

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2006



TROUT TALK

Schrems West Michigan Trout Unlimited



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



President's Report...



It was not how I expected my summer to turn out. My assumption as we headed into our annual WMTU outing at Wa Wa Sum was that Eric Starck would stay on one more year as our president, but as we started our annual meeting, Eric made it clear that he thought it was time for someone else to take over the chapter's leadership. After some deliberations, the board elected me to the office and one member who witnessed the meeting described it as the most low-key campaign for office that he had ever observed. We owe a lot of thanks to Eric for his leadership these last two years and I look forward to his support and advice as he continues to serve on the board.

Since that election, this summer for me has been anything but low-key. So far I have exchanged letters with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on our concerns over the effectiveness of the lamprey barrier on the Pere Marquette and the continuing need to treat the river with the chemical TFM to control the lamprey population. We have also conducted conservation projects along Stegman Creek and the Coldwater River, and I spent one evening with Josh Zuiderveen, the Timberland RC&D Stream Care Project Manager, inspecting some of the other work he has completed along Stegman Creek. We had our first board meeting since the election on August 1st, and just recently, we had the fish kill on Tyler Creek, which we are in the process of responding to. All this activity in just the last six weeks!

While I am a relative newcomer to Trout Unlimited, I am the type of person that once I make a commitment to do something, I become fully involved. Fortunately, I have had some great teachers and mentors over the last few years that have shared with me their love of trout fishing and their desire to protect our cold-water resources. Dick Pobst sold me my first fly rod in 1999, an 8-weight rod that I was going to use for big pike up in Canada. While I did not get much use out of that rod the first year, I enjoyed the experience and came back to Dick for a 4 weight rod and Trout School the following year where I learned from Dick, Wade Seeley, and Dave Hise. It was in preparation for this school that I purchased my first pair of waders, Hodgman breathables that came with a one-year free membership to Trout Unlimited. My first WMTU meeting was in January of 2001 when I attended one of the seminars with the desire to learn more about trout fishing. Later that year, I renewed my TU membership as a Life Member and was talked into joining the WMTU board in 2004. Other mentors and teachers include Steve Fraley, John Kluesing, Glenn Blackwood, Matt Supinski, and several of our current WMTU board members.

As President, I have three major areas where I would like to focus this next year. These are in no special order. First, I would like to increase the financial transparency of our chapter so that we all have a better understanding of how our donations are spent. Look for a financial report in our next newsletter. Second, I want to continue our work towards increasing our partnerships with other organizations in order to increase our own effectiveness in improving our resources. These partnerships include the Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited and other TU chapters. We have successfully worked with both the Lansing and Kalamazoo chapters as well as the Chicago Oakbrook chapter on several projects on the Coldwater River in the last year. We also want to start partnering with local schools through our sponsorship of Salmon in the Classroom programs which we will be funding this year, and local watershed councils and Timberland RC&D as we develop and implement plans to protect our local trout streams. Finally, I want to continue our focus on trout habitat, protecting the streams where they live. To do this, we need to expand our habitat projects and focus more on education for the riparian landowners so that we can prevent the pollution and damage to our trout streams like the recent fish kill on Tyler Creek. All of our Michigan trout streams face challenges of many kinds and I hope that you will work with me and the rest of the Schrems West Michigan Trout Unlimited board of directors to make a positive impact to conserve, protect and restore coldwater fisheries.

Dave Smith, President WMTU

SWMTU Honors Carl Richards

Trout fisherman everywhere were saddened to hear that one of the major revolutionaries of the sport of fly fishing for trout, Carl Richards, died on Memorial Day. • Carl was one of the key early members of the Schrems West Michigan chapter of Trout Unlimited and he authored 14 books on aquatic insects and fly-fishing, including the classic "Selective Trout" (1971). His involvement in the chapter, the state council, and his expansion of the art, skills, and lore of trout fishing lead to Carl receiving the chapter's Cornelius Schrems Award in 1976. • Carl's widow, Alicia Richards, asked for donations in memory of Carl be given to SWMTU. Currently, the Chapter has received \$500 in donations from several individuals in honor of Carl Richards, which we will use to conserve, protect, and restore our cold-water fisheries. *Please join us in honoring one of our own local pioneers of trout fishing.*



Photo (circa 1966) is credited to Dick Pobst who collaborated along with Carl recently on books & articles regarding caddis flies (*The Caddisfly Handbook, An Orvis Streamside Guide*) and modern approaches to aquatic subjects. Richards' pursuit was an on going subject on and off the stream. His passion and discoveries are recognized the moment we search the fly bins at any local fly shop. His discoveries alone have brought each of us a collection of memories and how we now fish our favorite streams. - R.McKeon

DINNER SEMINARS

COMING
THIS
WINTER!

