncommon for my dad to work 80-plus hours per week. With that said, he would prioritize his time for the family. My dad was the kind of guy who would take me on fishing trips even though he didn’t fish. He was the guy who would row an old yard sale boat that he got for \$50 while I cast from the bow. The boat was truly the ugliest thing on the river and was a rowboat, not at all intended as a drift boat, but he was a pretty good rower and would position me in a great way to make my casts.”

Ted was the youngest of five siblings. He has three older brothers, all of them now engineers, and an older sister, now married to an engineer. Ted was the art

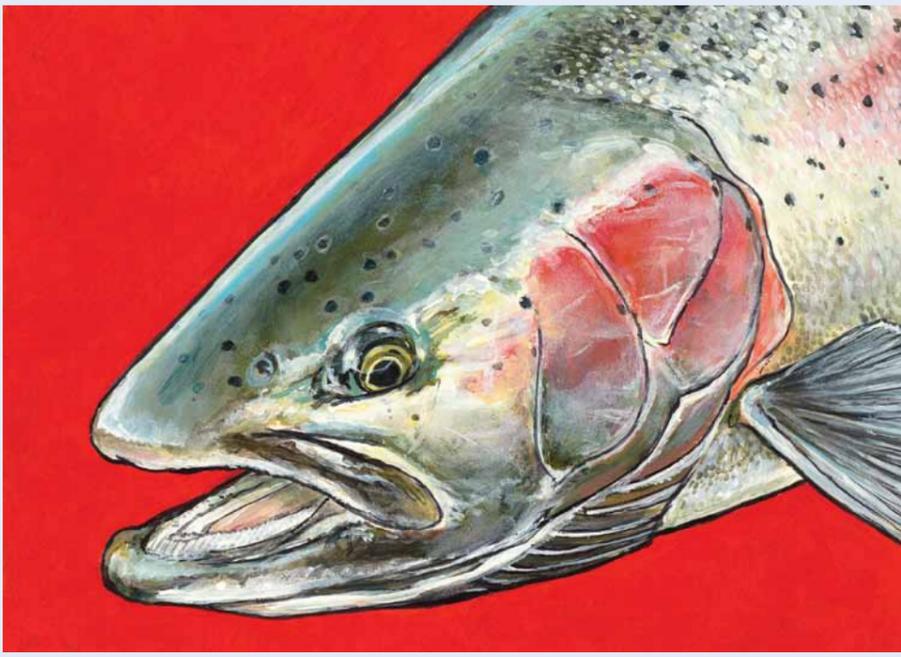
kid. “I grew up without television, so my main forms of indoor entertainment were reading the encyclopedia and drawing. I drew mostly with markers and pencils on cheap printer paper or even freezer paper.” Hansen progressed from drawing whales to dinosaurs to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, deer and landscapes. “In high school I created weird creatures, continued with the landscapes, and started exploring abstraction. Of course there was plenty of angst, self-absorbed, terrible teenager art.” He attributes his prolific drawing to “probably overly enthusiastic encouragement from my parents.” Art became an identity. He was competitive about it. He wanted to be best artist in school. Hansen, now an art educator, compares his childhood paintings to those of his students: “I was average. Just average. But I kept at it. Then I got better at it.”

Ted chose to attend Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota because he heard their choir sing. “I didn’t know humans could sound like that,” Ted says. He sang in the choir, majored in theater and explored the edges of art. Ted splattered paint on wooden boards and staked them around campus. He placed pieces in roadside fields and in lawns. “It was experimental. Very abstract. It was weird. Sometimes weird art is good, but not necessarily. Sometimes weird art is just weird.” He shrugs. “I was creating a mess that matched how I felt at the time. I was trying to figure things out. Let’s face it, if you’re studying theater you’re probably trying to figure things out.”

In Moorhead, Hansen realized that a fly line could be used for more than trout. “I fished the Red River and was fascinated by the odd-looking fish I



“MICAH’S BROOKIE” ACRYLIC ON CANVAS 12” X 24”  
COMMISSIONED BY MICAH CRIDER



LEFT: "STEELHEAD ON RED" ACRYLIC ON CANVAS 16" X 20"  
RIGHT: "GOLD LEAF ROYAL WULFF #2" GOLD LEAF, INK, ACRYLIC ON BOARD  
6" X 6"

would pull out: catfish, walleye, moon-eyes." Ted made countless casts over local lakes and ponds and hundreds of hook sets into blue gills and bass. The repetition made him a better fisherman.

Hansen graduated from Concordia and joined the Peace Corps. He was happy to be placed in Bulgaria, a country with diverse topography and coastline on the Black Sea. Ted taught English as a foreign language, and in turn, learned Bulgarian. Last year Ted overheard two servers speaking Bulgarian at a North Dakota restaurant. He paralyzed them with a question in their native language.

Ted was drawn to the Monastery of Saint Ivan of Rila, in Bulgaria's Rila Mountains. There happens to be a trout stream behind it. The monastery is a 10th century cultural monument. It's renowned for its Eastern Orthodox architecture and the icons it houses. An icon is a sacred image usually surrounded by gold leafing. Thin layers of gold reflect light and illuminate the subject matter. It is considered a connection to the divine.

Hansen translates iconic gold leafing to his own work. He glorified ultralight backpacking equipment in a series that includes the camp stove and the pocket knife. "In backpacking everything you carry becomes sacred," Ted explains. He knows this well. Ted and his wife Annie hiked 305 miles of the Continental Divide Trail in Montana. He's applied gold leafing to fishing tackle too. His pieces include a bead head hare's ear, a Royal Wulff and a Mud-dler Minnow. "We revere our flies."

After Bulgaria, Ted came back to Minnesota to attend graduate school at the University of Minnesota. He earned a Masters of Education and began teaching art in the Minneapolis Public School District. "On the surface, my students and I might appear to have little in common. I'm a white guy who grew up on a small farm in Montana and likes fly fishing - my students are racially diverse, many grew up in an urban setting, and their interests are as varied as the individuals. Art is where we meet. My hope, is that each of us can come to the classroom exactly as we are. I make a conscious effort to learn about the art that moves them (both visual and performing arts) and include that in what I teach. I also share the art from my own artistic journey. Learning *with* my students is what makes education most rewarding."

In 2007, Ted met Annie Marrin. "Early on in our relationship I brought her fishing down at Whitewater and had one of those magical days where everything comes together perfectly. After taking about a half hour to learn casts that took me years to learn, she landed several brown trout." Ted and Annie were married in 2013. "While in Montana this past summer, I took several photographs of her sending perfect casts to top-feeding cutthroats. The sky above her was a parade of orange, pink, and gold clouds against a cerulean blue of approaching dusk. I could spend a year painting just that scene."

