

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2007

TROUT TALK

SCHREMS WEST MICHIGAN TROUT UNLIMITED



Dedicated to Conserve, Protect & Restore West Michigan Cold Water Fisheries and their Watersheds

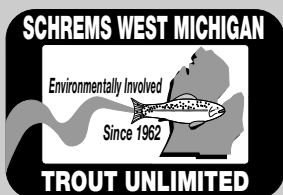
STEELHEAD SYMPOSIUM

Saturday
February 24, 2007

People can learn more
about it at:
[http://www.wmtu.org/
articles/steelhead_
symposium.html](http://www.wmtu.org/articles/steelhead_symposium.html)

SWMTU
Board Meetings
1st Tuesday of every month
6:00 PM

E-mail: wmtu@wmtu.org
Website: www.wmtu.org



President's Drift...

New Year, New Challenges

The Schrems chapter started the New Year off with a pleasant surprise being named the "Chapter of the Year" by the Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited! We received this honor at the state council meeting on January 20, 2007. This award was presented based on our membership and financial strength; our involvement and leadership in the state council; and our contribution towards conserving and protecting our coldwater resources. It was an honor to accept this award on behalf of our members and especially your hard working and dedicated board members who accomplished so much in this last year.

While we accomplished a lot and made significant progress last year, we still have many challenges and opportunities facing us in 2007. The chapter has planned a "Muskegon River Steelhead Symposium" for February 24th at the Rockford Sportsman Club. This event is free to the public and we have speakers from the DNR, local guides, and Jeff Alexander, author of "The Muskegon: The Majesty and Tragedy of Michigan's Rarest River", as part of panel of experts for the symposium.

On March 23rd, we have what could be described as our single most important event of the year, our Spring Fundraising Banquet. The majority of the money that we raise each year to support our conservation efforts comes from this banquet. I look forward to seeing a record crowd this year as we build on our success of last year's banquet. If you are unable to attend, please consider making a direct donation to the chapter to help out on our many projects. Following the banquet we will have our Muskegon River Steelhead outing on April 14th, and our Wa Wa Sum outing June 21-24.

This year will be extremely busy as we are facing many issues. Here is a brief summary of some of local ones:

- **DNR License Increase:** At our January board meeting, and also at the State Council meeting, we voted to support the DNR's license fee increase. While no one likes paying more for anything, with the reduction in General Fund support to the DNR we feel that the best way to protect our natural resources is to support this increase.
- **Nestle Wells:** The MCTU has submitted a letter to the DEQ opposing the Nestle White-Cedar-Osceola proposed well site primarily on the grounds that the existing study data fails to consider worst case scenarios. We are continuing to investigate and evaluate this proposal and we will do the same as Nestle completes its evaluation of its second proposed site later this summer (White-Cloud site).

...Presidents Report continued on page 4



Dave Smith (R) is accepting the award from MCTU's Chairperson Patrick Kochanny.

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Carl Richards: Quiet Man, A Big Revolution (Part 1)

Selective Trout Changed Everything

Editor's Note: Carl Richards, 73, co-author with Doug Swisher of the classic Selective Trout, died of cancer May 29 in a hospice near his home in Rockford, Michigan. Richards was a dentist who loved entomology. Selective Trout was perhaps the seminal publication of the modern era of fly fishing. Published in 1971, Selective Trout was one of 14 books Richards wrote on assorted and related topics. His ashes are to be scattered on Michigan's Au Sable River, his favorite place to fish for trout. Several months before his death, freelance writer Thomas Buhr interviewed Richards at his home in Rockford. Portions of that interview are presented here.

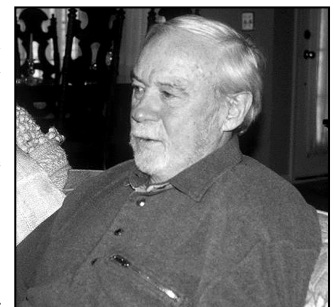
By Thomas Buhr

His friends will tell you that Carl Richards was a quiet man, even an introverted man, but the wake he created in the waters of fly fishing with friend Doug Swisher were anything but quiet.

Richards and Swisher simply revolutionized fly fishing with the publication of *Selective Trout*. The book resulted from an exhaustive effort to collect specimens, catalog them at various stages of their life cycles and create realistic patterns for fly fishing.

Swisher remembers how they first met:

"I was seeing an attorney whose office was next to Carl's Dentistry," Swisher said. "The attorney realized that Carl and I had a passion for fly fishing. He arranged a drift boat trip on what is now the Holy Waters of the Au Sable. We really hit it off and started fishing together on a regular basis."