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

E-mail: wmtu@wmtu.org

Website: www.wmtu.org



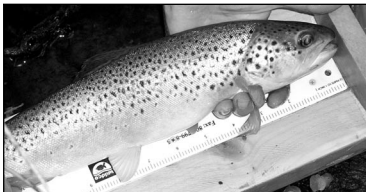
from the Riffles...

WMTU Partners with Timberland RC&D on Stegman Creek

By Dave Smith

On June 10 and again on July 15th, volunteers from WMTU met with Josh Zuiderveen and Aaron Brooks from Timberland Resource Conservation and Development. Josh is the Stream Care Project Manager for Timberland and is the person responsible for organizing the logistics of the two projects. The stream improvements took place at two locations along Stegman Creek, a tributary of the Rogue River, between Rector Avenue and 13 Mile Road just north of Rockford. Stegman Creek is a very cold water tributary of the Rogue, and during the peak summer temperatures, it provides a comfortable refuge to many trout from the Rogue.

June 10th found WMTU members Dave DeJonge and Jim Scott hard at work with Josh and Aaron installing wood "kickers" to narrow the creek and increase the velocity of the water, scouring the bottom and removing built up sand and exposing the underlying gravel. Other wood structures were installed to protect the opposing banks from erosion and to provide cover for trout. Within a few weeks of this project, we found that the depth of the stream had increased exposing the



gravel and trout inhabited nearly every new structure!

July 15th found WMTU members Jim Flamming, Michael Wolff, and Dave Smith joining Josh and Aaron for more stream work on a hot and steamy summer day. Fortunately the work site was located in an area with nice shade cover, and the cool waters of Stegman Creek helped to beat the heat. We completed a couple of structures along a very nice stretch of stream as we carried in logs, drilled, and cabled them in to support poles. It was not difficult to imagine the trout that soon would inhabit this stretch of river!



WMTU pledged \$500 to Timberland for 2006 to cover the costs for these projects plus we donated over \$300 in labor support and some pine logs that were cut from the Dolan Nature Area. For 2007, the board has already committed \$2,000 for similar projects along the Rogue River and Stegman Creek in addition to more volunteer labor support. If you are interested in helping out on any of these or similar projects, please feel free to contact any WMTU board member.

...from the Fly Bench

FLOATING SOFT HACKLES

By Dick Smith

My friend Evert VanderWal spent a lot of the first summer after he retired fishing the Muskegon River. He fished almost every day and he developed a system of fishing soft hackle flies that has worked extremely well on the Muskegon, the Manistee, and almost everywhere else we've tried it.

The flies he uses are simple and easy to tie, and his method is easy to learn. He is better at it than I am, and when we fish the Muskegon together, he generally catches more fish than I do.

I tend to be somewhat impatient, and I'm a fly changer by nature. After I go a while without any action, I start changing flies, and then I finally rig up so I can fish a streamer. Sometimes I'm rewarded for that with a pretty good trout, but more often than not, Evert catches several nice fish while I'm fiddling around with my tackle. He has the patience to stick with what he knows will work, and if the conditions are reasonable, he will catch more trout than I do, and he usually gets the biggest fish of the day.

His flies are tied on size fourteen or sixteen light wire dry fly hooks. Poly dubbing or spun fur, whichever you like best, can be used for the bodies. Evert uses poly dubbing and I like spun fur. The bodies are tied like dry flies with no tail. Small soft body feathers are used for hackles. I like woodcock body feathers. One of the three best patterns has a tan body and a light honey colored feather from a woodcock's breast. I use hare's ear for the body. Evert uses tan dubbing. Another good one has a body of light beaver brown and a mottled feather from a woodcock's back for hackle. The third has a muskrat gray body and a light colored feather from a woodcock's belly. Since the flies are tied on light wire hooks with dry fly material for bodies they will float on top, or in the surface film.

The fly is generally cast across and slightly downstream. At first the fly is fished dead drift on the surface as an emerging caddis. Sometimes a little movement, even a foot-long pull over the surface, will bring a slashing strike from a fish. When the current pulls the fly under, it is allowed to swing around in the current like a nymph or wet fly. Some days, the fish will only take the fly when it's underwater on the swing. On other days, it seems like the larger fish will only take it on the surface. I never put any floatant on that type of fly. They will typically float in the surface film again after a false cast to get the moisture out. A floating soft hackle can be difficult to see on broken water because it rides right in the surface film, or sometimes just under it. If a fish rises anywhere around where I think my fly might be, I tighten the line and make a miniature strike that will only move the fly a few inches, just in case the rising fish has taken my fly. If the rise wasn't to my fly, sometimes the little bit of motion caused by my strike will attract a trout's attention and then the fish takes the fly.