Ted landed a giant brook trout about 12 years ago. He couldn't mount it but wanted to preserve the memory. A friend suggested that he paint it. "Oh... yeah



-- I can do that," Ted realized. Fish portraits have become a staple of Hansen's portfolio. They are inspired by classical portraiture and are based in traditional technique. Ted recently completed a commissioned piece of an angler's once-in-a-lifetime Mongolian taimen. He's not only painting a fish, he's making a document, a record of a memory's essence and emotion. "When I hold a fish in my hand, observing how the light illuminates the brilliant colors of its slightly translucent scales and feeling the energy of the moment - this is what I'm trying to capture. When I paint commissions, in order for them to work, I have to make them my own. If I focus on creating art that moves me personally, that is the art that most moves others. The personal is the most universal."

Hansen returned to Montana last summer to fulfill an artist in residency in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area. He and Annie were delivered by mule team to a primitive cabin on the Middle Fork of the Flathead River. "I trapped about 15 mice and one pack rat in the cabin before I gave up." Ted and Annie lived in the cabin for two weeks. The duration of their stay allowed Hansen to study nature's fine detail. "The flash of a whitefish as it feeds in the last light of the day, the way the light descends down the ridge in the morning and ascends in the evening, the contour of a single tree on a skyline. I'm just now starting to piece

together some of these ideas into an art form, and it is lending itself to a more introspective, experimental approach."

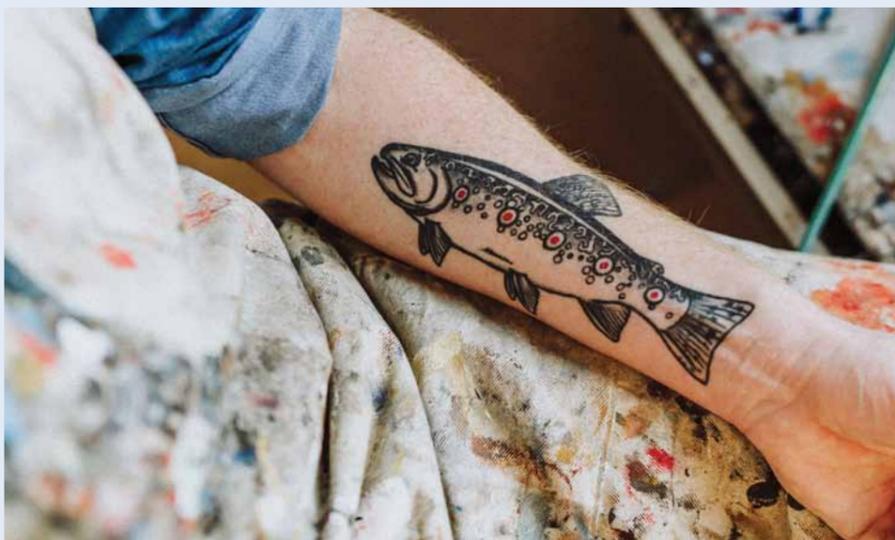
"I know I can paint a fish. Painting a single tree using only black ink -- that I'm not sure I can pull off. And that is why I need to do this for a while. If I do what I know, and keep doing that, it can be a way to create technically advanced but ultimately boring art. The next phase, which I think I'm entering now, is where I go back to that experimental approach that I was so comfortable with as a young man."

Hansen knows that evolution is a struggle. He expects a challenge, expects failure to precede success. He'll put in his time. He'll keep at it. "My approach to art is simple: Put in the work. Sometimes the work is just the hours in front of the easel working on skills and making the image the best that it can be. Other times, the work is more mental. Inspiration comes from the act of doing the work."

"Fly fishing and art have so many similarities," says Hansen. "With both, one can participate after some basic instruction, but you can spend a lifetime of dedicated practice and still feel like a beginner. Once you master one skill, you realize how far you still have to go. With both, there is never really any final destination, but it is rather the pursuit of excellence, or novelty, or transcendence. Sometimes you don't paint for months; sometimes your rod falls off your car after you forget to put it away and you run over it. Sometimes a painting just flows out of you and there is a perfect alignment of skill, inspiration, and being perfectly alive in a moment. And sometimes in fishing the same is true. Skill, inspiration and mindfulness all flow together to create a perfect moment."

See more of Ted Hansen's art at <http://tedhansenfineart.com> and [www.tedchansen.etsy.com](http://www.tedchansen.etsy.com). Follow him on Instagram @tedhansen\_art and on facebook @tedhansenfineart.

Ben Nelson is a physician in Duluth, Minnesota. He lives there with his wife and three children.



TED'S LEFT FOREARM BEARS THE TATTOO OF A TROUT. THE TROUT HAS SPECIAL SPOTS SPACED EXACTLY ONE INCH APART THAT ALLOW TED TO MEASURE FISH AGAINST HIS ARM.



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## THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER INITIATIVE

Partners in Conservation: The Izaak Walton League in Action

By Piper Donlin

Despite millions of dollars from government agencies, foundations, and farmland owners, our water quality is degraded and getting worse. Our soils are depleted, our rivers are polluted, our infrastructure is threatened by flooding and erosion, and we have neglected to meet the Clean Water Act's provisions for "swimmable, fishable waters." The Izaak Walton League's Upper Mississippi River Initiative (UMRI) believes we need a new approach.

The Izaak Walton League is a 96-year-old conservation organization that has been working to defend soils, air, woods, waters, and wildlife for generations. The Upper Mississippi River Initiative is a new project of the Izaak Walton League focused on giving communities the tools they need to improve the quality of their waters. The Initiative does so by implementing citizen water monitoring, building absentee landowner workshops to develop leases that provide conservation provisions, and expanding on the experience of groups working to build resilient lands and communities. The group believes that water is everyone's business and responsibility, and it should bring us together not drive us apart. The Upper Mississippi River Initiative promotes local action for clean water, healthy soil, native habitat, and provides an opportunity for dialog with all stakeholders on how to improve our water resources.

The group makes arrangements based on local interest: one-on-one conversations, site visits, panel discussions and

workshops with respected leaders in the field, and helps to organize actions in local government. We work with partner organizations, like Trout Unlimited, to share the lessons learned among people throughout the four Upper Mississippi River states. It is a process to learn how to build both resilient economies and landscapes, and to learn about our water, its condition, and what we are doing to affect it. Site-specific techniques are critical to influencing change. They can improve soil health, and reduce erosion, flood risks, and nutrient loss to water locally as it flows to the Upper Mississippi.

