

TROUT UNLIMITED MINNESOTA

The Official Publication of Minnesota Trout Unlimited - June 2024



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MNTU ADVOCACY IN ACTION

FLY TYING: THE STOP & GO SOFT HACKLE

SPRING HABITAT UPDATE

STREAMER FISHING FOR BEGINNERS

COASTER BROOK TROUT RESEARCH

MILL CREEK WORK DAY

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EDITOR’S ANGLE
 CELEBRATING OUR HARD WORK

By Jade Thomason, Editor

In Minnesota, a fondness for brook trout isn't complicated. Native, beautiful, tenacious and resilient, brook trout are easy to love. There's exciting research afoot on Minnesota's only native salmonid, and room for you to get involved. Nick Peterson of the MNDNR is leading a fascinating study on brook trout genetics, attempting to elucidate the connection between populations above and below barriers on Lake Superior tributaries. A tiny clip of fin provided by you could help settle the debate of whether magnificent coaster brook trout are genetically the same as the resident jewels plying our alder-lined headwaters. Read more on Page 15, and, at a minimum, look forward to reading exciting results in the future.

There are so many ways to get involved this coming season. Across the pages of this newsletter are photos of volunteers building lunger structures, tying flies

with kids, picking up trash, making a difference for cancer patients and planting trees. Others are recognized for financial donations, funding important education and advocacy. The last few pages have columns from chapter leaders; they guide their regions in coldwater conservation, forging communities of loud voices, stream stewards, new anglers and advocates.

Indeed, well over half of the articles in this newsletter are written by dedicated volunteers, and some writers have been providing content for over a decade. This issue marks five years for me as volunteer editor of this publication and I've found it to be a fulfilling, meaningful commitment. Of course this paper is delivered directly to MNTU members, but it also winds its way through the community, finding new readers. The newsletter aims to highlight what TU volunteers, employees and contractors



are accomplishing across the state. It's an astonishing amount of work and I'm proud to showcase it. There is a sense of satisfaction to be found in these pursuits, and the knowledge that you are making a difference for conservation in Minnesota.



STUDENTS RELEASED THEIR YOUNG TROUT ACROSS MN THIS SPRING. READ MORE ON PAGE 10.

ON THE COVER

A large coaster brook trout from Minnesota's North Shore. Read about how to assist with brook trout research on Page 15. Scott Thorpe photo.

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THE MONTHLY CAST
 NEWSLETTER

PROTECT - RESTORE - SUSTAIN

DON'T MISS OUT ON OUR ENEWS, THE MONTHLY CAST, DELIVERED TO YOUR INBOX!

MNTU.ORG/MONTHLY-ENEWS

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

BRIGHT SPOTS FROM THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION

By John Lenczewski, MNTU Executive Director

As is the case in most years, the 2024 legislative session produced mixed results for clean water and coldwater fisheries. Some good policy was passed, some very good policy could not clear every hurdle, and some bad ideas were stopped by the combined efforts of many partners and enlightened legislators. Some of the outcomes are reported elsewhere in this newsletter on Page 4. But a few successes deserve an extra word or two.

One outcome that will prove to be very significant for trout streams and water quality is the provision confirming that every public water that meets the statutory definition will be protected, whether or not it was included on early error-prone maps. On top of this, \$1 million per year was appropriated to the DNR to systematically update the public water inventory and maps. This will ensure protections for small, but vital, headwaters streams. We have many legislators to thank for this good policy, but special thanks is due to House Environment Committee Chair Rick Hansen.

Another victory for trout streams was the passage of the 2024 Legacy Budget

Bill containing \$2.9 million in appropriations for Minnesota Trout Unlimited to undertake additional trout habitat work around the state. The law, signed by Governor Walz, contains these provisions of special importance for MNTU's habitat restoration program:

1. \$2,308,000 for MNTU to undertake numerous habitat projects around the state in the next several years, including Rice Creek, Mill Creek, Stoney Brook, Sucker Creek, Keene Creek, the Little Cannon River and more
2. \$612,000 for Phase 2 of our Heritage Brook Trout program, including funds for construction of the Maple Creek project this summer

This outcome is the culmination of 16 months of work by MNTU staff. From discussions of project ideas with DNR Area Fisheries Offices and local chapters in winter 2023, to proposal drafting, presentation to the Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council, and quietly working with the council and legislators to successfully navigate the legislative appropriations process. None of this would be possible without the unrestricted dona-



tions of members and supporters. Their faithful support is making the restoration of miles of Minnesota trout waters possible. The names of many of MNTU's larger donors are listed in this issue. Please thank them for their support when you run into them.

MINNESOTA COUNCIL UPDATE

IMPORTANT INITIATIVES

By Brent Notbohm, Minnesota Council of TU Chair

It's springtime in Minnesota, which means everything is biting—brown trout, lake trout, steelhead, mosquitoes, black flies—you name it. If you're a fly fishing fanatic like me, then the months of April, May, and June are your favorites. They're also busy months for Minnesota Trout Unlimited with the legislative session wrapping up and the Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund deadline both in late May. Since college professing is my day job, it's also my busiest time of the year personally, working with students on their final projects, grading papers and exams, etc. In fact, I'm writing this having just submitted the last of my grades for the spring semester. "Work hard, play hard" tends to be my motto during the springtime.

Speaking of work, we accomplished several important initiatives at MNTU's April Board of Directors meeting in Lewiston, MN. My thanks to the Win-Cres Chapter for generously hosting, and particularly Mark Reisetter for guiding me to some trout after the meeting (which he documented on MNTU's Facebook page to my utter embarrassment).

If you've read this column over the last few years, then you know it's been a time of change for MNTU. We are well past the halfway mark of a four-year strategic plan designed to transform MNTU into the leading coldwater conservation organization in the state. New staff have been hired, new committees formed, and a host of new initiatives have been acti-

vated. I'm so incredibly thankful to all those who have contributed their ideas, expertise, and time to this exciting work. In a changing organization, unexpected issues arise no matter how much one plans and anticipates. One such issue is clarifying the relationship between our professional staff and the six volunteer-led Board of Directors committees: Advocacy Advisory, Habitat Advisory, Inclusivity and Diversity, Education, Communication, and Fundraising. After much discussion, we determined that committees will now be convened by one of MNTU's professional staff, but still be run by our dedicated volunteers. We hope this will unite staff and members around the important work of each committee and help with the scheduling and administration of the meetings themselves. As always, if you're interested in joining a committee, please let myself or your chapter president know.

We also passed a couple of key initiatives at the April board meeting that fortify MNTU's highly successful Education Program. The first is a new sustaining fund dedicated exclusively to the Education Program. This fund is part of a broader initiative intended to ensure funding for our Trout in the Classroom program long-term. The second is a new management plan to guide our Education Program moving forward. I'm pleased to announce that as part of this plan, MNTU's Assistant Director Kristen Poppleton will now provide executive management of the Education Program, including supervision of and



collaboration with our amazing Education Program Supervisor Amber Taylor. Kristen has many years of experience running environmental education programs and will provide terrific leadership to ours. My thanks to TCTU President Bob Luck, Headwaters President Kris Williams, and the entire Education Committee for all their work on these important education initiatives.

Spring is a busy season for MNTU! It is also a great time to go fishing in Minnesota and enjoy the fruits of our labor! I hope you all find time in your busy lives to get out and catch some fish! That is, after all, what motivates so much of us who care about the mission and work of Minnesota Trout Unlimited.



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MNTU ADVOCACY IN ACTION

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE MN LEGISLATURE THIS SPRING?

By Kristen Poppleton, MNTU Assistant Director

The 2024 legislative session opened February 12 and ended May 20. Some good policy passed and some did not. Here is a breakdown of session outcomes.

How did we select our priority issues?

MNTU adopted an Advocacy Plan in January that sets forth a framework to analyze and prioritize natural resource and policy issues, and allocate organizational resources to best address those priority issues and other issues of concern. The framework identifies three categories including priority issues, partner-led issues, and issues of concern.

Priority Issues

Using our Advocacy Plan Framework and input from members and staff, MNTU's Advocacy Committee identified priority issues. This year's priorities include:

Preventing Fish Kills

This is an overarching goal of MNTU in response to a troubling series of fish kill events over the last decade. Threats to coldwater fisheries come in the form of many different toxins that make their way into our streams. Recent fish kills in southeast MN have been traced back to runoff from feedlot operations and agricultural practices.

Feedlot Impacts

Livestock feedlot operations can pollute both surface waters and groundwater. When manure is applied and there is a sudden rainfall event, the manure washes directly into streams leading to rapid oxygen depletion and fish kills. Fish kills must be addressed through effective manure management including:

- Assessment of the density of feedlot operations within each watershed
- Manure spreading rules and setback requirements (from sinkholes, streams, and steep slopes)
- Assessment of the adequacy (or failure) of inspections and enforcement of manure storage requirements on siting and capacity

Agricultural Runoff (including pesticides & fungicides)

Runoff from tilled fields can carry chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Agricultural runoff containing nitrates and pesticides must be addressed through actions including:

- Practices to retain or slow runoff, increase infiltration, reduce fertilizer and pesticide use, and reduce erosion
- Regulation of treated seeds and eliminating the use of neonicotinoid insecticides

Legislation on Priority Issues

The legislative session is like a big funnel. It begins with a wide array of ideas, proposals, and interests. As time progresses, various factors such as public interest, political influence, and



STREAMS IN THE DRIFTLESS REGION IN OF MINNESOTA ARE MOST VULNERABLE TO THE IMPACTS OF AGRICULTURAL RUNOFF, INCLUDING POOR MANURE MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES, AND WILL BENEFIT GREATLY FROM SOME OF THE PROVISIONS PASSED IN THE LEGISLATURE THIS SESSION. MICHAEL MELFORD PHOTO.

legislative scrutiny help narrow down these ideas into more focused and refined policies or laws. It's a process of sifting through the multitude of possibilities to distill them into the most viable and impactful solutions.

This session kicked off with several opportunities to address our identified priority issues through the introduction of bills whose outcomes would significantly impact the water quality of trout streams. Significant bills we supported included:

Feedlots

- Providing \$2 million in funding for Manure Management grants for small farms—those with fewer than 1,000 animal units—to better protect groundwater and reduce greenhouse gasses
- Requiring a mandatory environmental impact statement for the largest feedlots—those proposing operations with more than 10,000 animal units

Agricultural Runoff

- Legislation that supported sustainable agriculture practices such as perennial cover crops
- Prohibiting the sale of seeds treated with neonicotinoid pesticides for non-agricultural uses, helping to reduce exposure of people and wildlife to these pesticides
- Requiring state agencies to report their nitrogen fertilizer purchases and identify strategies to reduce the amount of nitrogen fertilizer the state uses by 25% from the initial reported total

Related Issue:

- Clarifying the existing definition of

“public waters,” rather than error-prone inventory maps from the early 1980s. In 2022, the Minnesota Supreme Court ruled that the statutory definition of public waters applied to protect a stream, not an old inventory map. It asked the legislature to clarify things to prevent more lawsuits.

To move these priority issues along in the legislature, we worked with partners and individual legislators to identify the best times for letters, testimony, media coverage, and days of action at the state capitol.

What passed, what didn't, and why does it matter?

We were pleased with the response to our calls for action during this legislative session! Many thanks to those of you that attended our webinar on Preventing Fish Kills, submitted letters to your representative and/or senator and shared the opportunity to act on Instagram or Facebook. In part because of your advocacy,

we were able to pass several important measures that will have a direct positive impact on our coldwater fisheries. While it is disappointing to see some important provisions dropped, we know that it can often take years of persistence to elevate an issue and garner the support needed on both sides of the aisle.