A soft hackle with a spun fur body works very well as a dry fly on the surface, and when I see a nice fish rising, I generally make my cast slightly downstream and put the fly on the water about two or three feet above the fish. If it's a big fish, sometimes I don't fish the cast out underwater after the fly sinks. I just concentrate on the one rising fish.

If the fish won't take the fly on the surface, I cast farther up above it and pull the fly under so it drifts down to the fish just below the surface, and that often works. A floating soft hackle works very well when it's cast upstream and fished strictly on the surface, and it works very well when it's cast downstream and across and pulled under as soon as it's on the water. But by far the most effective way of fishing the floating soft hackles when wading, or anchored in a boat, has been to let them drift as far as they will go on the surface and then fish out the rest of the cast with the fly as a nymph. I let the fly hang in the current below me a few seconds before picking it up. Then I dry it with a false cast or two and put it back on the water again. I have taken some really nice browns and rainbows with the fly just hanging downstream in the current an inch or two below the surface.



I have tied the floating soft hackles in a lot of different body colors, light beaver brown, and muskrat seem to be the best early in the season. Tan or hare's ear bodies begin to produce better in the summer, and it's always good to have a couple flies with black bodies and hackles that are mottled black and brown. A fly with a black body and black colored feather sometimes works very well in the early season when the Chimarra caddis are on the water. They usually emerge at the same time of year that the Hendricksons do, and then again in the summer during early July, and again in late August. VanderWal's soft hackle patterns are designed to imitate caddis, but they pass well for any kind of emerger, whether it's a mayfly or a caddis.

Typically, many of the smaller body feathers of a woodcock are just the right size and color for those flies, but almost any small soft body feathers will work, and gray partridge (*Perdix perdix*), which are also commonly called Hungarian partridge feathers are very good. Partridge and woodcock feathers both require careful handling with the hackle pliers, but they are very durable once they are tied in place.

VanderWal's patterns are very effective. In my never-ending quest to improve a fly pattern by adding something to it, or changing something, I have improved some of them to the point where they won't catch fish anymore. But so far I have not been able to do anything to improve his floating soft hackles, or to prevent them from catching any fish.

Just Beyond the Bend...

This letter comes to us from Utah Taylor. The SWMTU Chapter sponsored this attendance at a Trout Camp held by the Kalamazoo Valley Chapter of TU this summer. SWMTU plans to continue sponsoring students at the camp next summer and into the future. Check upcoming newsletters or www.wmtu.org for how you can nominate a student.

Dear SWMTU,

The Trout fishing camp was excellent. The instructors were very kind and helpful. They helped me learn a lot throughout the week with fly and knot tying. Those were two of my favorite things to do during the day. The flies I tied weren't the best, but it was a start to my fly tying experience. The knots I learned to tie saved my life on the river at night.

The evenings were filled with beautiful sunsets and fishing. I caught 3 fish all together. The first one was a ten inch brown trout and the other two were blue gill. The hospitality was great and the rooms were nice and cozy. The rooms kept you warm and always gave you a good night sleep. The food was exceptional every day and night. They served all of my favorites like fish, spaghetti and chicken. I had a great time at the camp and want to thank you so much for sponsoring me!

Sincerely,
Utah Taylor



SWMTU Investigates Tyler Creek Fish Kill

Sometime between midnight and 8:00 am on July 28th, 2006, a fish kill occurred on Tyler Creek between 76th Street and its confluence with the Coldwater River. As many as 2,000 brown trout, ranging from 3 to 20 inches, were found floating in Tyler Creek.

A spokesperson from the Michigan DEQ said a state investigation showed a long heat wave and a heavy rain the night before likely depleted oxygen levels in the creek, leading to the kill.

If you were fishing in this area and have any knowledge of this event, please contact Jay Wesley MDNR fisheries biologist at (269) 685-6851 Ext. 117.

Jim Bedford of the Lansing TU chapter originally reported this fish kill and SWMTU is working with the Lansing chapter and the Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited to follow this issue. Ron Barch, SWMTU board member will take the lead in this effort assisted by Paul Eberhart, Jim Bedford, and other TU members.

SWMTU has filed a Freedom of Information request from the DEQ and DNR so that we can reach an independent conclusion as to the cause and contributing circumstances to this environmental disaster. For future updates, check out the MCTU website at www.mctu.org or the WMTU website at www.wmtu.org.