In 2017, 40 volunteer stream monitors drew almost 500 samples from 83 sites across the Cedar River watershed, and tested for E. coli bacteria, an indicator of fecal contamination. 70 percent of the samples had E. coli contamination which far exceeded human health standards for body contact (swimming, wading, boating, etc.). After major rainstorms, volunteers consistently found extremely high E. coli readings on most streams and tributaries at 5X, 10X, 20X or more of the standard. This indicated that the rain is flushing E. coli from septic systems on the land and in tile lines into the streams. From these results, several volunteers took the lead and have made significant progress working with county governments to address the issue through better education about septic systems and monitoring. This is the perfect example of UMRI in action: Citizens concerned about the health of people who enjoy our streams, rivers and lakes, and their decision to do something about it.

UMRI's mission is to listen, learn, and connect. We listen to producers to under-



THREE UMRI VOLUNTEER STREAM MONITORS TAKING SAMPLES AT ONE OF THE MONITORING SITES ALONG THE CEDAR RIVER.  
PHOTO BY DON ARNOSTI

stand them, learn their needs, and connect them to farmers and organizations who can lend knowledge and advice. Interested in getting involved? Work with your local TU chapter to co-sponsor an event to promote healthy watersheds, regenerative agriculture, soil health, or pollinator habitat, or hold a stream clean-up in your community. Contact UMRI staff and volunteers to get involved.

*Editor's Note: Piper Donlin is the Outreach and Engagement Coordinator for the Upper Mississippi River Initiative. Find out more about the UMRI and a great opportunity to partner with another conservation organization at: [www.umrinitiative.org](http://www.umrinitiative.org)*

# MNTU 2019 PHOTO CONTEST: HOME WATERS

This is the official announcement of the 6th season of the MNTU Photo Contest. We've made some changes and are excited to announce a new version of our contest: Home Waters. Every year, we hear stories from anglers around the state about waters that they've visited for years, care about, and want to help protect. These are "home waters." While we don't want you to share your secret fishing hole, we want to share the places you think are special and worth protecting and restoring.

Send in your entries early, we look forward to seeing your photos!

## Rules of the Contest:

- Photos must be shot in Minnesota.
- Photos must include a trout, salmon or steelhead with water in the background of the photo, **OR** a water body that they inhabit.

- Submissions must include the name of the body of water, along with a description about why it is special or what it means to you, between 20 and 100 words in length.
- Photos must be submitted by May 15th, 2019. Top entries will be published in the June issue of the MNTU Newsletter.
- All photos submitted must be sent in \*.jpg format at their original resolution to the Editor at: [mntueditor@gmail.com](mailto:mntueditor@gmail.com)
- There is a entry limit of three photos per individual. Please include the name of the photographer and the location the photo was taken in the submission.
- Submission of photos gives MNTU the right to publish photos in the MNTU newsletter, in online media, and in other print mediums.

## 2019 Prizes:

The winner in each category will receive a box of a dozen flies ready to catch trout this season. The overall winner will receive a Minnesota TU T-shirt and an official MNTU hat. Check out the prize shirts and hats at the Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo this March and look for them on social media as well. They will be featuring our official "sticker" logo.

Share this announcement with your friends near and wide, we welcome submissions from members and non-members alike. Photos from the contest will be used in the upcoming June 2019 issue of *TU MN* and will be highlighted on our website, Facebook page and in other promotions.

Questions? Contact the newsletter editor at: [mntueditor@gmail.com](mailto:mntueditor@gmail.com).



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# WINTER FISHING IN THE SOUTHEAST

## A Story of Exploring Mill Creek

By Carl Berberich



THE AUTHOR LOOKING FOR WINTERTIME BROWN TROUT ALONG MILL CREEK IN CHATFIELD. STAYING ON THE BANK IS OFTEN A BETTER ALTERNATIVE THAN WADING WHEN SEARCHING FOR TROUT, AND OFTEN SAFER FOR ANGLERS. THIS ALSO HELPS KEEP SILT OUT OF ANY TROUT REDDS WHERE EGGS MAY BE INCUBATING.

Fishing the end of the year during the new trout season in southeast Minnesota was not what I expected. The DNR's Town and State Park Trout Season, introduced in 2017, down-sizes all the designated trout streams in the state to just four towns with trout streams and three SE Minnesota state parks where one can fish in the late fall. This season runs from October 15 to December 31. Previously, all trout streams in Minnesota were closed at this time of the year, except for those on North Shore. The Town and State Park Season changed that, but is limited to the designated trout streams in the southeast Minnesota towns of Chatfield, Preston, Lanesboro, and Spring Valley, and the streams in Forestville State Park, Whitewater State Park, and Beaver Creek State Park.

At first glance this seems like a very small and insignificant amount of water for catch-and-release trout fishing in the state. Maybe there could be too much fishing pressure, because of way too little water for so many people in the state to fish. Also, fishing during this time is very different than fishing in the spring and summer. You are fishing the transition from fall into winter, with very different techniques and flies. In the end, the main reason I found to go fishing is the complete lack of other people fishing, especially as fall progresses into winter. When December rolls around, no one is fishing these streams. You could have the streams practically to yourself, even on windless, warm winter days. The only thing that you have to learn is where the feeding fish are, and what they will eat.

Fishing the Trout Unlimited habitat improvement water on Mill Creek in Chatfield in mid-December on a cloudy, windless day was a surreal experience.

Everything was in stark extremes. White snow, black

stream bottoms, and a cloudy white sky. Soundless, but for the stray background noise of vehicles in the distance. From about 10:30 in the morning until 2 pm is the approximate time when fish might feed actively. I knew that the day I was fishing in December would warm up to 30 degrees, and no sunshine was expected. The water was about 38 degrees and crystal clear, and there was 6 inches of snow cover. My experience from fishing last March, before the first mayfly hatch, was that very small gray midges could hatch out on these warmer, windless days. At times this hatch can be very prolific, and the fish can get turned on by a heavy hatch of midges, especially in quiet, shallower pools. I even had just the fly for fishing a midge hatch. So not only did I have my arsenal of nymphs, scuds, and some soft hackles, I also had some #24 gray midge parachutes that I had tied for the previous year's winter fishing, as well as a new #22 stripped peacock quill, parachute midge pattern.

With all the snow on the ground, I was concerned with walking and getting down to the stream's edge. Snow and frozen ground can be slick on the inclines, but the worst is right at the water's edge. A little bit of thawed mud on top of the frozen stream's edge makes for very bad situations. My knees are not very stable anymore, making sliding down into the stream a very real possibility. I had just gotten some new wading boots that have 1/2" studded cleats, and I use an aluminum wading staff with a carbide tip to get up and down at the stream's edge. Since I'm usually fishing by myself, safety becomes something that I carefully practice.

One of the things that I don't like about winter trout fishing is the cold. Wading in 38-degree water is significantly colder than the rest of the year. After experiencing frostbite decades before, I'm much more proactive in prevention.

I've found that iron oxide hand warmers work really well. I put them into the backside of my fingerless gloves and they make all the difference. You can also get them for your feet. These hand warmers or heat packs are inexpensive, and I'll never be without them in cold weather again.

