

Newscasts

December 2007 Serving the Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited



December 11 Meeting

The state of Wisconsin's waters

The December 11 SWTU meeting, as usual, will be at the Coliseum Bar and Grill on Olin Ave. Dinner is at 6 p.m. and the meeting begins at 7.

December's meeting is important to our chapter and will provide us with a broader understanding of the impact we can make on our cold water resources. Todd Ambs, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Water Division Administrator, will bring us up to speed on the latest developments and issues affecting our water resource. Todd will discuss non-point pollution, ground water quality and quantity, The Great Lakes Compact, fish disease and other issues of interest and importance.

Prior to his current position as Water Division Administrator Todd served as the Executive Director of the River Alliance of Wisconsin. You won't want to miss this meeting – it will give us some renewed insight and a broader understanding of the importance of Southern Wisconsin Trout Unlimited's impact on both our local and statewide water resources. See you on the 11th!!

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The Giving Season

Consider a gift to the cold water resource

Thanksgiving is behind us, trout season is long past and the season of giving has arrived. There is no better way to say thank you for our cold water blessings than to join those members who make an annual donation to our Chapter Endowment Fund.

The Fund was established in 2005 with the mission of taking advantage of every opportunity to carry out stream projects that nurture our cold water resources back to health.

Our goal is to raise **\$3,000** before the New Year – if we are successful we can increase the reach of our stream restoration projects. **We need your generous financial support.** Please use the Web link or contact information at the end of this article to send your tax deductible contribution today!

A gift for the fly fisher who has everything

Is "impossible to buy for" a label that applies to you? Do you not know what to ask for, and wonder why you get such oddly useless gifts?

SWTU to the rescue!!

Tell your friends and family that you'd like an improved coldwater resource – and they can help by making a donation to the SWTU Endowment Fund in your name. Only "interest earned" by the Endowment is used to support restoration efforts, so the gift is truly a lasting legacy.

You can access a donation form at www.swtu.org/how_to_give.html. The larger the Endowment Fund, the more we can help! For questions or to donate, contact John Schweiger at (608) 238-8062 or johnrose55@charter.net.

You-Must-Be-Present-To-Win

Longtime chapter member LeRoy Ebert won \$100 in November, so the *You Must Be Present to Win Drawing* is back to \$20. Please join us at our December 11 chapter meeting for a chance to win a \$20 gift certificate to *Fontana Sports Specialties*. You need only be present (and able to discern the calling of your own name) to win.

Icebreaker & Fly Tying Classes – See page 2!

An Icebreaker for the Ages

Top speakers, great people and a new venue

By Josh Palmer, Icebreaker Chair

Saturday, January 19th draws ever closer and 2008 is looking to be a vintage year for the Icebreaker. The new location – **the Promega Center in Fitchburg** – will fit the event perfectly. There is a comfortable auditorium in which to enjoy and learn from our expert speakers, as well as a large classroom where our talented fly tyers will set up. There is a cafeteria and an atrium to house the SWTU exhibits and Mike Miller's live aquatic insect display. Please make note of the new location and be sure to mention it to your friends. Transition times can be confusing, so it's best to be sure that everyone is aware of the change.

Find all event information at www.SWTU.org. Click the Icebreaker link to find a schedule of events, map to the Promega Center and a copy of the poster. You will also find information on the Friday night Nash Williams banquet and the fisherman's breakfast the morning of the event. Also listed are opportunities to volunteer your time or donate a raffle or door prize. If you can't find the answer on-line, contact Josh Palmer at (608) 333-4084 or joshuacpalmer@gmail.com.

Your Icebreaker speakers are...

As mentioned in November's *Newscasts*, **Tom Rosenbauer from Orvis** is our national guest. He is an author, innovator, inventor and world traveling fly-fisherman. He has written *The Orvis Fly-Fishing Guide* and other fascinating books. Tom plans to speak about conservation at the Nash Williams Banquet the night before the Icebreaker. His Icebreaker presentations will be "Fly-Fishing in the Eastern U.S." and "Reading the Water."