...Carl Richards continued on page 2

....Carl Richards continued

Soon after the first trip Swisher and Richards began to challenge existing fly patterns and began to decode the hatches and solve several bothersome problems with fly selection.

"I think it was about six months after we met that the ideas that would ultimately lead to *Selective Trout* took root. They came about because of the problems we had with heavy hatches and fussy trout. I think we were able to accomplish so much on our own because we were a good match. Carl enjoyed the entomology. I liked the casting and pattern design."

Neither Swisher nor Richards set out to write a book. They were just two trout fanatics looking for a way to catch more fish. A fishing trip with *Outdoor Life* Fishing Editor, Joe Brooks, led to an article about the no-hackle fly. Brooks thought a book was in order.

"Joe Brooks was the greatest man I ever met and probably the most famous fly fisher ever," Swisher said. "We just wanted to have information on insects and patterns that we would have handy in the trunk of our car. He took us to his publisher, we showed him what we had, and the rest is history."

The effect was immediate.

"I remember reading *Selective Trout* with my grandfather when it first came out," recalled Glenn Blackwood, host of *Fly Fishing* with Glenn Blackwood. "Until then, we didn't know the names of the bugs or their hatch cycles. *Selective Trout* taught us what those bugs were, when they hatched and mated, and, most importantly, how to tie the proper patterns for each fly from nymph to spinner. Carl and Doug took a very complex and encompassing set of scientific data and made it understandable to the layperson. It is one of the most impressive achievements ever in this sport."

Selective Trout was followed by *Fly Fishing Strategies*, an effort to address presentation with the same level of precision as fly selection, and several other books with similar methods. During my interview with him for this article, Richards reflected on his experiences as a fisher and a writer.

How would you characterize the sport of fly fishing in the days before *Selective Trout*?

It was dominated by the busy, heavy-hackled Catskill and English patterns as well as big-bodied western flies. There was little knowledge about entomology, hatch cycles, and regional differences. Some of the eastern fly fishers knew what the bugs were, but this was not true in Michigan. For example, what the easterners were correctly identifying as Hendricksons were known as Borchers Drakes in Michigan. That was pretty much how it was back then.

Was there a significant event or a combination of factors that lead to the writing of *Selective Trout*?

Both, we found that the standard patterns just would not work. The stuff in books by Art Flick, Vince Marinaro and Ernie Schwiebert were fine for real fast waters, like many rivers found in the east, but not for smooth waters.

The event that probably brought it all together was a morning we were fishing just above Rusty Gates' place on the main stream of the Au Sable. We'd known each other about six months at this time. A big hatch of little blue-winged olives was going on and the fish were rising everywhere. Neither of us could get a hit using the exact patterns recommended to us. We watched a whole pod of brook trout feeding as a large group of naturals drifted by. I threw my fly in amongst them. The fish ate all the naturals while ignoring my fly. I could tell my fly very easily among the naturals because it had all this fuzz on it, the hackle, and the natural didn't.

Now up until then every book that had ever been written said you have to have hackle on a fly or it would sink like a rock. I wondered if that was true. I had tried to fish fur nymphs and I could hardly get them to sink. I talked to Doug about it. At that time I had a cabin on the North Branch, so we spent that night tying up versions of these little olives with no hackle, a different set of wings, and dressed them real well. We went back the next day and I noticed my fly drifted well when I could see it at all. Half the time I couldn't tell the naturals from mine. We each caught 22 trout and it was the first time either of us had caught a trout on that hatch. That's what got the no-hackle pattern approach going. After that, we decided to start taking close up photos of insects and close up photos of our flies to see what was different.

How did you acquire the skills for this careful analysis?

I don't know. I just had an intense interest.

Back in those days there were no macro photography cameras. What you had to do was take a standard 35 mm SLR camera, put an adapter on

it, reverse the lens, and then you could get macro pictures. Then we had the problem of lighting because the light meter wouldn't work. It was trail and error. You shot a whole roll of film at different F-stops and whatever one worked that's what you used.

Doug Swisher said there's no one in the universe who knows more about the insects fish eat than you do. How did you go about acquiring this specialized knowledge?

I just bought the books and read them. There was a book called *Mayflies of Michigan Trout Streams* that showed you how to use the microscope. I already knew how to use microscopes, but the problem was the microscopes we were using in pathology and histology were way too strong for examining insects. I went to a camera store and got a dissection microscope which had the right level of power, 5 to 50. I already had eastern keys to patterns and got a hold of two Ph.D. dissertations from Idaho and Utah with all the western keys. I read them and keyed out the patterns. I never actually talked to an entomologist. I did it on my own. Having a medical background gave me a tremendous advantage in this process.