Getting access to the stream sometimes is not that easy in the winter. The parking lots in Chatfield's Mill Creek Park section of the stream provide the best parking access, if they are plowed. There is a gravel road beside the stream at the upper end of Chatfield's Town and State Park fishing section. This access point has very little parking room, but there are stiles crossing over the fence to the stream. With all the snow, walking for me is much slower and difficult. That can be a good thing for a couple of reasons. With the snow cushioning your steps and the slower walking, it makes for a quieter and much more stealthy approach. With winter's extreme water clarity, you will need this extra stealthy approach when you're fishing.

Walking slowly up to the stream, I realize that I'm fishing water I haven't fished before. I usually walk in from the road farther upstream before I start to fish. Fishing this December, this section is new water for me. Generally, in the winter I'm looking for quiet water, where the stream hardly moves. In the wintertime these areas sometimes hold fish which are trying not to expend energy due to the colder water.

Walking the stream, I look to see where the fish are holding. I begin by searching in the pool tail-outs this time of year. I start fishing with a beadhead orange scud with an indicator. I limit myself to three to five casts in a pool if I don't see anything, and then it's time to move on. This is a very small stream, so sometimes it's easier to walk very slowly in

the stream than to climb out onto the stream bank and be more exposed to watchful trout. Climbing out can also be treacherous in the winter due to the slickness at the water's edge.

I move ahead at the same speed the water flows downstream, with no splashing. Finally, I'm at a point where I have to get out. There's a curve with a shallow pool upstream and no view of what's ahead. After climbing out, I walk away from the stream, 10-15 feet away and parallel to the water, looking for the next good spot to fish. Without leaves on the trees and no streamside vegetation I can get a very good view of the area and can see farther up the stream. I walk and slowly scan the water, easily seeing 60 feet or more ahead. And then I spot it: A rise. No, wait. A second rise, then a third. They're rising near the tailout of the next pool, in very still water. As I watch, I see there are many rises! I get back down in the stream to have a lower profile. I've entered a quiet pool and walk slowly upstream to its top, almost up to the small riffle separating the pool I'm in and the next where the fish are rising. I'm about two feet lower than where the fish are, and I see that they are still rising. I slowly walk forward and see what they're eating. Really small midges. This is just what I was hoping for! There's a lot of midges on the water, and lots of fish are rising.

I'm approaching from downstream, walking up into the riffle. The fish are actually rising in two separate locations up ahead. On the right side of the stream, 3-4 feet from the bank and on the left side of the stream, 3 feet from the bank. I am still 60 feet below them, too far to cast, plus I have a riffle between us. The pool the fish are in has no noticeable flow. This is going to be one of the hardest situations to fish: absolutely quiet, still water while casting midges. But the fish are feeding and I'm here, so it's time



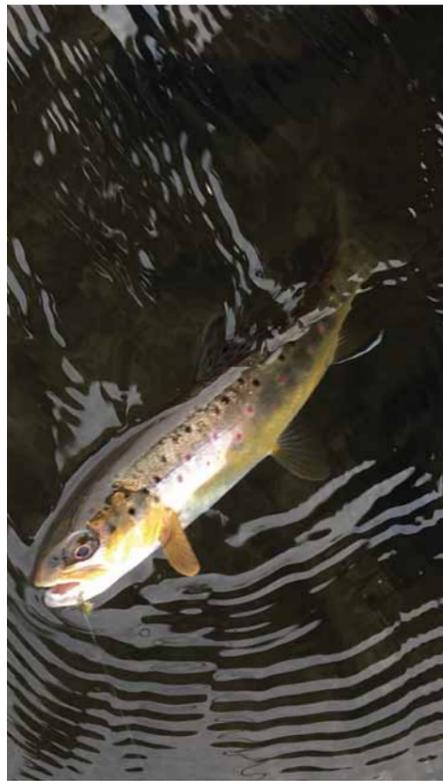
THE SPECIAL REGULATION SECTION OF MILL CREEK IN CHATFIELD.

to switch flies. I change from the #16 scud to a #24 midge. My leader is pretty old, and will have to be re-tied. I don't have any 7X or 8X tippet, but I do have 6X material. I wasn't really worrying about my leader when I was throwing a nymph, but throwing a midge dry fly is different.

I lift my 7.5-foot 3wt fly rod and I start casting the midge. I see immediately that I have a problem. I didn't notice this when I was casting the beadhead earlier, but now I see that the fly is landing with a curled leader. I need full extension of the tippet when this fly lands. The fly is landing about 10 feet short of where the fish are feeding. I slowly retrieve the fly and start to work on the leader. I need

all the memory worked out of the monofilament. Because of the cold temperature and the cold water, it seems harder to strip the leader of its memory. I also slowly walk another ten feet ahead. I'm near the top of the riffle, and I should be able to make the cast, especially now that I've straightened the leader.

The first cast lands three feet to the side of a rise on the right side of the stream. I wait, and nothing happens. I re-cast and still nothing. Ok. It's time to get accurate. I'm about 35-40 feet downstream. There are lots of rises. I'm seeing heads. Mostly on the right bank within one to two feet of the bank. I make the cast, and the fly lands exactly where it needs to. The leader is perfectly stretched out.



THIS MILL CREEK BROWN TROUT CAME TO HAND IN THE WINTER SEASON AFTER TAKING A MIDGE PATTERN.

Two to three seconds pass and bingo! The fish is on. I very gently retrieve the fish. It's a nice 10-inch brown. I take a picture and release the fish. I adjust and cast to fish rising on the left side of the stream. I target another fish and yes! I hook another. After that fish, I see that the fish are rising on the right side again. I target another fish on the right side and make the cast. Boom! Another nice fish. But that is all. I make more casts to either side, but the fish aren't rising now. I check the time and it's 1:30 pm. This could be the end. So, I get out of the stream, and start walking upstream.