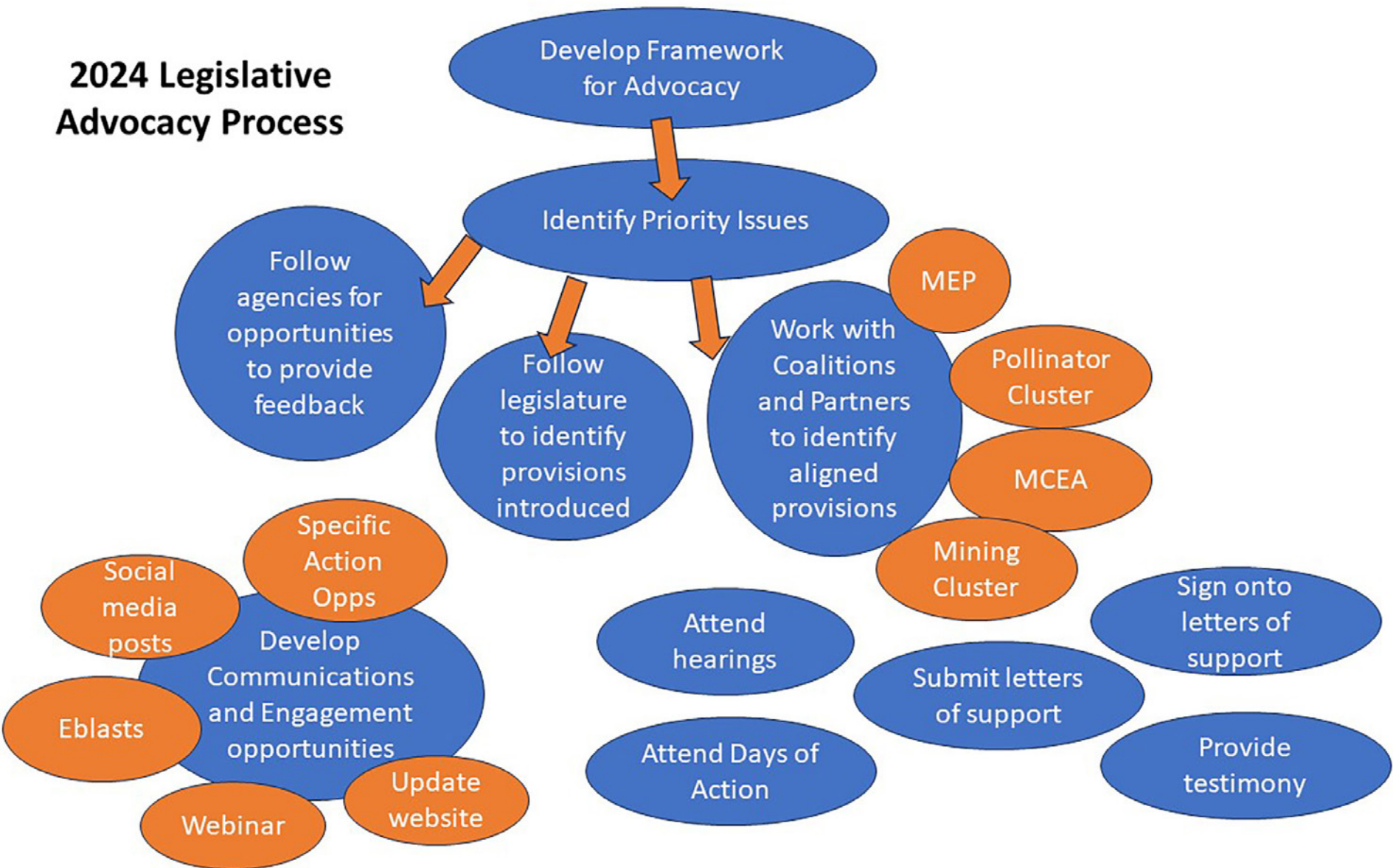
The manure management grant program was included in the final bill but funded at a lower level than we hoped. \$850,000 was appropriated to the Board of Water and Soil Resources for this grant program. The bill provision states that these dollars can be used as a match for federal funding.

The manure management grant program is a significant opportunity to prevent fish kills in southeastern Minnesota. In fact, expanding manure storage was one of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's top recommendations in the *Preventing fish kills in Minnesota's driftless region* report put out by the MPCA,



CLARIFICATION OF THE DEFINITION OF "PUBLIC WATERS" WAS INCLUDED IN FINAL LEGISLATION, ENSURING FUTURE PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE HEADWATERS TROUT STREAMS.

2024 Legislative Advocacy Process



MN Department of Agriculture, Health, and Natural Resources earlier this year. Feedlots with over 1,000 animal units require permits that mandate nine months of manure storage, while those with less than 1,000 animal units have no manure storage requirements. Over 90% of the more than 2,600 feedlots in southeastern Minnesota have fewer than 1,000 animal units. This grant program will make it possible for smaller farms to develop manure management and storage systems in the part of our state with the most vulnerable groundwater areas.

Manure storage facilities are critical infrastructure as they give farmers the ability to store manure rather than applying it to fields when rain is imminent. The application of excess manure on fields before heavy rainfall events is a major cause of fish kills. The state funds made available through this bill could be leveraged to apply for a federal match program. The state agencies intend to apply through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) to effectively double the dollars available to assist small farmers. These funds are available for other practices that contribute to climate change mitigation.

The requirement of a mandatory environmental impact statement (EIS) for all proposed feedlots of 10,000 animal units or more was dropped. The proposal to automatically require an EIS be prepared for every proposed feedlot of 10,000 animal units or more did become law. However, existing law contains a mechanism for having an EIS ordered on a case-by-case basis. Getting a discretionary EIS ordered (versus the automatic or “mandatory” EIS sought) takes vigilance by citizens and organizations. The opportunity to comment and request a full-blown EIS typically comes as part of public comment on the lower level of review, and Environmental Assessment Worksheet. MNTU will keep tabs on the EQB Monitor, where the Environmental Quality Board posts notices of all projects undergoing environmental review.

The requirement that state agencies report nitrogen fertilizer use and identify reduction strategies was included in the final bill. The legislature established a goal to reduce the purchase of nitrogen fertilizer by the State of Minnesota by 25% between February 1, 2025, and January 1, 2030, while this fertilizer reduction only applies to state lands, it

is a step forward in reducing nitrate pollution. According to the MPCA, more than 70% of nitrate pollution in Minnesota—89% in southeastern Minnesota alone—is caused by commercial fertilizer and manure application. Nitrates can have significant impacts on our trout streams, reducing the size and potential survival of trout populations. Increased nitrates in streams can lead to decreased suitability of habitat (especially for spawning and nursery areas), stress adult fish which can make them more susceptible to disease and impact their reproductive success, and have been shown to decrease the number of aquatic insects available as a trout food.

Provisions regarding neonicotinoid-treated seeds were dropped. Opposition by agricultural lobbyists to any regulation of neonicotinoids remains strong. Without legislation in place to prohibit the use of neonicotinoid-coated seeds, it is up to us as consumers to be informed and “vote with our pocketbooks.” This legislation is sure to be reintroduced in the future, as the devastating impact of neonicotinoids on our insect populations has been and continues to be documented.

Clarification of the “Public Waters” definition was included in the final bill. However, it does not become effective for three years. In addition, \$1 million per year was appropriated to the DNR to update the public waters inventory to address errors and omissions in the 1980s era list and maps. The DNR has been foot-dragging on this task since the buffer law was passed in 2016. Minnesota regulates lakes and streams based upon whether they are “public waters” or not. The passage of the buffer law in 2016 drew attention to the public waters inventory and associated maps that the DNR developed in the early 1980s. Some waterways were overlooked at the time, many of which are small trout streams, and some procedural errors (notice to landowners) were made. The DNR was to update the lists and maps but has done nothing. Those who want to ditch streams oppose correcting the list/maps and have sued, claiming regulators must ignore the definition in law and consider only the erroneous maps. State courts have upheld the definition and asked the legislature to clarify that the definition, rather than the maps, dictates inclusion so that costly lawsuits are avoided.

The new law clarifies that the statutory definition dictates whether or not something is classified as “Public Waters.” Importantly, it also includes \$1 million per year to the MNDNR for it to systematically update the list and maps, county by county.

What’s Next
This summer MNTU will reflect on this past session and develop a strategy for 2025. Outside of the legislative session there continue to be a few opportunities to advocate for important measures through other avenues, including providing feedback to the agencies on feedlot permits. Stay tuned this fall for a new slate of opportunities to engage in action to protect, conserve and sustain cold-water fisheries and their watersheds.



BE THE FIRST TO KNOW ABOUT VOLUNTEER AND/OR ACTION OPPORTUNITIES. SIGN UP FOR OUR ALERTS!
MNTU.ORG/MONTHLY-ENEWS

It seems that I start almost every article with the phrase, “this is one of my favorite flies.” I guess maybe they all are?

The Stop & Go was created by local legend Randy Lage. Why is it called the Stop & Go? That is because it is red and green, just like a stop light. So no, it is not a Christmas fly.

I was introduced to this pattern by Randy after I joined the Laughing Trout Fly Ty-ing Club. Randy created the fly to fish the South Branch of the Whitewater when it is off-color. I have only made a couple very minor changes to the fly from the way Randy was tying them. I use Ho-lographic Green Tinsel for the body. Peacock-colored Superbright Dubbing for the thorax and I use red tying thread with a thin coating of UV resin for some extra shine.

The fly was designed to be fished as you would any soft hackle: by swinging it down and across. However, I do not fish it that way. I use it as a second fly below a weighted nymph or as a dropper under

Materials List	
Hook:	Scud Hook
	Size 14 - 18
Thread:	14/0 or 8/0 Red
Rib:	Red Wire
	Size Brassie
Abdomen:	Green Holographic Tinsel
Thorax:	Peacock Dubbing
Collar:	Hungarian Partridge

a dry fly. This fly seems to consistently catch fish from early spring until late into the fall.

It took a couple months of being in Laughing Trout before Randy shared his pattern with me. However, he did not want me sharing the pattern with others outside of the group. Over the last several years, it has become my favorite soft hackle. I have even convinced Randy that it is too good a fly not to share with others. Thanks Randy for all the help



you have given me and many others over the years. You are one of a kind!

You should give this fly a try. I think that you might like it.

As always, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me:

Paul Johnson
paulwaconia@gmail.com



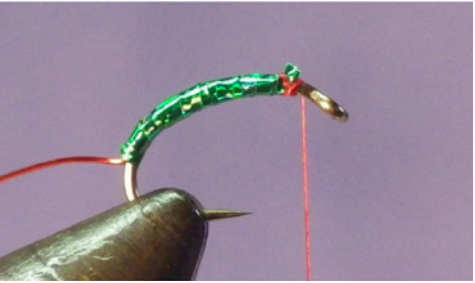
Step 1.
Start your tying thread at the 3/4 point. Wrap a smooth thread base half way down the bend of the hook.



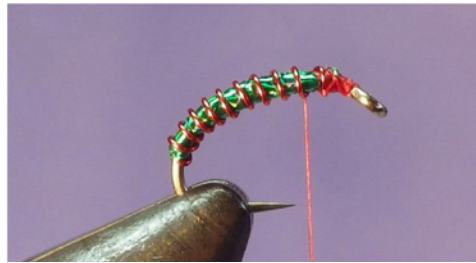
Step 2.
Tie in a length of wire.



Step 3.
Tie in a length of tinsel.



Step 4.
Wrap the tinsel forward with slightly overlapping turns to the 3/4 point on the hook.



Step 5.
Counter-wrap the wire forward with evenly-spaced wraps. The wire wraps should be a little closer than you would use on a typical fly.



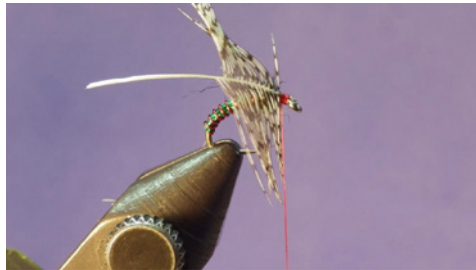
Step 6.
Form a small dubbing noodle on your thread with the peacock dubbing.



Step 7.
Form a small dubbing ball right at the 3/4 point on the hook. This small ball is to help keep the partridge collar out and away from the body of the fly.



Step 8.
Prepare partridge feather by pulling off the fuzzy fibers from base of the feather. Grab just the tip of the feather and pull down the fibers on both sides.



Step 9.
Tie in the feather by the tip just in front of the dubbing ball.



Step 10.
Make two or three turns of the partridge feather. You will want to be careful with the first wrap not to break the feather. Secure with your tying thread. Clip the excess. Whip finish.



TOM CARPENTER PHOTO.

REEL RECOVERY IS LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD MEN

PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR MEN WITH CANCER

By Bruce Maher

This September, Reel Recovery will be hosting another Midwest retreat in the Wisconsin Driftless Area for men living with cancer. Tom Sather from the WI Clearwaters Chapter, and Bruce Maher and Scott Wagner from the WI Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter are teaming up to host a Reel Recovery Retreat at the Oxbow Hotel, Eau Claire, WI from September 4-6, 2024.

Reel Recovery is a national non-profit organization that conducts fly fishing retreats for men living with cancer. Reel Recovery's mission is to help men in the recovery process by sharing with them the healing powers of the sport of fly fishing, while providing a safe, supportive environment to explore their personal experiences with cancer, with others who share their stories. Retreats are offered at no cost to the participants and are led by professional facilitators and expert fly fishing instructors. Reel Recovery provides all meals, lodging and fly fishing equipment, and no previous fishing experience is required. Reel Recovery's overarching goal is to improve the lives of the men it serves.

Though only a few days in duration, a Reel Recovery Retreat can be a life-changing event for these men. The Retreats provide male cancer patients with information, education and a network of support that will help them as they proceed through their cancer treatment and/or recovery. Retreat leaders provide participants an opportunity to gain new



REEL RECOVERY PROVIDES FLY FISHING RETREATS FOR MEN LIVING WITH CANCER. CONTACT THE ORGANIZATION TO VOLUNTEER OR ATTEND A RETREAT.

insights about living with cancer, about managing their disease and about coping with the psychological, social and emotional aspects of having cancer.

By sharing their stories with others who have gone through a variety of experiences, retreat participants learn about treatment options, navigating the healthcare system, dealing with insurance issues, facing mortality, coping with stressful family and work-related situations—in sum the whole gamut of experiences

that life with cancer entails. By learning from others in similar situations, retreat participants can gain a fresh perspective about their disease and renewed hope about fighting and surviving it.