No More SWMTU Voice Creel

Effective October 1st, 2006, SWMTU is eliminating our Voice Creel telephone line. This is a cost savings measure that will save the chapter roughly \$270/year. The majority of our members have switched to email correspondence using wmtu@wmtu.org, while usage of the Voice Creel has dwindled. For those members who do not have access to email, or prefer to use voice communication, please feel free to contact any officer of the board, and we will be happy to give you assistance, or answer any questions you may have.

Thank you,
JR Hartman
SWMTU Treasurer

Volunteers needed for Communications Committee

SWMTU is looking to expand its communications with its members. To do so, the Chapter needs help from people like you. Experience with newsletters, websites and email is helpful. To volunteer, please contact Dave DeJonge at 616-771-9690.

Join us for a Texas Hold-em Tournament!

Shuffle up and deal! We are extremely excited to announce our 1st Annual "Texas Hold-em for Trout" Fundraising Tournament to be held **Saturday October 14th at the Holiday Inn Crown Plaza** on 28th Street in Cascade. This will be a no-limit Texas Hold-em poker tournament starting at 7:00 PM and ending at midnight, or when one person wins all the chips! Doors will open at 6:00 PM for registration. There will be free hors d'oeuvres available and a cash bar at this event.

Cost is \$60.00 per person with a maximum of 100 entries. This is a low-pressure, fun event and a great opportunity to meet other TU members. The winner of the tournament will take home \$500, with cash prizes awarded to the top ten finishers. Proceeds from the event will be used locally to support our Salmon in the Classroom school programs. For more information regarding Salmon in the Classroom, please visit our website, www.wmtu.org. Entrants do not need to be current TU members so please encourage your family and friends to join us. **Space is limited so please RSVP no later than September 29th at wmtu@wmtu.org or contact JR Hartman at 616-453-8344.**

SWMTU Fundraising Committee

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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

Saturday, October 7, 2006

Salmon Fishing Trip on the Muskegon River.

Everyone welcome, bring a friend or family member. Please RSVP to Gregg Start at 616-481-1042 or wmtu@wmtu.org. See www.wmtu.org for more details.

Saturday, October 14, 2006

As a new fundraising initiative, SWMTU

is organizing a Texas Hold'em poker tourney. This charitable event offers you and your friends the opportunity to test your poker skills while supporting a worthy cause. You do not need to be a SWMTU member to attend. Cash prizes will be awarded. For more information and to RSVP, contact JR Hartman at 616-453-8344.

June 21 - 24, 2007 -- Membership meeting and annual outing at Wa Wa Sum

KNOWLEDGE

FLY FISHING QUIZ

1. What action in the casting stroke loads the rod?

- A) The drift move B) Stopping the rod C) Follow through D) Acceleration to a stop

2. The size of the casting arc should:

- A) Vary from 45 to 50 degrees B) Increase as the rod bend increases C) Never exceed 45 degrees D) Decrease as the rod bend increases

3. Which of the following is true? Large arbor/large diameter reels:

- A) Require less turns (and time) in retrieving line B) Spin faster when a fish takes line C) Are louder than small arbor reels D) Increase memory in fly lines

4. An off shoulder cast:

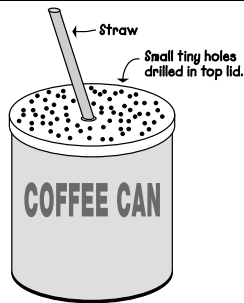
- A) Is only useful for left handed casters B) Changes the position of the rod hand C) Is useful in a right hand wind (for a right handed caster) D) Requires changing your rod to your non dominant hand

Answers: 1. (D); 2. (D); 3. (A); 4. (C)

(by Liz Watson of the Northwest Women Flyfishers)

HOME BREW DUBBING BLENDER

Illustrated by R. McKeon



An idea from an old magazine.... use an old coffee can to make a dubbing blender (instead of the loving spouse's coffee grinder or kitchen blender). Simply take an old (clean) coffee can; punch a hole in the center of the plastic lid so that a drinking straw will fit; punch a bunch, say 30 to 40, small holes with a nail or awl in the plastic lid; put a plastic straw through the center hole; put the unblended dubbings in the can and then blow a few times.

The small holes (if you made them "small"), will allow the air to escape and the air movement inside the can will stir up / blend the dubbings. This may not get you the most blended of dubbings, but hopefully a mixture that still looks like "bug fur" to the fish.

PS- Don't forget to exhale into the straw, not inhale. Those fur balls can be murder!

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, Michael Lindley
Fundraising: Andy Milnes, Chair- Jim Scott, Teresa Skye, Larry Risbridger, Robert Fox, Michael Lindley, Erick Stark
State Council: Paul Eberhart, Eric Starck



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