How long after *Selective Trout* did you decide to do *Fly Fishing Strategies*?

I think it was about four years. A guy from Chicago wanted me to guide him on the Au Sable. He was a multi-millionaire as I remember. I told him I wasn't a guide, but I'd take him fishing. It was a Trico hatch. I gave him the right fly and let him fish in front of me. He never caught a fish and I caught about 30. At that point I realized there was more to it than just having the right fly. Then we had to stop and figure out what we were doing. We had never really studied casting. We had been doing it for so many years we just did it. Then we figured out what we were doing and wrote *Fly Fishing Strategy*. We took pictures of various types of casts. We even did leaders for the leader formula in the book. We'd cast with just hands and wrists to determine which leaders had the biggest and tiniest loops.

NOTE: Carl Richards, *Quiet Man* - is a 2 part article. Look for this to be continued in our March/April issue of *Trout Talk*

Hexes and Drakes!



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Just Beyond the Bend...

Great Lakes Steelhead History and Tactics (Part 1)

By Dick Smith

Steelhead have been in Michigan since 1876. Rainbow trout have been a spectacular success in the Great Lakes.

A lot of Atlantic salmon were planted in Michigan streams before rainbow trout were tried, but the Atlantics were a consistent failure. Atlantic salmon were native to Lake Ontario, and there were fabulous runs of them there in the middle of the nineteenth century, so it was assumed that they would do well in the Upper Great Lakes. Atlantic salmon were planted in Michigan from 1873 to 1880, but they never did very well. Excessive harvesting and pollution destroyed the Lake Ontario Atlantic salmon runs. By the start of the twentieth century and there were no Atlantics in any of the Great Lakes.

When rainbows were first brought to Michigan, steelhead were considered to be a different species from the rainbow. Steelhead were classified as *Salmo gairdneri*. Gairdner was the name of the man who provided the original specimens for classification. The rainbow was classified as *Salmo irideus* (iridescent, from the Greek word Iris for rainbow). Today, the rainbow trout is classified as *Oncorhynchus mykiss*. It is generally divided into six subspecies, and two of them have the old species names.

The coastal rainbow has the subspecies name *irideus*. The redband of the Columbia and Fraser Rivers has the subspecies name *gairdneri*. They are the two subspecies of rainbows that produce steelhead. The coastal rainbows generally produce steelhead that return to their rivers between November and April. The redbands tend to be earlier fish that are back in their rivers by the end of October.

The first known rainbow eggs to leave California went to Seth Green at the Caledonia hatchery in New York in 1874. They were fish from the McCloud River and they were classified as *Salmo irideus*. Rainbows from the Caledonia hatchery were introduced into the Au Sable in Michigan by Judge Daniel Fitzhugh of Bay City in 1876.

In 1885, the hatchery at Big Rapids received its first shipment of rainbows, and those fish eventually went into the Pere Marquette, the Muskegon, and the Hersey River. Then the Platte, the Manistee, and the Saint Marys River were stocked. The Soo rapids of the Saint Marys became one of the most celebrated rainbow fisheries in the world. Ernest Hemingway called it, "The Best Rainbow Trout Fishing in the World." Ray Bergman devoted about six pages to it in the chapter on bucktails and streamers in his book Trout.

In 1904, fish that were classified as *Salmo gairdneri* and thought to be pure steelhead, were brought to the Northville hatchery. They were planted in some of the larger streams on the assumption that they would migrate to the Great Lakes, and they did, just as many of the fish from the earlier rainbow plants had done.

Lamprey eels entered the Upper Great Lakes through the Welland Ship Canal, which opened in 1932. By 1950, they were a serious problem. Lampreys select the largest available fish when they choose the fish to which they will attach. They killed a lot of lake trout and steelhead in the nineteen fifties. Back then a five-pound steelhead was considered a very big one.

My first steelhead was caught in the spring of 1956, and it was twenty-three inches long. A few years later, when I caught one that was twenty-eight inches long, my father said it was the largest steelhead he had ever seen.

The number of steelhead counted at the weir on the Little Manistee River each year in the 1950s was between 1,000 and 3,000 fish.

The lamprey control efforts of the nineteen sixties worked well enough so in 1970, the count at the weir was over 17,000 fish, and the average steelhead checked at the weir weighed over 11 pounds.

NOTE: *Great Lakes Steelhead History and Tactics* is a 2 part article. Look for this to be continued in our March/April issue of Trout Talk

from the Riffles...