Trout Unlimited members living with cancer are encouraged to sign up to participate in a Reel Recovery retreat, and to encourage men they know who to learn more about Reel Recovery. Trout Unlimited members are also encouraged to consider volunteering as a Fishing

Buddy for future Reel Recovery Retreats.

Fishing Buddies pair up one-on-one with retreat participants to support and mentor them during the fly fishing sessions of the retreat.

For more information about signing up as a retreat participant, or volunteering for future retreats, contact Reel Recovery at info@reelrecovery.org or call 800-699-4490.

REMEMBERING MARTY STEITZ

A LONG-TIME CONSERVATIONIST

By Jim Steitz

Longtime TU supporter Marty Steitz died while scuba diving March 18, near Andros Island in the Bahamas. Marty cherished the marine aquatic world as well as the freshwater, and enjoyed his last moments amid one of Earth's living treasures, a coral reef. His love for fishing and aquatic ecosystems dates back as far as his sons can remember, including family vacations to lakes in the Canadian boreal, and anecdotes of less inspiring college field trips, collecting from the degraded remnants of suburban Chicago streams. In the early '90s, Marty dove into the art and science of restoring native prairie and savanna on a county-owned forest preserve, a project that now sustains several hundred acres of America's most endangered biome and inspired similar efforts across the Chicago region.

In 1995, Marty and family moved to Utah, where he fell in love with western salmonids, their soul-nurturing mountain streams, and their intertwined history through Pleistocene climate and geology. He devoured knowledge about fly fishing, fish runs, insect hatches, and flies with the zeal

of a convert. He served as a volunteer and board member of the High Uintas Preservation Council on behalf of Utah's greatest alpine ecosystem, and cut his teeth in political advocacy on behalf of wild places and wild creatures throughout a state deeply imperiled by extractive interests and short-term ideologies.

Marty moved to the Twin Cities in 2000 with wife Anne and son John. (Son Jim remained in Utah for a degree in environmental science at Utah State University.) Marty continued his advocacy and fly fishing passion for our freshwater ecosystems in Minnesota. He remained a sharp voice in the ears and mailboxes of government officials, particularly those inclined to sacrifice a trout stream for a copper mine. He crammed more activism and fishing fun into the calendar than any human can expect in our attention-starved world, making sure to share his piscine exploits with his sons. He made friends among wild creatures and their human stewards with a humor, benevolence, and generosity from which we can all learn. So long as the trout are biting, with a helping hand from their human guardians, Marty lives as an eternal ripple on that infinite stream.



MILL CREEK WORK DAY

POWERED BY VOLUNTEERS

By John Weiss

CHATFIELD - Todd Christenson had time before a Trout Unlimited work project April 20, so he walked over to Mill Creek to see what it looked like before a major habitat improvement project set to begin in a month.

He wasn't impressed.

"It needed some improvements because of its high eroded banks and the oxbow getting bypassed," said the member of Hiawatha TU. "A lot of silty sand sediment. Not good fish habitat."

But even as he checked out the stream that flows through Chatfield and enters the North Branch of the Root River, he could hear change—Heath Gerard of Barth Construction, which will do the work, was chainsawing thick wooden beams to be used to make seven lunker structures that will provide deep cover for fish in the 2,274 feet of improved stream. Christenson and 12 other Hiawatha members gathered on that cold, windy morning to lift, drill, hammer and drive in large screws to make the heavy structures. Along with them was Jennifer Biederman, TU habitat director, and Gerard.

Interestingly, many of the volunteers weren't ones usually seen at Hiawatha meetings.

Marty Johnson of Harmony said he saw a notice about the work project in an email. "Thought I would help out," he said. "I like projects like these."

Wayne Weber of Kasson said he likes projects instead of having to speak out. "I like to work on this kind of stuff as opposed to the advocacy kind of stuff. I'm kind of shy," he said.

Ken Granle of Mantorville wore a mask to keep warm in the biting wind. He came with his buddy Greg Goodnow, a regular volunteer. "We decided to come, rain or shine," he said. "We're going to go fishing afterwards." Unlike some who decided it was too cold to tie a decent knot (me included), they did fish. "The wind was not as bad down in the valley," Goodnow said. "Ken did very well and I had a new set up that did not do well."

Then there was Richard Fetterly who lives well west of Rochester. "I don't get to a lot of activities because it's a 50-mile drive so much of the time," he said. "I don't feel the carbon cost justifies my traveling that far." But this had the double attraction of helping and fishing.

Christenson of Rochester said he came because he's part of TU and "wanted to do more to help the trout habitat and the volunteer activities." He fishes about once a week and enjoys habitat improvement so he liked helping to create something for a project.

He wasn't alone in his assessment of what Mill looked like.

"Biologically, it's as close to a



VOLUNTEERS HEAVE A LUNKER STRUCTURE TO BE INSTALLED IN MILL CREEK. THESE PROVIDE DEEP COVER FOR FISH, AS WELL AS ADDED STREAMBANK STABILITY.

desert as it could be in certain sections of the stream where it's just sand and silt," Biederman said. "I don't see a ton of fish down there." She believes that "if you would go in there and look for aquatic invertebrate life you would probably find a very small diversity and low abundance ... there is very, very, very little habitat for aquatic invertebrates."

The project will complete work on Mill, which winds through Chatfield and well above it; much of the upper part had similar projects done in the past.

Minnesota Trout Unlimited uses "a competitive bidding process approved by the State to select both design/oversight firms and construction contractors. MNTU contracts with each firm, pays the invoices, and later seeks reimbursement from the State per the OHF (Outdoor Heritage Fund) grant agreement," Biederman said. "The environmental design firm does a pre-project survey, design work, permitting, and construction oversight. MNTU and the MNDNR may assist the design firm with construction oversight depending on the project. The MNDNR participates in the design walks and design review. Minnesota Trout Unlimited manages all aspects of contracting and project management."

Besides Mill this year, MNTU has also started working on nearby Rice Creek, which will get about 5,200 feet of work done, Mill, then 3,100 feet of Mazeppa Creek in June and, finally, Maple Creek near Choice, 3,500 feet within a state wildlife management area. That project will start in late June or early July.

Dusty Hoffman, a Department of Natural Resources stream habitat specialist, said the Mill Creek project will be typical of many others in the past decade or so. Here are some of the key components:

- Getting rid of eight badly eroding banks that will be sloped back, if possible, so the stream can reconnect to its floodplain. The land is then seeded with grasses. An estimate of how much soil will be kept out of the Root River, and Mississippi River, predicts the project will keep six dump truck loads of dirt out of the river annually. That is 84.7 tons. The longest bank is 190 feet long and one is eight feet tall, though they average six feet. If there's no room to slope them back, they will be benched.

- The wide, shallow, sandy stretches will be narrowed considerably so current increases, getting rid of more of the sand and silt in the streambed. "You will see the good substrate, and the bad substrate will keep moving," he said. Anglers will see more rocks and rubble in new riffles instead of just endless sand.

- Clusters of boulders in the main channel will move the water faster so it scours out the channel; they are also trout habitat.

- Years ago, an oxbow in Mill was cut off and is now dry land. But it will be reconnected, adding about 1,000 feet to the stream.

- The lunker structures Hiawatha members made in April will be put in so brown trout will have more places to hide.

- Riffles will be stabilized so macroinvertebrates will have places to live and feed trout. A place will be built for cattle to cross so they don't unnecessarily disturb the stream.

- Wads and lower trunks of trees cut from along the bank will be put into the bank, with the root wad facing out, to break up the power of the stream. "They also give the trout cover," Hoffman said. "Brown trout are very specific to overhead cover in comparison to brook trout. Brook trout can do fine without overhead cover" unless they are feeding. At the base of the project will be a big towhead with more than 70 trees close together with rock in between the roots.

MNTU partnered with the Natural Resources Conservation Service in the beginning to do the design work and also WSB & Associates, he said. To help get vegetation established, the landowner agreed to keep cattle out for a year.

When it's done, results should show up quickly, Biederman said. There will be better distribution of fish and the "riffles are super important for habitat," as are root wads. Fish will move in "right away, totally," she said. "I would fish this thing right away, a 1,000 percent."

More photos on following page.

John Weiss was a reporter/photographer for the Rochester Post/Bulletin for 41 years and still does freelance. He has been an outdoors writer in the Driftless nearly 46 years. He is secretary for Hiawatha TU and loves fly fishing small streams.



VOLUNTEERS FROM ACROSS THE DRIFTLESS WORK TO BUILD LUNKER STRUCTURES FOR HABITAT IMPROVEMENT ON MILL CREEK IN CHATFIELD.



LEFT: YEARS AGO, AN OXBOW ON MILL WAS CUT OFF AND IS NOW DRY LAND. IT WILL BE RECONNECTED, ADDING ABOUT 1,000 FEET TO THE STREAM.
 RIGHT: RICE CREEK BEFORE HABITAT WORK WAS TOO SLOW AND WIDE. WORK THIS SPRING SHOULD NARROW THE CHANNEL AND IMPROVE THE WEED-CHOKED STREAM. 9
 CARL BERBERICH PHOTO.



MNTU EDUCATION UPDATE

JUNE 2024

By Amber Taylor, MNTU Education Program Supervisor



This year, we had 68 schools and two nature centers participate in the Trout in the Classroom (TIC) program. By the time you read this, our team will have worked directly with almost 4,700 students at fall field days, classroom activities, and spring releases during the 2023-2024 school year. That is a big number for a two-person team! A huge shout out to my awesome education team, Evan Griggs and James Emery, consistently bringing the energy to each and every program they teach, engaging students in a variety of hands-on lessons throughout the school year. Volunteers also have been and continue to be a major contributor to our success, providing close to 250 hours of support at field days finding aquatic insects, in the classroom for fly tying, and at spring releases celebrating the day with our MNTIC students and teachers. Through word-of-mouth amongst teachers and media, as well as MNTU chapter members recruiting schools in their communities, the program continues to grow and will have around 75 schools next year participating across the state.

Our fantastic teachers continue to engage their students in numerous TIC-related learning experiences, lessons, and field trips throughout the school year that tie back to the trout they are raising in their classrooms. Keep reading for a few teacher testimonials pulled from their DNR end of year reports about the great things that happened during this year's TIC program.

“We had a wonderful year with the Trout in the Classroom (TIC) program. There were over 400 students who had direct exposure to the tank in our classroom and 31 students got to participate in trout



FIFTH GRADE TIC STUDENTS AT THE SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING AND ARTS GET READY TO IDENTIFY THREE OF MINNESOTA'S TROUT SPECIES USING A DICHOTOMOUS KEY AND THEIR KEEN OBSERVATION SKILLS DURING A FISH ID LESSON WITH OUR EDUCATION TEAM.

release day. With the help of our Trout Unlimited Chapter 642 we coordinated an after school Fly Fishing Program, which tied in well with TIC. As usual, the highlights surrounded the arrival of the eggs, the hatching of the eggs, the first swim-ups, and of course, the trout release. A benefit to this year's release day was connecting the release of the trout with the final day of our Fly Fishing Program. Consequently, the TU Chapter 642 members who volunteer for this program also got to experience the trout release first hand, witnessing the excitement of the kids as they released their trout, and even releasing a couple of their own. It is my belief that the

more connected children become to an area stream, the more likely for them to take an active interest in protecting that stream. To expose these students to the Clearwater River is a great step in that direction. Secondly, to work alongside our TU volunteers, who provide a wonderful example of stewardship, the students get to observe examples of ways to get involved with organizations that are dedicated to the same objectives we are working to instill with the TIC program.” - Gene Dillon Elementary, Bemidji, fourth grade teacher

“Students had many opportunities to learn about trout this year. We had an in-

house trout day at SEA [School of Engineering and Arts] in the fall with classes on the trout life cycle, tank chemistry, and Catch the Critter (a macroinvertebrates game). In the winter, MNTIC volunteers came to SEA to do fly tying, fish ID (with real mountings), and Design a Habitat with the students. In the spring, more MNTIC volunteers met us in Farmington for our trout release to teach fly casting and help identify real aquatic macroinvertebrates. We also had the Jeffers Foundation join us on this day to do stream ecology. In addition to our 80 fifth graders, we had 26 parent volunteers join us for our Trout Release Day. It was really great to have all of



LEFT: LONG-TIME TWIN CITIES TU VOLUNTEER JOHN KLESCH HELPS A STUDENT DURING A FLY TYING LESSON.