Looking for some more fish rising to

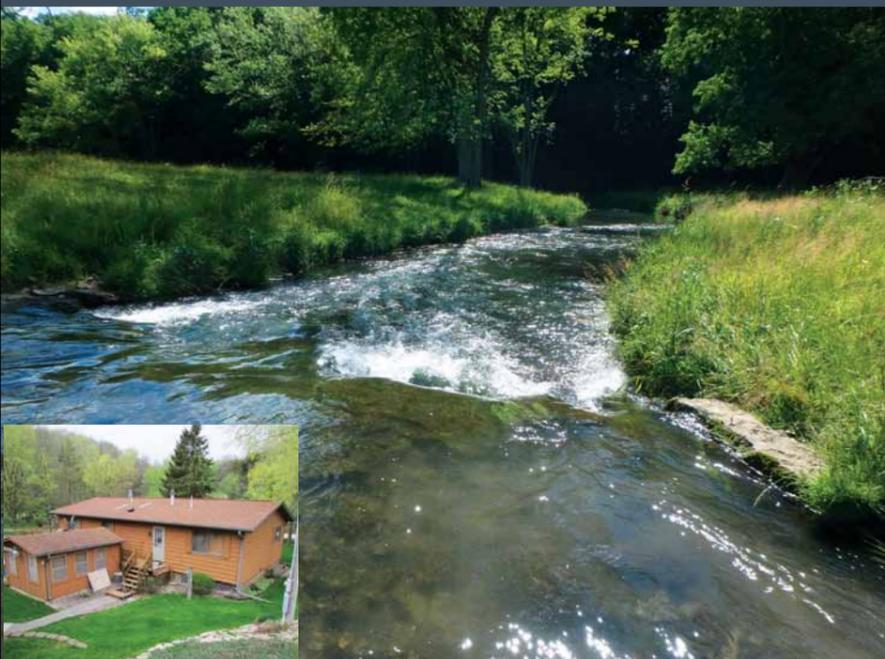


MIDGES, COMMON FORAGE FOR TROUT IN THE WINTER, CAN OFTEN BE FOUND RESTING ON THE SNOW ALONG DRIFTLESS TROUT STREAMS.

midges, I walk about a quarter-mile and see nothing. Just snow with only one set of very old boot tracks. I've pretty much been fishing on a stream no one else has been on for a long time. It's just a standard winter fishing day here in the Southeast. The hatch is over and now it's time to head home. It's been a good day.

*Editor's Note: Carl Berberich is an avid fly angler and a board member of the Hiawatha Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Read more about Mill Creek and the habitat work that MNTU completed on it in the February 2017 edition of Trout Unlimited Minnesota.*

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# INCLUDING MNTU IN YOUR ESTATE PLANNING

Any loss in a family is challenging. It's much easier to delay answering uncomfortable questions such as, "What happens to my assets and my loved ones when I or my partner dies?" So it's no surprise that roughly half of Americans don't have a will, and even fewer have an estate plan. While it is a hard subject to discuss, an estate plan goes much further than a will. Not only does it deal with the distribution of assets and legacy wishes, but it may help you and your heirs pay substantially less in taxes, fees, and court costs, as well as benefit the people and causes that you care about.

Including MNTU in your estate plans not only helps to provide for future programmatic and organizational security, it can take many different forms to balance your financial and philanthropic goals. Drafting these documents may seem like a daunting task at first, until you realize all the good that comes from having them. A gift in your will or living trust lets you make a meaningful gift to MNTU with ease and be flexible in your commitment. You can give cash, specific property

or a percentage of your estate, with restrictions or without. Because your gift doesn't come to MNTU until after your lifetime, you can change your mind at any time. To make sure your will accomplishes your goals according to your wishes, we recommend that you obtain the professional counsel of an attorney who specializes in estate planning. We've included specific bequest language below for usage with individual or estate planning.

#### Bequest Language

The official bequest language for Minnesota Trout Unlimited is:

#### Unrestricted General Legacy:

"I give Minnesota Trout Unlimited, a Minnesota non-profit corporation, presently at 7201 West 78th Street, Suite 207 Bloomington, MN 55439, the sum of (dollar amount)/ or percentage of (\_\_\_%)/ residue of my estate to be used at the discretion of its governing board."

#### Specific:

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ently at 7201 West 78th Street, Suite 207 Bloomington, MN 55439, my (specific personal property item(s) and/or real property located at \_\_\_\_\_) to be used at the discretion of its governing board."

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The information above is not intended as legal or tax advice. For such advice, please consult an attorney or tax advisor. Contact our executive director, John Lenczewski, with any questions, or for assistance with estate planning, using this language or using this process: [jlenczewski@comcast.net](mailto:jlenczewski@comcast.net) or at 612-670-1629.



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Welcome to Minnesota's  
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Photo Credit Brian Schumacher

# EQUIPMENT AND RIGGING FOR STEELHEAD

## Preparing for the Spring Fishing Season

by Jason Swingen

One of the biggest hurdles to overcome when getting into steelheading is picking out the right tools for the job. This is especially true if you are coming from spin fishing, where your rods are easily labeled, from light to heavy, and moderate to fast. Then you decide to get your first fly rod and you are hit with terms like 1-12 weight (power of the rod, or weight of the line), weight-forward (a specific fly line taper), tippet (fancy term for “even more leader”), and strike indicators (an advanced air filled spherical device built to sense underwater activity -- also known as “a bobber”). Fly fishing can be thought of as an over-complicated form of spin fishing, so it is only fitting that the terminology is equally as complex.

Everyone has their own ideas on their favorite brands and styles of fishing gear, but for the most part, the equipment used by 90% of anglers on the North and South Shore is all quite similar. In this article I'll go over rods, reels, line, flies, indicators, nets, and the rest of the gear you should have if you are getting into steelheading, upgrading your current gear, or are looking for a gift for the steelheader in your family!

### Rod

The most popular rod for fishing steelhead on the tributaries of Lake Superior is a 7wt or 8wt, fast action, fly rod. When I first got into fly fishing, I heard that a 5wt is the most versatile fly fishing rod, but didn't realize that they meant for trout and not necessarily for steelhead. You can land steelhead with a standard 5wt fly rod, but it is not easy and is typically not good for the fish to fight it for as long as it takes on such a light rod. On the other hand, a 10wt rod has enough backbone to pull in a hard-fighting steelhead, but when the water clears up you will want to lighten up your line and downsize your hooks, and using a heavy rod is not as forgiving on light tippet.

Fly rods are most commonly found in a 9-foot length. These rods are long enough to allow for mending your line on the water, but short enough to fish smaller sections of rivers. I started with a 9-foot and recently switched to a 10-foot. The extra length makes it slightly more tip heavy, but it allows for better mends and easier high-sticking.

Most anglers don't only fish for one species, and it is not necessary to have a different rod for each one. If you want a rod that will allow you to throw streamers for bass and pike as well as steelhead, you may want to get a 9-foot 8wt. Although, if you mainly fish for steelhead and want an ideal rod for nymphing and possibly swinging flies on the North and South Shore tributaries, I would highly recommend a 10-foot 7wt or even a 11-foot 7wt, switch rod.