Put away those four weight rods the next speakers. **Larry Mann and Wendy Williamson from The Hayward Fly-Fishing Company** will talk about their experiences as warm water guides in Northern Wisconsin. This is a great opportunity to expand your trout horizons. After all, Wisconsin's state fish is the muskie, and it will feel good to let a little warm water expertise into your cold water hearts. Pike, smallmouth, and the muskie will take center stage.

Ok, it's safe to pick up the four weights again. **Mat Wagner from the Driftless Angler Fly-Shop** is our final speaker. Mat hand-picked Viroqua, WI as the place to move his family and set up shop. Mat's enthusiasm for the Driftless Area is second to none, and he has a unique perspective since he chose to relocate here from the famed fishery of the Rocky Mountains.

A raffle to drool over...

All of that and there is the year's best bucket raffle to boot. Paul Douglas is donating a beautiful bamboo rod, Greg Erickson is making a fly tying desk, Jim Gentry is creating one of his elegant rod racks, and Jim Bartelt is building a St. Croix from blank to beauty. Reels, flies, a top-notch vice, a net or two, gift certificates and door prizes are up for grabs, as well

The Icebreaker is SWTU's marquee fundraiser of the year. It will be almost as much fun as fishing.

Raffle and Door Prize Items Needed

Dear TU Members,

One thing people talk about and look forward to for the Icebreaker is the great door prizes and raffle items. The Icebreaker is next month and we still need items for door prizes and bucket raffles. If you can help us, please let me know what you have to contribute. We are in need of reels, flies and all types of gear. Nothing is too large or too small – anything you can contribute would be appreciated and help our chapter help the habitat. If you have questions or an item to give, please e-mail me at jhjekanvik@charter.net.

Thank you,
James Kanvik

Fly Tying Classes – Register Now!

SWTU's Beginning, Intermediate and Advanced fly tying courses provide general instruction on fly tying techniques and specific demonstrations of patterns proven effective in local waters.

Classes in Fitchburg meet for 10 consecutive weeks beginning 1/16/08. Classes in Sun Prairie meet for 10 consecutive weeks beginning 1/17/08. Classes at both locations run from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Find a photo gallery of flies from the Beginner class at www.swtu.org/begin_flies/flies_dest/index.htm.

Advanced registration is required! Details on how to register can be found at www.swtu.org/flytying.html.

Classified

Help Wanted: Fly-angler (45yo) looking for experienced bamboo rod builder or someone with bamboo rod restoration/refinishing experience willing to mentor me on some winter projects. Need advice on various aspects of the process. Fee negotiable. Contact Andy at awflyfish@hotmail.com or call 265-2503.

Fountains of Youth

A look at classic flies that have withstood the test of time ... flies that remain "forever young"

By Rusty Dunn

You arrive at your favorite stream on a mid-summer afternoon. The air is heavy and still. The water low and clear. Major hatches are about over for the year. No bugs in the air. No hoppers in the grass yet. The only insect you've seen was back in town at the fast food restaurant. But there, in a glassy smooth pool, downstream of a riffle, in the shade of a tree, fish are rising. Their rise forms seem impossibly gentle. A leisurely little sip ... a tiny dimple ... a barely visible ring ... that quickly disappears. Ghostly rises to invisible insects by unseen fish. Looking more closely, you finally see the source of all the commotion. Tiny black midges swarm above the stream.

What should you do?

- (A) Start crying;
- (B) curse loudly and kick the nearest living thing;
- (C) take down your rod and head for a bar; or
- (D) tie on a Griffith's Gnat.

The correct answer is (D), but be prepared to follow up with choices A-C. Midges truly are "The Fisherman's Curse."