RIGHT: JIM MCCRACKEN OF THE HEADWATERS CHAPTER HELPS WITH TROUT RELEASE DAY. JIM HAS BEEN A DEDICATED VOLUNTEER FOR MANY YEARS.

these opportunities available. Students really enjoyed them! During the time the trout were here, all of our fifth grade students learned about and participated in basic trout husbandry, water quality testing, and the creation of habitat to mimic nature. We also had a closed-loop aquaponics tank system with a betta fish for comparison. Some of our fifth grade students used what they learned about trout to create and present slideshows to students in kindergarten through fourth grade throughout the year. Our fifth graders do a daily school SEA News show and our trout were featured many times.” - School of Engineering and Arts, Golden Valley, fifth grade teacher

“This was my first year participating in the Trout in the Classroom program and it was an amazing opportunity for me and my students! The biggest highlight was having students excited to check on the trout each and every day. They were constantly asking questions about the trout behavior, adaptations, habitat, water quality, etc. I was able to use the trout for numerous examples throughout the school year to help students connect curriculum to real-life examples. There were 11 students who volunteered to help maintain the classroom tank. These students came in before school two days a week on a rotating schedule to complete water quality testing, clean the tank, remove dead fish, and take pictures. These individuals stepped up to the challenge and took a lot of pride in their work, which was fun to see! The volunteers were students who were from different backgrounds and friend groups and they all bonded over the shared experience of caring for the fish, which was incredible to witness as seventh graders tend to be cliquy and sometimes unwilling to work with others. While there were 11 "official" volunteers, many other stu-

dents came in before school with their friends to witness water quality testing and check in on the fish. We were also able to do a stream study field trip this year with the entire seventh grade at the beginning of October. All the students were trained on the importance of water quality in maintaining a healthy aquatic ecosystem, and learned how to complete water quality testing. They practiced physical, chemical, and biological tests of Keene Creek and wrote a paper about its overall health.” - A.I. Jedlicka Middle School, Proctor, seventh grade teacher

Have you heard about our new educational fishing programs called Meet a Stream (MAS) days? These events are being led by Evan Griggs, MNTU’s education specialist, are held on trout streams around Minnesota, and offer a more engaging way for participants to learn about fly fishing. They will explore the important habitat projects MNTU has (and continues to) implement on these bodies of water, conduct an aquatic macroinvertebrate study to learn about water quality and see what the fish are eating, set up a rod, get a casting lesson, and spend the last part of the day fishing these special bodies of water with the assistance of our team and some wonderful volunteers. Four of these events are scheduled this year and we plan to add more in 2025, holding them in different regions throughout the state. There are two more MAS days remaining on the calendar: Saturday, August 10 on the Whitewater River and Saturday, September 7 on the Vermillion River. Both events are from 9 a.m.-1 p.m.. Additional details and registration links can be found here: www.twincitiestu.org/events.html If you’d like to volunteer to help out at these or any other MNTU education programs, contact Evan: tic.mntu@gmail.com.



A HUMBOLDT HIGH SCHOOL TIC STUDENT HAS FUN SEARCHING FOR AQUATIC MACROINVERTEBRATES IN THE VERMILLION RIVER.



A TIC TEACHER AND HIS STUDENTS CELEBRATE A SUCCESSFUL YEAR AFTER RELEASING THEIR TROUT INTO SPRUCE CREEK NEAR MILTONA.

FLIES

DRIFTLESS RECOMMENDATIONS

By Bob Luck

Years ago, before it got snapped up by a gazillionaire, I paid 50 bucks to fish on a little-known spring creek flowing through a ranch in southwestern Montana. It was hopper heaven. One of the fish I landed already had a deer hair hopper dangling from its mouth. I pulled it out, and thought vaguely about how cool it would be to catch a fish on it, before deciding it was too far gone and stowing it in my trash bag. That is the only fly I've discovered in a trout's mouth, but I do find a lot of flies elsewhere along the stream, and a decent share of them are fishable enough to go into my box.

I like to think I've passed the point where I find more flies than I lose. Even if that is true, I can't turn exclusively to foraging unless I become a nymph specialist. Dry flies don't weather well, and I don't find many streamers or wets. Either not many anglers fish them, or the ones who do are more competent. Or both.

That leaves tying or buying to replenish my supply.

When I was in my early teens, I spent more time at the vise than on the stream. It was a seven-mile bicycle ride from my home in Madison to the closest trout stream, Black Earth Creek, which was slow, clear, and heavily fished. I never hooked a trout there. When I tied flies I at least had something to show for my efforts. I loved reading books by authors like Art Flick, Vince Marinaro and Swisher & Richards, and imitating their creations. By the time I took up trout fishing again as an adult, the fly tying gear had long since been discarded. I was busy with a job and a family. I decided I was better off purchasing flies, and that's still what I do today.

The advice I hear about buying flies is to stay away from the internet and go to a local shop. Ironically, most of that advice comes from the internet. Shops provide good tips and the right fly selection for nearby waters. Their flies are more durable. And they need our business. I believe all of those arguments, although my experience with the tips part has been spotty. I recall walking into a fly shop in Estes Park and asking for help understanding hatches on the Big Thompson River. I had seen two kinds of mayflies on the water but was unsure which ones the trout were eating. "Well, just look carefully at the water and you should be able to see." That clerk had a bright future in Zen philosophy but he didn't sell me any flies. A more typical experience was a call I made to a fly shop in Preston when I couldn't figure out where the tricos were hatching on the Root River. The clerk gave me good directions even though he couldn't sell me flies over the phone. I had a productive morning.

That shop is typical of the fly shops found in the Driftless, although I'm sure that the owner would object to that adjective. It is located in a historic building on the town square, right next to a brewery and a few doors down

from a sandwich shop. The whole town seems more alive than the first time I drove through in the early '90s when a few bars and a lumber mill seemed to be the only signs of life. I'm not sure how much the shop has contributed to the renaissance, but it hasn't hurt. Along with flies and fly gear, the shop has an active guide service and rents kayaks for float trips on the Root. Except for first thing in the morning, when guides are meeting up with clients, the staff have plenty of time to talk fishing.

Given the chance to support a local fly shop in Preston, Lanesboro, River Falls or even Minneapolis, it seems almost un-American to buy off the internet, but I still get about half my flies that way. My reason used to be price—it is tough to pay a couple of bucks in a shop for a fly that goes for 69 cents online. But those cheap flies really do fall apart much faster, and if my boast about losing less flies is true, then the cost difference per season is minimal. Now I am hooked on the convenience. I can order flies in my pajamas and don't have to waste time or gas driving to a shop. Lately I've noticed more of my favorite local shops offering online shopping—so I'm going to have to change my behavior or come up with another excuse.

Some (mostly Tenkara) anglers fish just one or two patterns of fly: a combination wet/dry when trout are actively feeding, and a beadhead nymph when they aren't. Although I agree that stealth and presentation are more important than fly choice, I can't bring myself to copy them. Why deprive myself of the joy of seeing a trout smack a hopper, sip a trico spinner, or chase a streamer? I do consider myself to be fairly limited in my fly selection, fishing only about 20 patterns.

When I fish a streamer, it is almost always a black or olive Beadhead Woolly Bugger, unless I feel the need to go deeper, in which case I tie on a barbell-headed Clouser Minnow in red and white. Why red and white? No clue. I fish smaller streamers: sizes 8 to 12. I used to fish larger sizes, figuring I would catch larger fish, but an eight-incher will readily eat a size 2. I figure a size 8 is still enough to interest a 20-inch trout, and it is easier to cast.

Most of my nymphs are sorted by weight. My fly box has compartments for nymphs in 10-gram increments up to 50 grams. On Driftless streams, the 20- and 30-gram nymphs see the most use, getting close to the bottom without hanging up too much. If color and pattern make a difference, it has escaped my notice. I do prefer nymphs with a little fuzz or hackle collar, figuring that their movement in the water might be attractive. I also carry a selection of small Zebra Midges and beadless pheasant-tail nymphs that I use as droppers when fishing a two-fly rig. The final nymph in my selection is the Mop Fly: a strand of chartreuse mop fiber attached to a beadhead hook. The mop fiber absorbs water and the near-neutral buoyancy causes the fly



HERE ARE A FEW OF THE BOOKS THAT INSPIRED THE AUTHOR AS A TEENAGE FLY TIER. EVEN THOUGH HE HASN'T TIED A FLY IN DECADES, HE CAN'T BEAR TO PART WITH THEM.

to glide a foot or so over the bottom. I tie on a Zebra Midge as a dropper, and catch well over half the fish on it. My theory is that the mop fly attracts attention to the dropper which looks more like food, but who knows? I do know that it often works when nothing else does.

Spring creeks, with their steady flows of cold water, have a smaller variety of aquatic insects than freestone streams, and I can match most Driftless hatches with half a dozen dry patterns: Sulfur Duns in size 14 to 20, Blue-winged Olive Duns in 16 to 24, Elk Hair Caddis in 16 to 20, trico duns and spinners in 22 to 24, and an Adams for everything else. For terrestrial fishing, I carry hoppers, ants and beetles. I have a few emerger patterns in my dry box, mostly blue-winged olive and trico imitations, but I'll usually tie on a small wet fly when I suspect trout are feeding on emergers.

My wet fly box is heavy on partridge hackle flies in sizes 14 to 20, with orange and brown body colors, along with the green-and-red-bodied Stop & Go. It may be that there are wet fly hackles equal to or more effective than partridge feathers, but I'm not interested in finding out. Those soft, mottled fibers just seem designed by Providence to attract fish. The newest addition to my selection of

wets isn't new and I just learned from Professor Google that it isn't even a wet fly. It is an unweighted, sparsely-dressed size 12 Prince Nymph with split brown tail, peacock herl body, white wings and brown hackle. I generally cast it upstream and dead drift it against banks. It drifts high enough in the water column that I can see the fish strike—if I am lucky—but it will attract fish that refuse to rise to dry flies. Not easy to fish, but really satisfying when it works. When I lose my focus, I swing it downstream for a while.

My flies fit into two boxes in my vest: one for wets, nymphs and streamers, and the other for dries. When I fish at night, I swap in a box of mice and other large dries. I replenish the boxes from a large plastic utility case which is mostly filled with impulse purchases and failed experiments. Those flies belong in the trash, but that probably won't happen until my survivors sort through my personal effects. They'll find a selection of fly tying books next to the case. Even though the last time I tied a fly was decades ago, I can't bear to part with them.

Bob Luck is the current Twin Cities Chapter president and an avid angler.

STREAMER FISHING FOR BEGINNERS

GETTING STARTED WITH BIG FLIES

By Jade Thomason

Throwing streamers is one of the best ways to hook up with the largest trout in a stream. Data has shown that once trout are over 14 inches their diet focuses on larger prey items. In the Midwest, dace, shiners, chubs, sculpins, and crayfish are top forage. Whether from a boat or while wading, covering water with streamers can be effective for new anglers to increase their large fish frequency. Here are some techniques and ideas to help get started streamer fishing and hooking more big trout this season.

Rotate Through Streamers

I use a number of basic streamer patterns and colors when targeting trout. Fish attacking streamers are making fast decisions, and specific patterns and minute details are less important than form, color and function. Classic colors including olive, brown, black and white fill most of my streamer boxes. For trout, I typically stick to sizes 6 to 10. If tying your own flies, be sure that your streamer tails are not too long. Trout often nip at flies, and extra-long tails without a stinger hook can lead to missed chances. Beadhead Woolly Buggers, small Murdich Minnows, Slump Busters and Muddler Minnows are useful patterns to start.

If I thoroughly fish a few pools and runs with no action on a quality stream or river, I change flies. Pay close attention to any forage that you see in the water, and match it as you can. Brown and olive patterns can be good if there are crayfish or sculpins around. White patterns do well for minnow-heavy streams, and black is a great selection in off-color water and in lower light conditions. Carry a variety of sizes and weights of patterns to allow for many options. For me, one of the most important aspects of streamer selection is their movement in the water. Patterns with plenty of marabou, rabbit fur, rubber legs or other wavy synthetics can effectively trigger fish to bite.

Consider a Sink Tip

Whether it's a fully separate fly line, or a simple loop-to-loop add on tip, sinking lines can revolutionize your streamer casting. They allow you to use a lighter fly that is easier to cast, yet the fly remains low in the water column during retrieval. This greater amount of time in the strike zone can help hook more fish, especially if you're targeting trout in a deeper pool or run. I like to carry a variety of sink tips in differing weights, and connect them to the end of my fly line based on the speed and depth of water I'm fishing. When using streamers it can be handy to use shorter, heavier leaders, even if not utilizing a sink tip. It helps make casting easier for beginners, and you're less likely to break off or lose a large trout. It's rare for me to use anything lighter than 3x tippet with streamers, and I often go even heavier with larger flies.

Cover Plenty of Water

Fishing with a streamer on a trout river is a fully different activity than using nymphs or dries. The challenge is to keep casting to new water. It only takes a few presentations in one location to see if a large fish will rush over and grab your fly. If you didn't hook up, it's time to change your casting spot. Exclusively streamer fishing on small streams involves plenty of walking. I often fish a single pool in less than 10 minutes from top to bottom. If a large fish comes out and refuses, I make a mental note to stop back on my return walk and try with a different fly. Most commonly I carry a rigged streamer rod to toss in after running nymphs and/or dries. I prefer this casual, combination method and find that it's the best of both worlds in trout numbers and size.