You don't necessarily need an expensive rod for steelheading since you are typically fishing in smaller waters and don't need to rely on delicate,



TOP: A FEW KEY SUPPLIES INCLUDING AIRLOCK INDICATORS, STEELHEAD NYMPHS AND A DEPENDABLE PAIR OF WADERS. MIDDLE: ADD SPLIT SHOT ONTO THE TAG END OF YOUR TIPPET-LEADER KNOT TO DECREASE THE CHANCE OF A WEAK SPOT. LEFT: WRAP UP YOUR STEELHEAD RIGS ON A LINDY RIG HOLDER TO HAVE FAST FLY CHANGES IN THE FIELD. RIGHT: A 7 OR 8WT FAST ACTION FLY ROD COMBINED WITH A MATCHING, OR ONE SIZE OVERLINED, REEL IS ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR SETUPS FOR STEELHEAD.

highly accurate casts. A more expensive rod will have higher quality components, will often be lighter, and often have a better warranty. If you are near or are visiting Duluth, the Great Lakes Fly Shop currently has some great rods from Echo and Scott.

### Reel

Simply pair your reel size to your rod weight or go up a size. Most fly reels come in a 5/6, 7/8, or 9/10 sizes, corresponding to the line weight they hold. 7/8 reels are the most common, depending on the size of fly line you are using, but larger reels will take in line faster and can balance out a longer rod better.

Make sure the reel you choose has a good drag system. Steelhead will rip line from your reel and can sometimes get caught in the current and you'll have no choice but to chase them down. Use the money you saved on a rod to buy a nice reel. I

have been using a Redington Behemoth 7/8 Reel and it has been fantastic, offering a large arbor and extremely smooth drag with a large drag dial. A few other good options are the Echo Ion, or the Waterworks Lamson Liquid.

### Line

Choosing the right line can be one of the most complicated decisions when outfitting your rod/reel. There are dozens of brands and each one has hundreds of different combinations of weights, tapers, and buoyancies meant for highly specialized styles of fly fishing. If you are just getting started in steelheading, then getting a weight-forward floating line is going to be your most versatile option. These lines are usually labeled as WF8F (for a Weight Forward 8wt Floating line). There are many lines that are specific for nymphing or indicator fishing that are great options. Just match the line weight to your rod. If your rod is

longer than 9 feet, consider going up a size with your line. The extra line weight helps throw bulky indicator rigs as well as heavy streamers, which are the most common ways to fish for steelhead.

You will also need backing when using fly line. Backing fills up your reel first, so that you can wind in your fly line faster. Backing also allows a fish to strip more line from the reel than just your fly line. 20 to 30 pound backing is ideal. Although steelhead likely won't take you into your backing, it is not worth the risk.

Similar to the somewhat confusing weight system given to rods and line, tippet (the lightweight line at the end of your leader that you tie to your fly) is measured by its diameter instead of its breaking strength. If you buy a tapered steelheading leader it will be labeled by its length and X rating (2X, 3X, etc.), that corresponds to the specific diameter of the thin end. That diameter of a leader

typically falls within a range of breaking strength. A 9-foot 0X tapered nylon leader has roughly 15 pounds of breaking strength at the tip and will work great for many different applications. I prefer to build my own leaders for steelheading that consist of 6 feet of 20 pound mono, and 3 feet of 15-pound fluorocarbon. I tie on a small barrel swivel or tippet ring, then tie on tippet depending on water depth, speed, and clarity. The tippet length and size I use can vary greatly. Generally 2-3 feet of 1X-4X (6-12-pound) fluorocarbon to my point fly, and if I can use a dropper fly, I will tie on roughly 2 feet of tippet from the hook bend of my point fly. Remember to use lighter tippet on your dropper fly, so that if your bottom fly gets snagged, you won't lose both flies.

\*Remember that you can only use one fly on the North Shore of Lake Superior.

### Flies

Compared to trout fishing, selecting flies for steelhead is somewhat simpler, since steelhead aren't in the rivers as long as trout, and there aren't specific hatches that you need to match your flies to. Primarily, steelhead are eating eggs, nymphs, and stoneflies. So load up a box with any combination of glo-bugs, beads, pheasant tails, hare's ears, frenchies, stoneflies, x-legs, wooly buggers, or really anything that looks like a pink or orange fish egg or a bug. I prefer using bright eggs and dark "buggy" nymphs in sizes 6-12.

Other than flies, you'll need two things to nymph effectively. The first is a strike indicator. I have bought every size and style of strike indicator, but I currently I have narrowed it down to two, Airflo Airlock strike indicators (3/4 inch, 1 inch), and Thill ice/fly bobbers. Airlocks are durable, easy to see, easy to adjust

depth, and easy to change between sizes and colors. The only cons are that they are relatively heavy making them harder to roll cast than other strike indicators. Thill bobbers are two-tone color of bright orange and bright chartreuse. This can be extremely helpful when nymphing, because the bobber will lay on its side until your weight and nymph are pulling straight down. This way you can tell exactly when you are fishing the correct depth. The main downside is that you need to string your leader through them, which makes it more difficult to change out to a different size or style of indicator. They also are not as durable as a Thingamabobbers or Airlocks.

The second piece of equipment you'll need is an assortment of split shot. I use round split shot in sizes B, BB, 5, and 7, depending on the water depth and speed, as well as the type of technique you are using. I like to leave a long tag end on the knot connecting my leader to my tippet. I crimp the split shot onto the tag end instead of the leader itself. That way you won't accidentally create a weak point in your line from crimping on split shot.

### Everything Else

That's everything you need to actually catch a steelhead, but if you are completely new to fly fishing you will need a few more things to stay dry, land more fish, and release them healthy, and quickly. These basics include waders/boots, a pack, a net, nippers, hemostats, as well as a fishing license and trout stamp. Just make sure your boots are grippy, your shades are polarized, your hooks are sharp, and your net is big enough to land a giant. Now go catch some steel!

### Rigging Pro-Tip

Pre-rig your dual flies on a Lindy Rig



THE AUTHOR WITH A CHROME STEELHEAD HE CAUGHT THIS FALL.

holder. If you want to change both flies quickly, or you break off both flies, you won't lose precious fishing time re-tying flies. Try a loop-to-loop connection or use a no-knot fast snap to quickly snap onto a tippet ring at the end of your leader.

*Editor's Note: Jason Swingen is a Gitche Gumee Chapter board member and resides in Duluth. Check out his outdoors blog at [www.js-outdoors.com](http://www.js-outdoors.com)*

## SELECT POETRY

By Larry Gavin

### Imagine It

Imagine it a stream that flows from the north somewhere, another state perhaps, and it appears beneath the county bridge suddenly, like a phone call late at night, from someone you once loved, years ago, when those things mattered. It flows still, winding slowly and intimately among the cows and the barbed wire and the switch grass. Imagine its fish are friendly, hugging the bottom in riffles and runs, rising excitedly for hatches as predictable as sunset. Now imagine it all means something with gravity as baseline data and love waiting at the end of facts. Then a stream again, searching out the meaning of words, and geology, and life; truths - as persistent as the steady tug of a fish resisting the inevitable coming to hand.