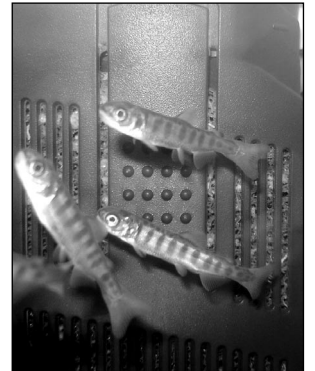
Salmon in the Classroom Update...

Mike Hoekwater of Calvin Christian High School gives us this update on his Salmon in the Classroom project.

Our class got the salmon eggs mid-November. I took my classes to the Wolf Lake hatchery and we got a nice tour of the place. The eggs we received were "eyed-up", meaning you could see the fish eyes in the eggs. We probably got around 100 eggs.

The fish began hatching about three weeks later in December. For the first few weeks after hatching, the fish can't swim and they stay on the bottom of the tank. They have a yolk sac attached that they feed from. Over our Christmas break, some of the fish had used up most of their yolk and were beginning to swim up.

I received food for them from the DNR. Now we are feeding them a small amount of food twice a day. It's been a very interesting learning experience so far, probably even more for me than for my students! It's been a lot of fun too.



Save the Date!!

42nd Annual Fundraiser Banquet • March 23rd, 2007

Please join us for the 42nd annual SWMTU annual banquet at The Highlands at the Elks Country Club scheduled for March 23rd. We've listened to your suggestions in the past and have selected this venue for this year's event. With increased seating, enhanced menu items and centrally located within the Greater Grand Rapids area, The Highland at the Elks Country Club should make for a wonderful evening.

This year's event will be memorable with enhanced raffle items including camping gear, personal electronics and of course numerous Rod/Reel packages from all of the top manufacturers.

We are also seeking donations of items that could be raffled, or included in the auctions. We will gladly arrange for pick-up of any item(s), please contact JR Hartman at 616-453-8344 or jr@hhmetalsource.com.

SWMTU has a mission to conserve, protect and restore West Michigan's trout and salmon fisheries and their watersheds. Our fundraising events help us achieve this goal. We sincerely appreciate your attendance and support of this worthy cause.

Watch for your invitation in the mail soon!

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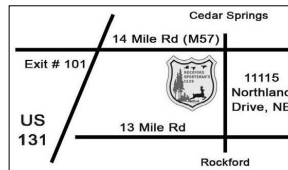
Graphics/Layout:**Robert McKeon Design**
rmckeon2@cox.net**MISSION STATEMENT**

To conserve, protect and restore West Michigan's coldwater fisheries and their watersheds and to provide a forum for the exchange of information concerning coldwater fisheries and the techniques and the sport of trout fishing.

SWMTU EVENT CALENDAR • 2007**Steelhead Symposium**
Saturday, February 24, 2007
From 1:00 pm to 5:30 pm**Friday, March 23, 2007**
Annual Fundraising Banquet**Saturday, April 14, 2007**
SWMTU Steelhead outing**June 21-24, 2007**
Membership meeting at Wa Wa Sum**Presidents Report continued from page 1**

• **Tyler Creek / Rogue River:** Schrems has submitted two Embrace a Stream grant applications for projects on both of these rivers this year. I hope you will join us in helping to bring these projects from concept to reality by donating some of your time later this year. I can promise you that we will have no shortage of volunteer opportunities this year! Also as part of our response to the Tyler Creek fish kill that occurred last year, we proposed an addition to our MCTU Conservation agenda that commits us to working with the Michigan Department of Agriculture to add a risk assessment process for manure application to the best practices that farmers use in their daily operations. We feel that the addition of this risk assessment tool will help lower the chances of manure being washed into our favorite streams and lakes. Our proposal was adopted by the MCTU at the January 20th meeting.

In closing, we need your support to protect our resources. I hope you will attend our spring Fundraising banquet or make a direct donation to the chapter and please consider volunteering your time when it comes to our in-stream projects later this year.

Tight Lines**Dave Smith, SWMTU President***Schrems West Michigan Trout Unlimited Presents***Muskegon River Steelhead Symposium****Saturday, February 24, 2007 • 1:00 pm to 5:30 pm****Location: Rockford Sportsman Club****11115 Northland Dr., N.E. • Rockford, MI 49341-8005****Cost is FREE! • Refreshments provided.****Speakers include: DNR Biologists and Local Guides*****Seating is limited so please RSVP at wmtu@wmtu.org***

2006-07 COMMITTEES: **Conservation:** Dave Smith, Chair – Paul Eberhart, Dick Smith, Ron Barch, Bradley Boomstra
Membership: Gregg Start, Dave DeJonge, Andy Milnes, George Carroll • **Communications:** Gregg Start, Dave DeJonge, Ron Barch, Dick Smith
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