Cast Down and Across

While there are plenty of circumstances that may offer challenging casting, I try to consistently fish my streamers down-



TROUT SHIFT THEIR DIET TO LARGER FORAGE AS THEY AGE. TOSS A STREAMER TO INCREASE YOUR CHANCES OF CATCHING LARGER FISH.

stream and across the current of the stream or river. If possible, casting to the bank can produce good results. Fish often hold tight to cover, and they can respond quickly if you drop your cast right onto them or the exit of their structure. Aiming your cast down and across also keeps a tight line, which helps with hook sets. At the end of each cast, let your streamer hang in the current for a little bit, and twitch it some. It's surprising how often a nice fish will follow your fly all the way across the current, and only commit once it's dangling downstream.

Strip Set!

The hook set is one of the largest differences in fishing streamers compared to classic nymph or dry flies. It's important to keep your rod tip low and use a stripping motion to provide action to the fly. If possible, have the tip of your rod touching the water. You'll maintain a better connection, and when you feel a bite, you can strip hard, directly hooking

the trout. If you miss it, keep stripping the fly as you were before. Trout often hit the fly multiple times before they are hooked. Some trout intentionally swipe the fly to the side, looking to injure it, and then come back and grab it more firmly. Once you've strip set and feel the fish on the line, then you can raise your rod and play the trout.

Useful Across Species

Most of the information shared here is relevant for many warmwater target species as well. Bass, pike, walleye and others chase many of the same fly patterns and techniques. Practicing throwing larger flies on local warmwater lakes and rivers to hone your skills can be useful before targeting the largest trout in smaller streams. Bass are more forgiving and abundant than trophy trout.

Jade Thomason is the editor for this publication and an active member of the Gitche Gumee Chapter in Duluth.



DEEP POOLS ARE CLASSIC STREAMER WATER. PLUMB THE DEPTHS AND MOVE TO A NEW POOL IF YOU HAVEN'T RECEIVED A STRIKE.

SPRING HABITAT UPDATE

RICE, MAZEPPA, KEENE AND MORE!

By Jennifer Biederman, PhD, MNTU Habitat Program Director

Rice Creek: Construction Complete
Minnesota Trout Unlimited (MNTU) completed a new habitat improvement project on Rice Creek, a designated trout stream in Fillmore County, MN. Located near County Road 6 and Jubilee Drive, the project falls within a DNR Aquatic Management Area fishing easement.

This project extended along nearly a mile of stream, and enhanced in-stream habitats for fish and macroinvertebrates, and nongame biodiversity, through the installation of toewood and pool logs for overhead cover and foraging; stream-bank narrowing with boulder toes, grade control riffles and toewood; and boulder clusters and rock vanes for additional trout habitat.

Up Next: Mazeppa Creek, Mill Creek, and Maple Creek

Construction of a trout habitat improvement project is poised to begin on a 3,400 reach on Mazeppa Creek the week of May 27, 2024. This 3,400-foot project is 25 minutes from Rochester and an hour from the metro, and will emphasize reconnection of the stream to the floodplain through bank grading and channel stabilization. Trout habitat, including riffles for spawning and cover rocks will be added throughout the reach.

Prior to construction, MNTU is conducting a special survey for the state threatened wood turtles, which have been found in the Mazeppa Creek Aquatic Management Area. Any turtles encountered during the survey will be relocated outside of the project area.

After construction is complete on Mazeppa Creek, the Mill Creek project



A NEWLY RESTORED REACH ON RICE CREEK WITH A THICK COAT OF HYDROMULCH TO HOLD SOIL AS COVER CROP GROWS IN (MAY 2024).

in Chatfield will begin—hopefully in mid-to late June. This 2,300-ft project will stabilize banks and add trout habitat. For more detail, see John Weiss’s article on the Mill Creek project on page___. After Mill Creek, MNTU will construct a habitat improvement project with a focus on heritage brook trout on Maple Creek near Choice, MN. Located within the Choice Wildlife Management Area, this reach boasts oak savannah and excellent opportunities for public hunting, fishing, hiking, and wildlife observation.

Fish Passage in the Baptism River and Keene Creek watersheds

This summer, MNTU will construct two culvert replacements in tributaries to the

Baptism River near Finland, Minnesota, in addition to a culvert replacement on Keene Creek-Okerstrom road, which connects two previous stream improvement projects in the City of Hermantown. These projects primarily focus on reconnecting brook trout with critical coldwater habitat, replacing culverts that are undersized, perched, and lack suitable substrate for macroinvertebrate and fish passage.

Other Habitat Program activities:

Tree planting on Cedar Valley Creek: We have planted 45 trees along the Cedar Valley stream improvement project south of Winona, including swamp white oak, burr oak, hackberry, and white pine.

Thank you to the volunteers for helping!

Invasive species control along Little Pickwick: Volunteers from Win-Cres and Hiawatha have completed several work days this spring to remove invasive species including black locust and box elder along the stream corridor.

Tree maintenance along the northeast streams: In late May, tree maintenance was carried out by MNTU volunteers from the Gitche Gume chapter and DNR staff at project sites on Keene Creek in Hermantown and Chester Creek, including removing caging and planting.



LEFT: PLANTING A WHITE PINE AT CEDAR VALLEY CREEK IN WINONA COUNTY, MN (MAY 2024)



RIGHT: HIGH WATER ON KEENE CREEK—OKERSTROM ROAD IN HERMANTOWN SHOWS WATER BEING DIRECTED TOWARD THE ROAD, ERODING THE BANK, DUE TO AN UNDERSIZED CULVERT.

COASTER BROOK TROUT GENETICS PROJECT

GET INVOLVED!

By Nick Peterson

The Minnesota DNR will continue to evaluate the genetics of brook trout in northeast Minnesota and continue the Coaster Genetics Project (CGP) in 2024! We are seeking assistance from anglers to collect samples from any size brook trout captured below posted boundaries in any tributary to Lake Superior in Minnesota. Anglers who want to participate will be granted a 2024 MN DNR sampling permit which will allow them to legally collect a small, non-lethal fin clip from brook trout captured below barriers. The genetics samples (fin clips) collected by volunteer anglers for the Coaster Genetics Project will be analyzed with samples collected during the Minnesota DNRs Coaster Brook Trout Assessment in fall 2024 (see Peterson 2018).

Results and Questions Answered Over the Past 10 years

In 2018, the Minnesota DNR reevaluated the genetics of North Shore brook trout and discovered genetic differences above and below barriers on some North Shore rivers using microsatellite genetic markers (L. Miller, MN DNR Geneticist, unpublished data). In 2023, the Minnesota DNR utilized fin clips collected from Minnesota DNR surveys and from anglers (via the Coaster Genetics Project!) to further evaluate the sources of coaster brook trout in Minnesota's shoreline to Lake Superior using novel, single nucleotide polymorphic (SNP) genetic markers (Mamoozadeh et al. 2023). We identified well-differentiated above-barrier populations that support brook trout populations below barriers and in Lake Superior proper (shorelines, harbors and bays), evidence of genetic population bottlenecks that have occurred over the past 60 years, and a lack of domestic introgression in Minnesota populations from hatchery strains stocked in Lake Superior over the past few decades (Mamoozadeh et al. 2023; we call this the Coaster Project 1.0).

Next Steps and Future Research Questions

Unique strains of brook trout have been identified in southeast Minnesota trout streams (called Minnesota wild-or heritage strain; Hoxmeier et al. 2015), but it

remains unknown if unique strains exist in northeast Minnesota trout streams. A broad scale collection effort between 2018 and 2023 expanded on Coaster Project 1.0 and collected over 3,200 samples from over 70 sites (tributaries or shoreline stations) shore-wide. A subset of these samples were sent to Michigan State University for genetic analysis (lab work and summary in progress; we call this Coaster Project 2.0). The Coaster Project 2.0 will provide more detailed analysis of the genetic population structure of brook trout populations that exist along Minnesota's North Shore (above and below barriers), and will help to identify if/where/why unique genetic strains exist.

Unique strains, if they exist, may need additional protection (e.g., special regulations or closed seasons), and could support future management and stocking efforts for brook trout in northeast Minnesota and lake-wide (e.g., identify a local or unique strain for hatchery production). Beyond Coaster Project 2.0, more samples from brook trout captured below barriers and in Lake Superior will provide more detail about the source-sink dynamics of above and below barrier populations, information about the potential contributions (or lack thereof) of adult brook trout that spawn below barriers, and to identify and monitor straying rates, introgression, and impacts from stocking programs currently happening in other jurisdictions (Grand Portage, Red Cliff, Wisconsin, Michigan).

Coaster Genetics Project Goals

1. Characterize contemporary genetic population structure (unique population units) of brook trout in northeast Minnesota streams using single nucleotide polymorphic (SNP) markers.
2. Evaluate the contributions and gene flow of brook trout populations above barriers to the populations captured below barriers.
3. Collect and publish data to support lake-wide brook trout research (e.g., MNDNR is a collaborator on multiple Cooperative Science and Monitoring



SCOTT THORPE HOLDS A STUNNING COASTER BROOK TROUT CAUGHT ON THE NORTH SHORE OF LAKE SUPERIOR.

Initiative projects).

Social Media Connection

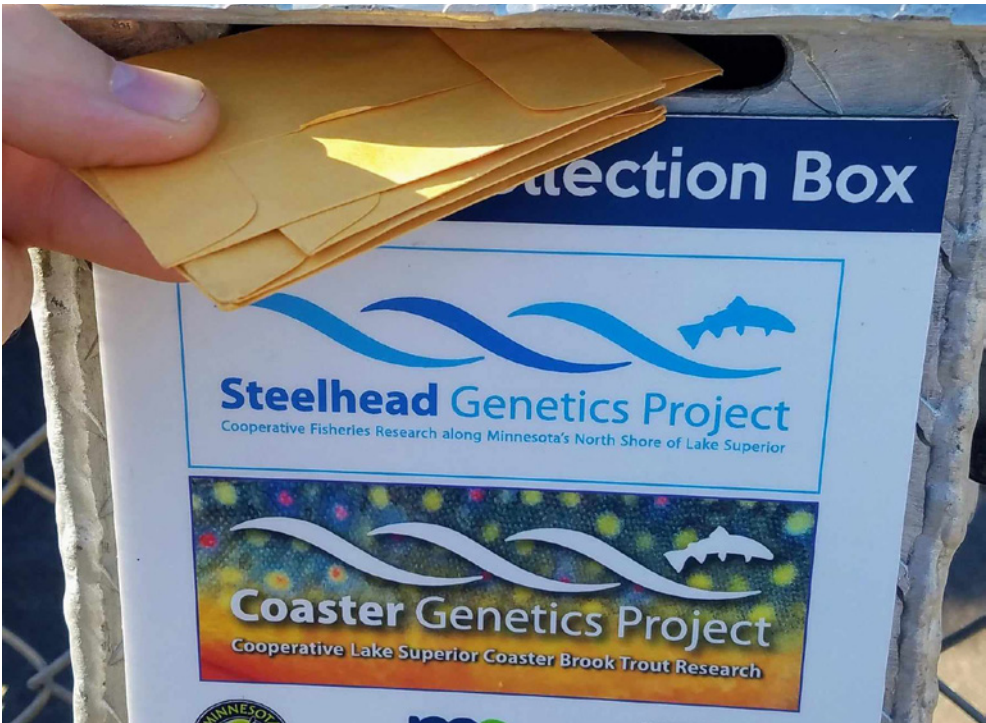
I created a Minnesota North Shore Brook Trout and Coaster Genetics Project Facebook group. This group is only available to anglers who sign up for the project. I want to move away from solely using email as our form of communication and have more conversations via social media. The Facebook Group will provide an opportunity for all those involved to share fishing reports and tips (what flies or lures are working) throughout the year and give CGP anglers a way to communicate with each other and find new fishing partners. If you are part of the CGP and want to be part of the Facebook group, please let me know.

How to Get Involved

If you would like to get involved, please call or text me, Nick Peterson, at

nick.peterson@state.mn.us, work: (218) 302-3272, cell (515) 351-9683. Once we chat, I will send you a DNR sampling permit, envelopes, and other sampling materials.

Get others involved! If you know any other avid brook trout anglers and think they could support our cause, please send them my way! It is very important that CGP anglers follow the proper (and safe) sample collection and data reporting procedures. Anglers who participate will be required to measure each fish and provide me with a (vague) location of where the fish was captured on a regular basis to track sample sizes. No worries, your secret fishing spots will not be shared with other anglers. Please do not let the collection instructions discourage you or others from participating. I will help you out as much as possible.



LEFT: EXPERIENCE THE RANGE OF COLORS AND PATTERNS ON COASTER BROOK TROUT AND VOLUNTEER FOR THE STUDY. SCOTT THORPE PHOTO.
RIGHT: BROOK TROUT FIN CLIPS DROPPED OFF AT A NORTH SHORE COLLECTION BOX. JASON SWINGEN PHOTO.

THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR DONORS

YOU MAKE FISHING GREAT!



Minnesota Trout Unlimited expresses our appreciation to each of the 252 generous donors who gave during our last fiscal year, which ran April 1, 2023 through March 31, 2024, with collective contributions totaling a record \$101,000! Regardless of

the amount, their gifts make possible Minnesota TU’s habitat improvement, policy advocacy and education programming.