*Larry Gavin is a poet from Faribault, Minnesota. He is the author of four books of poetry. His fifth, A Fragile Shelter: New and Selected Poems will be available in 2019 from Red Dragonfly Press. [www.reddragonflypress.org](http://www.reddragonflypress.org)*

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# MNTU CHAPTER NEWS

## Gitche Gumee Chapter

The Gitche Gumee chapter is happy to be moving past the dead of winter and into warmer months. February is a time where we start to fantasize about our local steelhead and begin to tie flies to prepare for the spring run.

On January 27, we had another rousing Fly Fishing Film Tour (F3T) event at Clyde Iron Works in Duluth. We had deeply sub-zero temperatures but with nearly 300 attendees and excellent raffle bucket participation, the event was an overwhelming success. The event is a combined effort with the Arrowhead Fly Fishers, and many other local conservation groups are given tabling opportunities. We look forward to this community get-together each year and thank everyone who was able to lend a hand.

Our upcoming meetings are listed below. We hope to see you at one or more of the events this season. Look for summer events to be scheduled soon with outdoor and habitat-related opportunities to come. Always feel free to bring non-TU members to our events, we welcome anyone and everyone.

**February 19** DNR Update from MN & WI fisheries managers. Combined meeting with Arrowhead Fly Fishers. Clyde Iron Works, 7 pm

**March 7** Arrowhead Stream Trout Fishing and Habitat. Learn how TU habitat improvement is done, and where you can fish it around the Northland. Hartley Nature Center, 7 pm

**April 11** State of the Steelhead. Our annual spring steelhead fishing meeting. Hartley Nature Center, 7 pm

**Brent Notbohm**

## Hiawatha Chapter

February 4 we will have Steve Sobieniak, owner of the Root River Rod Co. fly shop in Lanesboro, MN speaking on the subject of fishing bamboo in southeast MN. This event will be held at the Olmsted County History Center located at 1195 W. Circle Dr. Doors open at 6:30 pm, meeting will start at 7:00 pm, with a half-hour educational presentation before.

March 4 will be our next members meeting. TBA

March 13 will be the start to Paul Krolak's introduction to fly fishing class through Rochester Community Ed. It will run through April 10 and be held at Willow Creek Jr. High School. Classes to be held from 7-9 pm Wednesday nights.

March 30 will be the Hiawatha Trout Unlimited (HTU) annual fundraiser film

festival. We will have the Minnesota Trout Unlimited (MNTU) best of fly fishing films of past and present. This event will be held at the Rochester, MN VFW 2775, 43rd street N.W. Doors will open at 6:30 pm and the event will go until 9:00 pm. Please "like" the HTU Facebook page for more details and events. There will be food and beverages, and many raffle prizes. All proceeds stay local.

April 1 member's meeting TBA.

**Phil Pankow**

## Headwaters Chapter

### Restoration Activities

Alder brush removal will continue on the Kabekona River. John Sorsenson, restoration coordinator, several TU members, and fisheries staff have cleared more than a mile of river brush, mostly alder. A beautiful, cleaner, more fishable river is now apparent to both brook trout and the fly fisher. Discussions are on-going for the Straight and Necktie river projects. Stay tuned for more information!

### Trout in the Classroom

All four projects are going well, including the new start up in the Kelliher school district. Steve Young, project coordinator, really appreciated Amber Taylor's (MNTU TIC Supervisor) October visit to our projects, teachers and kids, as well as all of the related educational and coordination work. We also value the new efforts to connect all TIC projects throughout the state as one unified and focused program.

### Headwaters Spring Meeting

Tuesday, March 26, will be our spring meeting at C.K. Dudley's Restaurant in Bemidji, on Old Hwy, 71. This meeting is designed to get us ready and excited about the opening trout and steelhead season. Also, it's our biennial raffle ticket sale; a beautiful 9-foot, 5wt Sage fly rod, two great reels, a custom-made Korbel rod, and more.

### Upcoming events

Our 5th Annual Pike Hunt is June 7-8. Anyone and everyone is welcome. Friday night we tie the Pike Fly, Saturday we coordinate TU guides and boats with fly casters, and Saturday evening we enjoy a delicious, fresh pike fry. Call to get on the list 218-766-7757.

Our fifth grade fly fishing program starts on March 29, 3 pm at the new Gene Dillion School. It will continue for four weeks, every Friday at 3 pm. We need all of our regular TU volunteers plus anyone else that can come and help with fly tying, fly casting, knots and etc. Please call Bob at 218-766-7757.

Fly tying nights continue with three



RECENTLY-ELECTED U.S. SENATOR FROM MINNESOTA, TINA SMITH, CASTING WITH MARLENE HUSTON, HIAWATHA CHAPTER BOARD MEMBER.

nights of the season left: Feb 21, March 7 and March 21. Also, a huge "thank you" to Kris Williams and John Lueth for upgrading our fly tying camera, flat screen and projection setup.

Women's Fly Fishing Retreat, May 31-June 1, offered in Bemidji. Come and learn so you can feel more confident getting out there fishing with your fly rod. More information available in March and at Great Waters Expo.

Mark your calendars for our third annual booth at Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo, March 15-17. It's a great opportunity to volunteer as a fly tying instructor, plus enjoy and learn at the Expo.

**Bob Wagner**

## Twin Cities Chapter

We have a busy habitat schedule for this spring and summer. We have four brush cuttings scheduled, with the first expected on Saturday, March 2 for the South

Branch of the Vermillion. This will be a final cleanup before we start the actual stream restoration this summer. We plan to follow up on Saturday, April 27th. We will need sawyers, sawyer helpers, brush haulers, cooks and a volunteer to haul the trailer for each event. Watch [www.twincitiestu.org](http://www.twincitiestu.org) and Facebook pages for exact dates, times and locations. Email Tony Nelson at [Tony@ligprint.com](mailto:Tony@ligprint.com) with questions or to volunteer.

A new volunteer opportunity will be to help on in-stream restoration work on the South Branch of the Vermillion this summer. We will need volunteers to work in the stream, lashing down red cedar trees to the banks of the creek. These trees will act to trap sediment, and over time, will work to narrow and deepen the stream. Exposed cobble allows for increased bug life, more habitat for trout, and better trout reproduction. This will take a number of days and most will be weekdays. Waders will be needed and we will have a few sets available for those who will need to borrow them. We ask that volunteers be 18 or older due to the presence of heavy machinery. More

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# MNTU CHAPTER NEWS



information will become available on our website as the dates approach. Be sure to watch for it.

**Stream Restorations:** Help us as MNTU explores new project options for future seasons. Never done it before? No experience necessary. Become a part of the team and come along as we do the initial stream walks with the MNDNR, county extension agents, or private landowners as we work together to discuss how best to help our streams. Next, MNTU hires an engineering company through a bidding process. Once chosen, we do additional walks to explore the actions needed to rehabilitate the stream and its banks. Once the plans are finalized, MNTU goes through a separate bidding process to hire the contractor. When the project begins, there are opportunities for involvement as the project advances.