George Griffith (1901-1998) was patriarch and protector of Michigan's legendary Au Sable River. He lived on its banks near Grayling, MI in a reach known widely as "The Holy Water." The Au Sable's water may be holy today, but it still suffers from an unholy past. Michigan's north country was an angler's paradise in the early 19th century. Large brook trout and grayling filled every stream. The Michigan grayling, a unique sub-species found nowhere else in the world, were stacked like cordwood in the rivers and creeks. Slate blue in color, strikingly beautiful, and sporting a grayling's distinctive oversized dorsal fin, they were the crown jewels of Michigan waters. The timber barons of the late 19th century, however, changed all that. Their deforestation was so complete, and damage to the fish habitat was so severe, that the Michigan grayling was extinct by 1936. *Extinct...* as in gone forever. Borne behind retreating glaciers, Michigan grayling died behind advancing greed.

George Griffith saw the same thing happening to wild trout in the 1950s. Increasing pollution, silt-laden runoff, over-harvest, and a hatchery-fueled, put-and-take management by the state produced a fishery in serious decline. Unhappy with the long slow slide to mediocrity, George Griffith and fifteen angling friends met at his home on July 18, 1959 to discuss what could be done to reverse the trend. That evening they formed an organization to fight on behalf of wild trout, naming themselves "Trout, Unlimited." (The comma was later dropped.) Their motto was "*take care of the fish, then the fishing will take care of itself.*" Michigan grayling prove that taking care of the fish means taking care of the water.

Like most spring-fed rivers in Michigan, midges are prolific on the Au Sable. Their immense numbers and small size make midge fishing a unique challenge. With so many insects near the surface, fish have the luxury of keying on one specific stage of emergence, ignoring all others. A common scenario is seeing lots of midges on the water, but cast after cast to rising fish yields nothing but some practice on your loop control. The trick is matching the size and finding the stage *du jour* that fish are focused on. Look closely at the rise. Does the trout's nose break the surface, even slightly? If so, they are probably taking adults, emergers, or stillborns. If not, as is often the case, they are probably bulging to pupae hanging just under the surface.

George Griffith's Gnat is a good place to start when fishing midges. It imitates adult midges, midge clusters, and emergers riding fairly high on the surface. If a standard Griffith's Gnat doesn't work, cut all the hackle fibers off the bottom half. It will then sit awash in the surface film, better imitating a stillborn, cripple, or struggling pupa. If your efforts are still ignored, trail a midge pupa an inch or two deep behind a Griffith's Gnat, using the dry as a strike indicator. No luck yet? Use a trailing pupa or larva incorporating copper wire or a tiny glass or brass bead, causing it to sink a little deeper behind the indicator. If you're still being ignored, just accept your fate. "The Fisherman's Curse" is real, and you are a victim. Then, opt for choices (B) and (C) above. You'll feel much better.

----- Griffith's Gnat -----

Hook:	Dry fly, ring eye, #18 - #24
Thread:	Black
Body:	Peacock herl
Hackle:	Grizzly, palmered

George Griffith's original pattern uses peacock herl for the body, but dark olive, dark dun, or black dubbing works as well and is easier to manipulate in small sizes. Some midges have chartreuse bodies, and it is wise to carry both colors.



Looking For a Few Good Volunteers

By Jack Way, SWTU President

It has occurred to me, while musing on the current state of the chapter, that there will soon be several openings on the Board of Directors. Come April 8, to be exact.

Most of these openings occur due to our newly adopted Chapter Bylaws. In the Bylaws, each Officer or Director is allowed a maximum time for serving of 6 years. Try as we might to serve "in perpetuity," as some directors have been accused, we now have a maximum time limit of being on the board.

This is a good thing, I would imagine. Being "President for Life" may have its advantages, although not necessarily for the wellbeing of the chapter. New people bring different skills, outlooks, backgrounds and different areas of expertise. They also bring a new level of enthusiasm that is always a good thing for any volunteer organization.

So, if you are interested, it's time to step up! There will be both Officer and Director seats available. Give me a call, and we can talk about what's involved.

You, and the chapter, will be very glad that you did.

Important dates to remember:

December 11	Chapter Meeting at the Coliseum Bar
January 19	The Icebreaker

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