Importantly, 100% of Minnesota TU Board Members supported the organization financially in Fiscal 2024.

We enjoyed hearing from supporters, including the following encouraging comments over the last year!

“I am a retired teacher – 80 years old. I believe Trout Unlimited and Minnesota Trout Unlimited are doing a fantastic job of educating the young and doing critical work to protect the environment. Keep up the great work you do!!”
Andrew Urban, Ely

“We are trying to give back in ways that address different areas of need. We chose TU first, as I am a member and fisher, and we appreciate the good work TU does, not just for fishing benefits but watersheds in general. Keep up the good work.” Thomas Konat, Global Public Safety

“MNTU is a terrific organization. We love receiving the quarterly newsletter and we truly appreciate all the focus on water quality, habitat and advocacy on behalf of all Minnesotans.” Daniel and Tara Owens, Bloomington

“The newspaper is GREAT! Thanks!”
Mark Egan, Minneapolis

“Keep up the good work.” Gary Grabko, Saint Paul

“Congrats on your work in the last legislative session! I’m no expert but from what I read, neonicotinoids are the biggest problem, not just for trout but for the environment (except for global warming.” James Granum, Fountain City

“Thanks for all the work MNTU does. Looking at the recent mailing that I received yesterday and some of MNTU’s online information posted on GuideStar, the group does/accomplishes a lot. No small feat, for sure.”
Dan Peterson, Lakeville

“I like receiving both the digital and hard copy MNTU publications. Keep up the good work and interesting articles! Thank you!” Mark Allen, Wayzata

We strive for accuracy and welcome corrections to Giving Coordinator, Mark Abner at mark.abner@mntu.org

Riverkeepers Council

The Riverkeepers Council appreciates and recognizes Minnesota TU donors of \$1,000 or more annually. Riverkeepers Council donors are invited to regular fishing and project-viewing outings and receive personalized communications regarding the impact of their extraordinary support. We appreciate our donors at any level, and we invite and welcome others who are in a position to contribute more to join the Riverkeepers Council.

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NORMAN MACLEAN: A LIFE OF LETTERS AND RIVERS

BOOK REVIEW

By John Hunt

I admit to being a true disciple of Norman Maclean. I have sought out and enjoyed many books and stories written both by and about him since I was introduced to his writing in the early '90s. Author Rebecca McCarthy's recently released book, *Norman Maclean: A Life of Letters and Rivers*, provides a different perspective than earlier looks at Maclean's life and career.

Drawing from her personal friendship with Norman, conversations with the Maclean family, and subsequent research over the last four decades, McCarthy looks beyond the common perceptions of Norman Maclean the author. McCarthy's approach also carries us beyond Maclean the son, brother, father, and passionate trout angler to pull the curtain back on his years as a college professor and mentor. In doing so, she broadens her reader's understanding of what contributed to Maclean's professional persona across his multi-decade teaching and writing career.

As a teenager, McCarthy met the aging Maclean in Montana while visiting her older, USFS-employed brother. Captivated by Norman's encouragement of her interest in poetry, the author is drawn to attend Maclean's beloved University

of Chicago in the early 1970s. As a student in the English department, McCarthy is given an opportunity to grow under Maclean's watchful eye as both a student and a writer. Although Norman retired in 1973, the grandfatherly professor fulfilled his promise to McCarthy's mother that he would look after her if she moved to Chicago. We read of afternoon walks the pair took through the changing neighborhoods surrounding the campus during all seasons and their sampling of an assortment of non-traditional cuisines available in the Windy City.

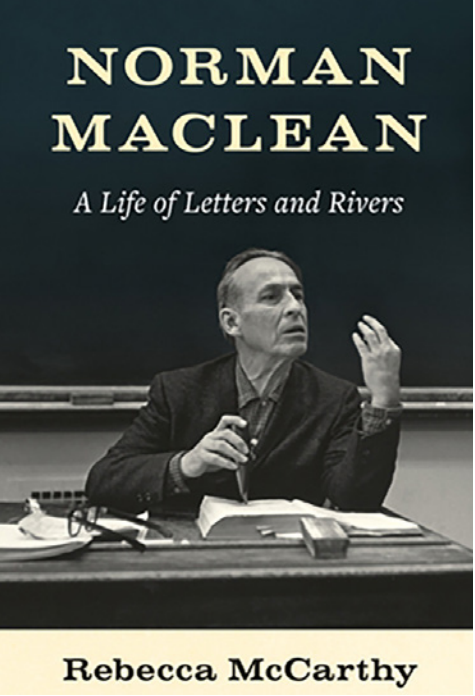
There are also a number of interesting glimpses of Maclean's life that I had not previously encountered. Examples include his friendship with Theodor Geisel (the future Dr. Seuss) while an undergrad at Dartmouth, of how Norman and his wife Jessie enjoyed hosting lively dinner parties for students in their Chicago home, of how he was good friends with researchers working on elements of the Manhattan Project at the university and how he led the marksmanship training on campus for prospective Army recruits during WWII, the deep pain that followed Jessie's death from emphysema, and even his fascination with the Battle of the Little Bighorn (aka Custer's Last Stand). On that last topic, the author

does appear to have a slight error in the text. McCarthy states that 600 men from the 7th Cavalry died in the battle, while every resource I have read indicates it was actually closer to 275.

Another feature of the book is its tendency to crisscross through time. Stories and reflections from one part of Maclean's life presented in one chapter often overlap with stories from an earlier or later era. While not fatal stylistically, it did cause me as a reader to pause several times and retrace my steps to make sure I understood what part of Maclean's career the story was exploring.

McCarthy includes a quote from Norman Maclean in her book that offers a thoughtful synopsis of Maclean's vision as a writer, "Words to me are things you take chances with both in what you say and how you say it..." Another interesting quote came from Michael Curley, who had taken a room at Maclean's home while in graduate school. "He [Norman] came out of an oral tradition in which he could tell a story a lot of different ways. When you write it down, there's just one version."

And that, perhaps, is the best description of *Norman Maclean: A Life of Letters*



and Rivers. Rebecca McCarthy presents Maclean as a supreme storyteller, shaped by his love of family, friends, Montana, and the English language. In doing so, she fills in some of the gaps in his life story that might have existed for fans of Norman Maclean.

Editor's Note: John Hunt is a long-time Trout Unlimited volunteer who has served in numerous positions over more than three decades. He has been authoring book reviews for the newsletter since 2013.

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. You can also make MNTU a beneficiary of

your 401k, IRA or life insurance policy. 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 P.O. Box 845, Chanhassen, MN 55317-0845, EIN# 52-1766036, the sum of (dollar amount)/ or percentage of (___%)/ residue of my estate to be used at the discretion of its governing board."

Specific:

"I give Minnesota Trout Unlimited, a Minnesota non-profit corporation, presently at P.O. Box 845, Chanhassen, MN 55317-0845, EIN# 52-1766036, my (specific personal property item(s) and/or real property located at _____) to be used at the discretion of its governing board."



Gift of Residuary Estate:

"All the rest, residue and remainder of my estate, both real and personal, and wherever situated, I give, devise and bequeath to Minnesota Trout Unlimited, a Minnesota non-profit corporation, presently at P.O. Box 845, Chanhassen, MN 55317-0845, EIN# 52-1766036, to be used at the discretion of its governing board."

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 or at 612-670-1629.

A NIGHT ON A HEX LAKE

EXPERIENCE A CLASSIC MIDWEST HATCH

By Carl Haensel



HEX HATCH FISHING IS CLASSICALLY DONE AFTER DARK AND HAPPENS MID-SUMMER ON MINNESOTA TROUT LAKES AND STREAMS.

The car was jammed with everything we needed for the trip as I pulled into the parking area for the lake. We managed to make it to the water in two trips. I went over the list in my mind, trying not to forget something vital in the car as we prepared to launch. At the landing, a few fish rose far out in the lake, enticing us to rush onto the water. The rises looked small, but it was hard to tell the size of the fish. No mayflies were to be seen. Paddling out into the lake on the calm evening, the air felt heavy. The sun hung low over the spruce and fir trees on the western shore of the lake. I tied on a hex nymph pattern and began to work it over a soft flat not far from the shore. Ten minutes of casting brought no results, then a thump, and a solid fish was on. A middling rainbow slid into the net a minute later, and then we continued to cast, waiting for dusk.

As the sun finally dropped below the trees and the sky turned from blue to orange, a big mayfly appeared from somewhere. Landing on the water, it floated like a sailboat for a moment, then took off again, flying down the shore. Tying on a hex emerger pattern on my spare rod, I cast to the general area where the mayfly had been, and alternated between letting it rest on the water and recasting and giving a gentle twitch. Then, behind me, I heard a loud splash. A trout rose with fervor to take something large off the surface.

It was beginning again, how it nearly always does, out of view. Reeling in and grabbing my first rod that was rigged with a hex dry pattern, I strained to see the edges of the dissipating rings of the rise as they faded off into the calm night. No other mayflies were on the water, and no other rises resounded. We wondered just how many trout swam underneath the canoe, and how many mayflies might show up. Casting into the calming waters, my fly landed with a plop, ungainly and firmly tied to its stout leader.

We waited. Loons circled and dove out in the gathering darkness, calling with increasing volume as night fell. Then, I felt something crawling on the back of my hat. The large hex distracted my attention for a moment, then I caught a glimpse of another fluttering on the water near the canoe. They were there. I heard another rise, further away than the previous one, and cast to it. After waiting a minute, another loud rise came from the same direction, and I set the hook. The fish was firm and strong, turning the stern of the canoe to the left as it pulled and dove, taking out line. With 15 feet of water underneath the boat and 2x tippet on the end of my line, I felt certain that we would land the fish, but time passed with tension as the big fish strained and ran. Eventually, it lay in the water next to the gunwale of the canoe, and we turned on headlamps to see it. Broad-shouldered and pink-sided, the fish was a fine speci-

men from the lake. After netting it and removing the hook, I lowered the edge of the net into the lake and it swam free, turning down into the blackness of the lake. While playing the fish, the hatch had intensified, with mayflies now lying spent on the water around us and fish rising in the distance. Turning off the headlamps, we paddled a short distance and coasted into a small pod of rising trout. They moved from hex to hex, sucking them in off the top of the water, duns and spinners alike, until the hatch progressed and only spinners remained. While fish were all around, they refused most of our offerings until only a handful of spinners were left. Then, we hooked a few more fish. None were as large as the first one, but they all put up spirited fights before we released them back into the darkness. Stubbornly, we kept casting for at least 45 minutes after the last trout rose, but finally, we paddled back to the landing

and began the long trek in the dark out of the forest.

The heart of summer is the best time to find trout rising to hex mayflies. Scott Sorensen from Fly Box & Co. in Grand Marais recommends July 5 to 10 as the best window of time, but the hatch can run early or late in any given year. Broadly, hex mayflies are around up north on our trout lakes from the last week of June through July 15 most years. If you're headed north and thinking about getting on the water for the hex hatch, there are some key things to think about for this nighttime fishing opportunity.

First, make sure you're using stout gear. This is not the time to try to catch fish on 5x tippet. Plenty of anglers I know use 2x tippet when they're fishing hex



HEXAGENIA LIMBATA ARE IMPRESSIVELY-SIZED MAYFLIES. LOOK FOR SHUCKS ON SHORE FOR A CLUE ON HATCH TIMING.



THE LARGEST TROUT IN THE LAKE WILL OFTEN COME UP TO FEED DURING A HEX HATCH.

patterns, and many others go even stronger. A short leader of five or six feet that tapers down to 1x tippet is my preference when the bugs are in the air and the sky is inky black. The fish won't refuse the fly because of the leader, and you'll tangle less and land any truly large fish that you'll hook.

Bring a variety of flies, including hex nymphs, emergers, dry flies and spinners. They can all be important during the night. Fly Box & Co. stocks quality hex patterns that can get you on fish. If you can, bring a spare fly rod, rigged up and ready to go in the canoe. I stick it behind me in the stern of the boat. That way if I mess up a leader or want to switch to a spinner pattern, it's already rigged and ready to cast. Other than rods, bring as few things as you possibly can in the canoe. Your fly line will snag on everything imaginable in the darkness, and the fewer opportunities, the better.

Make sure you've got a big net, preferably one that has soft plastic mesh. This is the least likely net to tangle your flies in the darkness, and makes a big difference when you're looking to get a fly back on the water quickly after catching a fish.

Start off your evening by launching your craft well ahead of sundown. It's realistic to do some streamer fishing or use your hex nymphs in the last hour or two of light. Make sure to get your bearings on the lake and make some mental notes about where the landing is. Trust me, it can be harder than you think to find your way back in the dark, especially if you're trying to locate an infrequently used trail in a swamp on a lake you've never been before. If you're the only person on the lake, you can even hang a bright jacket or shirt on a tree at the launch to keep from getting confused later in the darkness after you've landed your monster trout.