**Brush Cut Days:** We need a small group of people to run these days as they come along. These volunteers will take calls or emails and establish the volunteer roles. On the brush cut day, you would greet the troops, distribute the tools, and work with the DNR staff and their needs. Afterwards you pack up the trailer, get it returned to our storage facility and send a list of names and the insurance release forms to the Habitat Manager. One person can do it, but several would be better. I hope to get four to six people who can help when they can.

**Parsnip Spray Team:** We have a certified "spray boss" to work with volunteers to spray wild parsnip along our streams. We need four people each day, but a larger group would allow us to cover those dates more easily. This would be a few spring days with most in the fall. He will train you in plant ID, safety protocols with the chemicals, and spraying techniques. You can email Tony Nelson at [Tony@ligprint.com](mailto:Tony@ligprint.com) to get on the list. We also need a group of about four people who will volunteer to

haul our work trailer to our project sites on these work days. It is a fairly small trailer with a 2-inch ball hitch. The furthest distance would be from Farmington to Hay Creek. Most days will be at the Vermillion River or Eagle Creek in Savage. The chapter offers to pay mileage, but I am asking for volunteers who will do it for free so we can use our funds to restore our streams.

**Stream Keepers:** We need volunteers to fish our streams and to inspect them as you go. If you see a branch in the water, pull it out. If there is whole tree down, email Tony Nelson to arrange for a work crew. If there is bare spot on the bank that will erode, we will give you prairie seed to plant. If there is a bigger problem, again email Tony, or call those on the stream keeper list for that creek to work as a group to solve the issue. We assign each volunteer a mile or less on whichever stream you choose, and you can partner with a friend if you wish. We also need stream keeper managers to oversee the volunteers for specific streams.

They are your streams. Here is your chance to make a difference and to be an active part of the TCTU membership. Be involved one day or as many days as you choose. Make it a family project and involve your kids on the science of what it takes to support a trout stream. Any and all volunteers can contact Tony Nelson by e-mail at [Tony@ligprint.com](mailto:Tony@ligprint.com).

Tony Nelson

## Win-Cres Chapter

There has been a lot going on in the Driftless Region. Unfortunately, not much of it involves fish on the end of a line.

**Agribusiness:** Two large feedlots have been proposed for our area. One of

them, Catalpa Ag, was denied a permit by the MPCA. It is likely that they will reapply for a different type of permit. The second, Daley Farms, was granted a permit by the MPCA, despite similar geological and environmental concerns. The next hurdle for the Daley proposal is Winona County. The county currently has an animal unit cap of 1,500. The Daley Farms are currently exceeding the cap, having been grandfathered in at a larger number. Their proposal, however, is to increase their animal units by 3000 cows, to 5,968 animal units, four times the current cap. This herd would generate 46 million gallons of manure and wastewater annually.

Win-Cres members have been vocal opponents of these proposals, attending meetings and writing letters. We appreciate any support that TU members can offer to protect our aquifers and fisheries. Letters should go to the Winona

County Planning Commission.

**Outreach/Engaging Youth:** Win-Cres members, led by Marlene Huston, are teaching fly casting through Winona Area Public Schools' Community Education. Another group will be teaching fly tying to Winona Middle School students during February. Eggs from the Trout in the Classroom program are incubating in another Winona classroom. In March and April, we will be working with the Goodhue fishing club.

**Fishing:** As I write this, it is 15 degrees below zero. No one is fishing. However, a few members have gone out on milder days, catching fish on nymphs and lucking into an occasional early-afternoon midge hatch. Better days are coming.

Chuck Shepard

## Save the Date:

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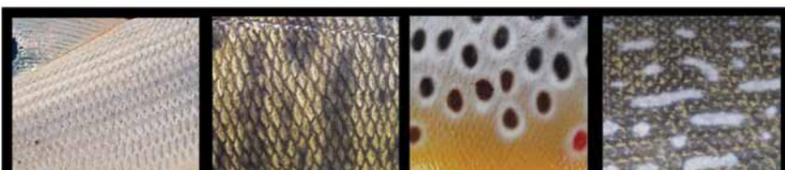
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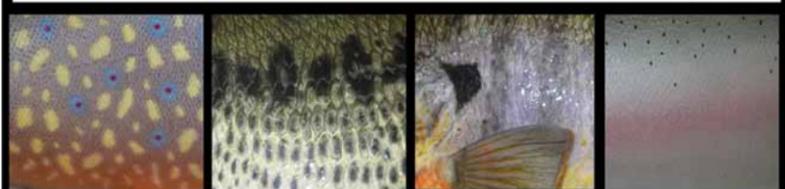
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## REELING IT IN

### A Little Boy

By Richard Schissel

As a young boy I spent summers at a lake, fishing with worms for bait, hooking sunnies and crappies. Years later, I learned the art and skill of fly fishing. The pure joy of standing in a stream on a perfect afternoon casting to trout seemed beyond any other pleasure.

Such a day occurred years later while fishing with an old friend, Mike Hipps, when we spent a beautiful spring afternoon on one of our favorite streams in western Wisconsin. We were fishing for brown trout with blue wing dry flies through the nicest time of the day.

On leaving the stream and emerging from the woods, we approached our car, parked next to the bridge that spanned the stream.

We saw a father and son standing on the bridge. The father standing by his son was not fishing, but his son was. He was perhaps five years old and stood with one foot placed up on the raised edge of the concrete structure like a man would.

In his hand was a small fishing pole which he held over the water, obviously fishing. The boy turned to me as I approached them and in a clear voice asked me if I had caught any fish. I replied, "A few." He then asked what I had caught them on. I walked over to show him the

size 22 blue wing olive dry fly tied to my tippet. I told him it was a dry fly. He looked at the fly and said softly, "Gee." I then broke the fly off my line and offered it to him. He opened his small hand and I placed it carefully in his palm. He closed his hand over it and said thanks.

The father looked on as Mike and I returned to our car, sitting at the open back door of my old station wagon and removing our boots and waders. Shortly, the boy and his father returned to their car, and as I was pulling off my waders, the boy began walking toward me, holding his small tackle box in his hands. As he approached, he opened the tackle box, which had four small compartments, three of which were full of numerous spinners and hooks of all colors and sizes. The fourth compartment was empty except for the little fly I had given him. He held in his hand a black-feathered Mepps spinner with a treble hook, which he held up and offered to me, saying that it had caught more than a thousand fish. I responded that I couldn't possibly take his spinner, but he insisted, and by this time, his father had walked up and said his son wanted me to have it. I accepted the offering and thanked him. He closed his tackle box. He and his father walked to their car, and drove away.

I still have that spinner hanging on a hook on my fly tying desk.

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