If you're using hex nymphs, work them extremely slowly in the water. Short, pulsing strips seem to work best. Nymph patterns that have some marabou on them are better than hard, static flies. Live hex nymphs undulate in the water in a waving motion as they swim, and are very attractive to the trout as they get active and start to emerge. Sometimes you can land the largest trout of the night before the sun even goes down if the fish are actively targeting the nymphs. I've even fished them just off of the bottom

straight under an indicator. This works even better if there is a little chop on the water. As darkness nears, look for large rises and active trout.

Even on good hex lakes, not every night will host a great hatch. Hatch dates vary considerably from lake to lake, with some starting earlier than others. Calm evenings with higher humidity seem to bring on the hatch, though it can be notoriously hard to predict. Mayflies floating on the water's surface and trout careening out of the water trying to catch emerging flies are the indicators you're looking for. Check for nymphal exoskeletons or "shucks" from the previous night to get an idea of how active the hatch has been recently. Sometimes the action starts prior to dark, and sometimes it takes a bit of time to get going. As darkness envelops your boat, listen for the subtle sound of bowling balls being launched into the water. Trout rising to hex mayflies are not shy. If it's not trout, it's either a beaver or a moose, so keep your eyes sharp in the darkness for interesting wildlife at a minimum. You never know what you'll find in the dark when you're fishing.

Depending on the lake, weather and where the fish are, you can either anchor your boat or drift gently, casting to the sound of rising fish. This is where fishing to the hex hatch gets interesting. Hopefully you've practiced, so you can cast into the darkness with confidence. The shorter leaders and stouter tippets mentioned earlier will help with this effort, but darkness is key. If you use a headlamp, you will scare trout and put them down. Fishing needs to be done in the darkness. The only time that I will turn on a light is to land a fish and snap a quick photo before letting the it go back into the night.

While it's not impossible to have a good hex evening on a brook trout lake, it's significantly less likely. Brook trout tend to slow down, if not outright stop biting, once the lake fades into total darkness.

This is heightened on moonless nights and in lakes that have dark, tannin-stained waters. Look for lakes that host rainbows or browns to have better hex action. Brown trout love the hex hatch wherever it's found, and if you're trying to find some big browns in a trout lake, the hatch is a good way to do it. Rainbows can be extremely aggressive during the hatch, swimming around just under the surface and vacuuming up the available mayflies. If you're looking at maps, look for lakes that feature a shallow bay or inlet. These areas often feature the silt that hex nymphs burrow in, and they are generally shallow enough to offer well-oxygenated environments. They can also be good places to set up when the hatch is on. Lakes that have deep, rocky shorelines and few silt bottoms are less likely to produce a good hatch. Check in with local fly shops for ideas, current conditions and successful fly patterns.

Rainbow and brown trout are not the only fish willing to rise in the nighttime for hex mayflies around Minnesota. Look for whitefish, walleyes, carp and a variety of other fish to target both the nymphs and adults. *Hexagenia limbatata* mayflies can be abundant anywhere there is plenty of silty bottom in a lake or stream, paired with clean water conditions. Improving water quality has brought hex mayflies back to many locations, even the Mississippi River. Plenty of other quality trout streams around the state feature hex mayflies, including the storied Straight River near Park Rapids. If you can't make it up north to the trout lakes, try out your favorite local stream before the Fourth of July. You might be surprised by what you find flying around in the gathering dusk.

Editors Note: Much of this piece is excerpted from Carl Haensel's book Fly Fishing Minnesota, published in 2022. Carl is the Northern Minnesota Vice Chair for MNTU. He works as a fly fishing guide, writer and photographer. His work is found online at www.namebini.com

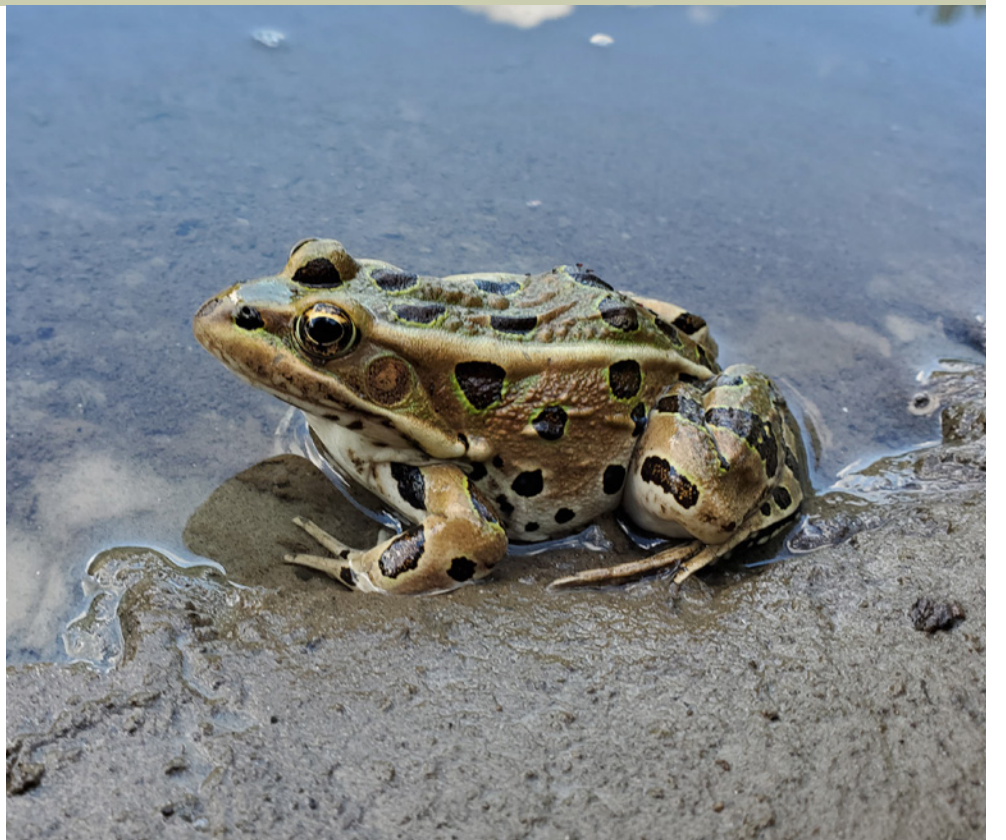


TIE UP SOME HEX NYMPH FLIES FOR YOUR TRIP OR STOP INTO LOCAL FLY SHOPS LIKE FLY BOX & CO. IN GRAND MARAIS.

WETLANDS

YOUTH SERIES

By Jim Emery, MNTU Educator • Photos by Jade Thomason



BLUE FLAG IRISES AND NORTHERN LEOPARD FROGS ARE MINNESOTA NATIVE SPECIES THAT THRIVE IN WETLANDS.

There is water all around us, especially in Minnesota. We're fortunate to have thousands of bodies of deep water—lakes, rivers, streams. But when we talk about the beautiful waters that we enjoy, let's not overlook an especially important water source.

There are areas of land that remain saturated by water, but aren't deep enough to be thought of as lakes. We call them "wetlands," because that's just what they are: land that stays wet. People haven't always appreciated how important and special these bodies of water are for the rest of the ecosystem. There was a time, not so very long ago, when it seemed like the obvious thing to do with a wetland was to dig it up or fill it in. Wetlands were just swamps in the eyes of urban planners: nasty, smelly, and unsanitary.

They served no good purpose and were in the way of land that could be so much better used. Because of this mentality, wetlands have been extensively cleared from many of the lakes around Minnesota, and from long stretches of creeks and rivers.

Now we know that we were hasty in our dismissal of those wetlands. They are extremely valuable assets to any ecosystem. The deep-rooted aquatic plants in a wetland draw pollutants out of the water with amazing efficiency. The soil at the bottom of a wetland helps contaminants to settle out before entering lake water. Wetlands also play a crucial role in the prevention of flooding. Native grasses and other plants draw water from the surface of the land like a sponge. Wetlands host complex food webs, and are

the places where many birds, fish, amphibians, and insects make their homes.

The good news is that wetlands can be replaced. Building a wetland is a very large project, costing a lot of money. It would have been much more efficient to have not removed the existing wetlands, but what's done is done. Since the 1990s people have been taking measures to undo the damage. New wetland settling ponds have been built next to Lake of the Isles, Nokomis, Cedar, Minnehaha Creek, and other locations around the Twin Cities.

The new wetlands have been a success, reducing pollution levels and mitigating flooding.



It turns out that, rightly considered, wet-

lands are not only important, they're beautiful. Cedar Meadows and Roberts Bird Sanctuary near Lake Harriet are considered hot spots for viewing birds and other wildlife. These parks feature hiking trails and viewing docks, and are enjoyed by many as quiet sanctuaries in the midst of a busy city.

Volunteers with Minnesota Trout Unlimited also engage in wetland restoration, planting deep-rooted native grasses as part of our work of habitat restoration. The relationship people have with the ecosystem will always be complicated and we've made some wrong decisions. Restoring wetlands shows how we can learn from those mistakes, and create something beautiful that we can all enjoy.



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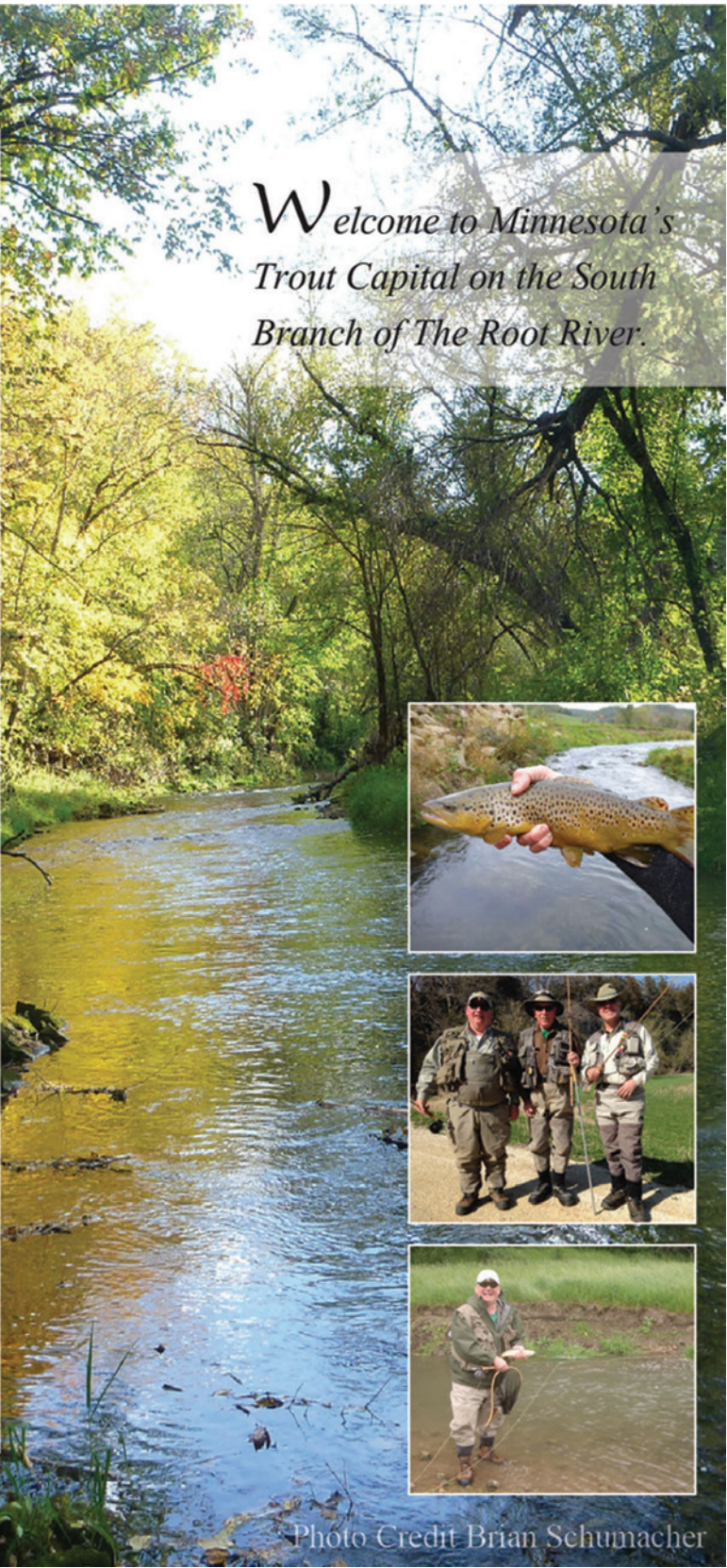
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Welcome to Minnesota's Trout Capital on the South Branch of The Root River.







Photo Credit Brian Schumacher



MNTU CHAPTER NEWS



GGTU PRESIDENT BRANDON KIME AND DAUGHTER HANNAH HELPED OUT AT THE DNR KNIFE RIVER FISH TRAP.

Gitche Gumee Chapter

Thumbing through the calendar it's hard to believe we are turning the page to June. After dealing with record snowfall in the winter of 2023, this winter felt like a godsend! With atypical warm temperatures and little snow during much of late winter, it felt like a glorious spring was in store for the Northland. We should have known better as Mother Nature corrected the course and we ended up with a typical North Shore spring with up and down temperatures (more downs than ups). Set complaining about temperatures aside, the area has received a lot of moisture, unlike the past few spring seasons, which has helped tremendously to bring down fire hazard concerns and brought several pulses of steelhead into the rivers.

Gitche Gumee wrapped up the 2023-2024 program season with our popular State of the Steelhead meeting. Nick Peterson, Fisheries Specialist with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, presented updates on shore-wide steelhead creel survey data and talked about a Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tag study that will be starting this summer. The PIT tag study will help us better understand movement of fish as well as native/non-native interaction in our watersheds. We are excited to see what results the study will show as this should help us better understand where our steelhead and brook trout move throughout the seasons.

The weekend following State of the Steelhead presentation, my daughter and I had an opportunity to volunteer with Nick Peterson and his team at the Knife River fish trap. We arrived to beautiful weather during our morning and 30 feisty and fresh steelhead. No doubt catching steelhead by line and reel is fun, but this was a different and cool experience being able to witness and handle all sizes of steelhead during our time. My daughter was able to appreciate the true

awesomeness of steelhead as their speed and strength helped them elude her net or wiggle their way out when captured. She was full of smiles during the experience.

The chapter is going to be busy this summer. Starting at the end of May and into June we will be in the field working on the Chester Creek project. Later in the summer we plan to be back on Chester Creek and then will move on to the Little Stewart River and Keene Creek as we approach early fall. In addition to maintenance and field days, we are partnering with the City of Duluth in offering fly casting clinics. This will be our fourth summer offering clinics, which will be held the last three Wednesdays in July. Each session does not build on the other, so join us during any of the three classes. Clinics are free and open to the public.

<https://duluthmn.gov/media/f351k321/parks-brochure-summer-2024-for-web.pdf>

All details about the chapter's summer activities will be shared on our Facebook page and e-newsletter. If you'd like to get more involved in the chapter or would like to be added to our e-newsletter distribution list, feel free to contact me at brandon.kime@gmail.com.

We hope to see many of our members at one of our offerings this summer!

Brandon Kime

Headwaters Chapter

The Headwaters chapter has been busy teaching fly tying and fishing skills with our Youth Fly Fishing Program. The 2024 program concluded with a trip to the river for activities, trout release, and fishing. It was a gorgeous afternoon with 30 kids and even more parents attending. Fifteen kids purchased a new fly rod

and were able to try them out for the first time. We had over 40 kids who did not get into our program, so this summer, Bob and Val Wagner will lead a couple of classes to teach these kids.

But the fun isn't stopping there, by the time you read this, we will have completed our TIC release day activities. We have two days scheduled for three different schools (Gene Dillon, Schoolcraft, and Cass Lake) for the release day programs at the Clearwater River. This will be our biggest year ever for the TIC program.

We also have three different fly-casting events scheduled this summer. In June we will be at the Brainerd Everything Outdoor Youth Expo (www.brainerdyouthexpo.com). In August we will be at the Beltrami County Fair in Bemidji and the Youth Outdoor Activity Day (www.youthoutdooractivityday.org) in Alexandria. These events are another way we help teach people how to cast a fly rod.

MNTU lost an important member of our community this winter. Bob Frazey, who died February 20 in Bemidji at age 90, was one of the founders of Headwaters Chapter 642 over 30 years ago. An avid outdoorsman, Bob particularly enjoyed fly fishing and teaching others about the joy of fishing. Even before helping start chapter 642, Bob was volunteering to teach fly tying and casting to middle school children. He was the inspiration for starting Bemidji's Trout in the Classroom program in 2007, the first TIC program in the state of Minnesota. He excelled at socializing and would frequently host board meetings at his home or offer tailgate barbecues to whoever showed up for the trout opener on the Clearwater River. In recognition of his ability to bring people together, the chapter presented Bob with an award for being "the glue" that held Headwaters 642 together over the years. He was a fine gentleman and will be sorely missed by all those whose lives he touched.

Kris Williams

Hiawatha Chapter

We were happy to have Monta Hayner, a guide for the Driftless Fly Fishing Company in Preston and former member of the board of Fly Fishing Women of Minnesota for a Hiawatha Chapter meeting. What she told us was applicable to women, as well as anyone interested in getting into fly fishing.

Fly Fishing Women of Minnesota had 50 to 80 members until about 10 years ago but now has 160 to 180, she said. She began with a long list of women who were pioneers or important in fly fishing. Here are a few she mentioned:

- Cornelia "Fly Rod" Crosby, 1854-1946. Maine's first registered guide, pioneered the use of lightweight fly rods and artificial lures. She had a nationally-syndicated outdoors column. She could fill an arena when she toured.

- Joan Wulff (she and her husband, Lee, once spoke to Hiawatha TU) who holds 17 national and one international title and is known for her ability to communicate.

- Mary Orvis Marbury who, at age 20, was put in charge of Orvis fly production and, in 1892, wrote about her favorite flies and their history.

- Carrie Frost thought European flies did not do well in America, so she started a fly tying operation called CJ Frost Fishing Tackle. She researched local insects and baits and replicated them. At her peak, she employed about 150 women, and Stevens Point, WI, where she had her shop, became known as the "Fly Tackle Capital of the World."

Hayner went on to talk about women-only classes across the state, including May 18 at the Driftless Fly Fishing Co., 9 a.m. June 26 at the Orvis store in St. Louis Park, a Wisconsin Women Fly Fishing Clinic near Westby with basic skills June 14 to 16 and an on-the-water



VOLUNTEERS WITH TCTU SPENT EARTH DAY CLEANING UP EAGLE CREEK.

MNTU CHAPTER NEWS



BOB FRAZEY, ONE OF THE FOUNDING MEMBERS OF THE HEADWATERS CHAPTER PASSED AWAY THIS WINTER. HE WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR STARTING THE BEMIDJITIC PROGRAM AND COULD OFTEN BE FOUND AT THE CLEARWATER RIVER TROUT OPENER WITH BBQ TO SHARE.

intermediate class June 12 to 14; Fly Fishing Women of Minnesota have ongoing classes.

Others include Orvis 101 at 9 a.m. every other Saturday at the Driftless Fly Fishing Co., and Bob Mitchell's Fly Shop in St. Paul with monthly classes. Thursday evening in the classroom and Saturday on the water. There are others that took place earlier in the year.

There are also women guides, including Hayner, Marlene Huston of Root River Rod Co. in Lanesboro, Sarah Sanford with Sanford Fly Fishing and Foraging (she has a drift boat), Liz Siepker of Driftless Fishers in Decorah, Iowa, Geri Meyer of the Driftless Angler in Viroqua, WI, and Tina Murray of Shenanigans Fly Fishing of Madison, WI.

Local clubs they can belong to include TU, Fly Fishers International - All Fish in All Waters, Women Connect and Fly Fishing Women of Minnesota.

Her next slide, however, was disturbing because it was about impediments to women getting into fly fishing. It said, "Fly fishing has not always been a welcoming environment for women." But she added "but that is changing."

She hit the most important part which was "building trust."

- Welcome new members, invite them to sit by you, get them talking.
- People learn better when they feel included and safe. Use inclusive language, not "fishermen" but "anglers" or "fishers."
- Invite them to your next meeting or event.
- Listen to them and use observing, non-verbal communication
- Share why you fly fish.

Then Hayner added that we need to

teach techniques and acknowledge the positive. But here's an interesting observation: "There is so much to learn, and someone can't learn it all at once. Don't overshare."

When asked "What is the youngest age to begin teaching fly fishing?" She said, "it all depends on the kid."

She ended with this key part: "It's all about having fun."

John Weiss

Twin Cities Chapter

We recently submitted our annual activity report to TU National, and here is the bottom line: In our last fiscal year, over 100 TCTU members donated over 2,000 hours of their time.

That is a lot of hours! It is also an underestimate, because it only captures registrations from our Events Center and board member self-reporting. And it doesn't include the 500 or so hours that 100-plus volunteers spent on Eagle Creek this April. That will go into the report next year! Whatever the total number of hours was, the results are clear. We have better habitat. We better understand the temperatures, chemistry and erosion issues of the 100-plus miles of trout water in the seven-county metro area. The Minnesota legislature passed some important legislation in the last session. And we have more kids than ever who are learning about trout and their environments. Thank you, volunteers!

This year we are going to continue to

work on the accuracy of our reporting, and on providing more recognition to our volunteers. And...we hope to have even more volunteers doing even more work!

Habitat improvement may be what TU is best known for, and we have a surprisingly large amount of water close to the Twin Cities to work on. In the next year, we are planning intensive work on Eagle Creek, the Vermillion system and Hay Creek. If you'd like to volunteer, check out the Events page on our website for upcoming projects: www.twincitiestu.org/events

I am particularly excited about the new "Meet-a-Stream" program being offered by MNTU. Youth and a parent/guardian will explore a trout stream restored by MNTU. They will learn about stream ecology by sampling macroinvertebrates to determine water quality and see what the trout are eating. Then they'll practice fly fishing skills, like casting and knot tying, before heading out to try and catch some trout. The program will be led by Evan Griggs, a professional guide and educator. The next two Meet-a-Stream events will be on August 10 on the South Branch of the Whitewater, and September 7 on the South Branch of the Vermillion. If you are a beginning trout angler, or know somebody who might be interested, check these programs out! You can find more details by scanning the QR codes below.

Bob Luck

Win-Cres Chapter

The board reviewed Win-Cres TU outreach efforts during the last month. Win-Cres worked with the Goodhue Fishing Club on April 6, from 9 to 12 p.m. at Goodhue H.S. teaching fly tying, casting, and stream safety. Unfortunately, the fishing outing with the club scheduled for April 26 was cancelled due to inclement weather. Club leader Robbie Ebner is hoping to reschedule the event, on a smaller scale for May 18 on Hay Creek. TU members also helped with the Gamehaven Scout Jamboree, teaching skills in fly tying, casting and stream awareness. Those helping were Chuck Shepard, Bruce Fuller, Mark Reisetter, John Weaver, Roger Berg, Tom Stevens, Dave Schulz and TCTU members Garry

Moore and Lee Stoe.

Roger Berg discussed the upcoming presence of Win-Cres at the Winona County Fair, July 11 to 14. The board previously approved attendance and fee payment. Roger passed a sign-up sheet around to enlist member participation at the fair.

The annual trash pickup was accomplished on April 17 by Neal Mundahl, Bruce Fuller, Roger Berg, Dusty Hoffman and Dave Schulz. Dusty Hoffman reviewed the progress on the Little Pickwick brushing project and suggested returning to the site for additional brushing on two dates in May.

Chuck Shepard reviewed his continuing work on knotweed control. He is working on the Paul Girtler property by the trailer and the pond. He is hoping to cut, spray and burn in July or August. He will also write property owners along Garvin in May or June to request permission to work on invasive species control.

The chapter is still in need of a leader for the mowing work. There are volunteers available to do the work but there is a need for a leader to make property owner contacts and arrange transportation of equipment.

Dave Schulz reported that the bamboo rod raffle was a success. A motion was passed that Win-Cres round the total proceeds for our ticket sales up to \$1,500 and send that to MNTU for the education sustaining fund.

Neal Mundahl reported on his participation in the MNTU Advisory Council. It was noted that the MNTU Habitat Committee has been formalized with Dave Shaffer as the representative of the Win-Cres chapter. Mark Reisetter also reported on the spring MNTU meeting in Lewiston on April 13.

The chapter president noted that the chapter will be reporting its total volunteer hours shortly and each volunteer needs to submit their hours (covering the year ending March 31, 2024) to Tom Stoa.

The next chapter meeting will be held June 5 at Mark Reisetter's camper on the SBWW.

Mark Reisetter



SCAN THE LEFT QR CODE FOR INFO ON TCTU'S AUGUST 10 MEET-A-STREAM EVENT. SCAN THE RIGHT CODE FOR SEPTEMBER 7 INFO.

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SELECT POETRY

By Larry Gavin

Kingfisher: Zumbro River

The kingfisher eyes me but really continues
to focus on the river. I am no threat to anyone.
He knows it. I decide I'll keep my head,
and continue upstream, and kingfisher joins
me, keeping just ahead. Vigilant.
I am not a king and can't help anyone.
I am inspired by the water moving
like a dream through the woods and over
rocks a chorus murmuring lost in thought.
Before I know it you crash into the water
and rise with a minnow held tightly
in your beak. I salute your success silently
wishing your good fortune is infectious.
Your ease and grace would help me too,
especially the grace. I hold my expectations
secret. Like an ancient story drifting
through the ages and landing here.
Just beyond understanding, a branch,
a leaf, a wing beat and then back home.

Larry Gavin is a poet from Faribault, Minnesota. He is the author of five books of poetry. His newest, A Fragile Shelter: New and Selected Poems, is available from Red Dragonfly Press. www.reddragonflypress.org



EVAN GRIGGS OF THE MNTU EDUCATION TEAM SHOWS OFF
MACROINVERTEBRATES TO EAGER TROUT IN THE CLASSROOM STUDENTS.