

Newscasts

September 2008 Serving the Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited



Chapter Meeting – September 9

Fishing the Far-Far North

Our speaker will be **Craig Amaker**, the Fly Fishing Manager at Fontana Sports. Craig guides on local streams and rivers and also hosts trips to other destinations, near and far.

Craig's presentation will be on a "destination far" – Alaska! He's just returned from his expedition and will talk to us about the fishing there and the diverse species he caught.

Gordon Creek Update

In addition to Craig's speech, we will be briefed on the fantastic work just complete – on deadline and on budget! – at Gordon Creek. This massive project – the largest ever undertaken by our Chapter – went exceedingly well. There are some bends in the redefined stream that will be *begging* to have a fly drifted on through. Hear all about it from the dedicated men who made it happen!

As always, we'll start at 7 p.m. at the Coliseum Bar and Grill on Olin Ave. If you'd like to eat, be there closer to 6.

Fish of the Future

Chapter Picnic at Nevin Hatchery

A great time, fine food and an education on the hatchery system was had by all!



All lined up at a pond full o' huuuge trout.



Past-President Jack Way receives a token of thanks and a loud round of applause for all he's done.

Notes from the Workday Chair

By Mike Grimes

Token Creek is too high and the ground too soft for us to pull out the trees. We must wait until the water is low enough to saw them off. This work only requires two or three of us with waders and a chain saw at a session. We fasten cables to the trees and saw them off at the trunk. The tractors pull them out and away from the stream. I hope to do some of this after 5 pm.

I talked to Scott Harpold and Kurt Welke recently. They just finished shocking sections of Black Earth and noted: "where there is cover there are trout and where there is no cover there are no trout." That statement reinforces my feeling that the size of the trout population in Black Earth is cover-limited instead of food-limited. They also noted that the trout really like the sweepers we installed, so much so that they will use their unscheduled time to put more in. They asked me to have us continue installing sweepers. I agree and have scheduled three work days this fall to continue that work. I scheduled four work days in the spring with location and work to be determined. (We lost only one sweeper to the floods.)

Black Earth holds a modest trout population right now. A population that is large enough for rewarding fishing but far below its potential size. Long stretches are trout deserts. A strong sustained effort from us and the DNR **can increase the number of trout dramatically!**

Our participation at work days are a big part of our contribution to that sustained effort. Black Earth Creek needs you. Better fishing close to home needs you! I expect you to do at least **ONE** work day if you are physically able! Over half the people at one of our work days should be from our chapter!

Your help IS needed. See page two for the workday calendar!!

You-Must-Be-Present-To-Win

Nobody won at our July picnic, thus the jackpot grew from \$60 to \$80. Please join us at our September 9 meeting for a chance to win a \$80 gift certificate to *Fontana Sports Specialties*. You need only be present (and able to discern the calling of your name) to win.

Restoring Gordon Creek

Work Day Calendar

We will meet at 8 a.m. at Salmo Pond on the following Saturdays to work on Black Earth Creek:

- ♦ September 27
- ♦ October 18
- ♦ November 15

Salmo pond is south of the junction of Hwy 14 and Scherbel Road a mile or so west of Cross Plains.

The spring schedule is compressed because the DNR crew starts netting fish in the Madison lakes as soon as the ice goes out and we support Shabazz at the West Fork mid-May.

- ♦ March 14 To be announced
- ♦ March 28 To be announced
- ♦ April 11 To be announced
- ♦ May 9 To be announced

Also be aware that Dane County has asked us to set up a stream monitoring program. They want someone to look at the places where they own or hold easements. In a sense, they are asking volunteers to adopt a stretch of stream and monitor it at least once a year. We will be working on it and will be asking for volunteers!

If you have questions or would like to be added to the contact list, please contact Mike Grimes, Project Chair, at mgrimes17@charter.net or (608) 655-1086.

Welcome New Members

Southern Wisconsin Trout Unlimited is pleased to announce the addition of the following new members to our ranks.

Kirk Braley	Adam Dunn
Carl Dodsen	Timothy Smith
Jonathan Hill	Gary Wischer
Brandon Witz	Nathan Jones
Nicholas Jackson	

We are honored to have you among us. Please join us for a Chapter meeting, and we will give you free raffle tickets, flies and “an offer you can’t refuse” from some of our most experienced fisher-folk!

Tremendous Work at Gordon Creek

All Chapter members should feel **intense pride** at the extensive restoration work done on Gordon Creek thanks to the leadership of SWTU.

The project committee of Mike Schmidt, Jim Gentry, Henry Nehls-Lowe and Jim Kanvic – along with many other Chapter members – put a tremendous amount of time and effort into not only getting the job done, but *getting it done right*. The **photos at right** are just a few of the many you can check out from the link on the front page of www.swtu.org. You can expect to hear a lot more about Gordon Creek and our ongoing efforts there.



A very broad bend in need of remodeling



The same bend leveled and stabilized with rock.



Filling in behind the rocks of a now-narrowed stream section.



Not just a pile of rocks... a snake habitat! (See the flyfisher?)



Lunker-building. Hard work, great fun and a hive of activity!

Photos courtesy Jim Beecher.

Permanently Preserving Dane County's Streams

What would it mean to you to have every trout stream in Dane county protected from development? Publicly accessible forever? Restored through project work if necessary?

With high gas prices, to have more good places to fish on Mt. Vernon, Gordon Creek, Vermont Creek, the Sugar River and Black Earth Creek?

We're blessed here in Dane County with about 40 miles of good trout streams. Over the years, TU, DNR, the county and other groups have secured about 50 streambank easements on these streams that have allowed public access and restoration work. We've all benefited from this effort. Most of these easements have been for 20 years and some are running out. If there's a new landowner or the current landowner does not want to renew their easement, public access could be lost and preclude future stream work or repair work on old improvements.

Last year, Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk initiated the Streambank Acquisition and Protection Program, aimed at securing permanent easements on all Class I and II trout streams in the county for public access and potential restoration if needed. The program was funded at \$100,000 for 2007 and \$200,000 for 2008 and thereafter. So far, the county has purchased seven easements on the West Branch and Primrose Branch of the Sugar River. In each case, these permanent easements replaced shorter term easements where restoration work had been done within the last five years. The total cost of these easements has been about \$350,000, with DNR contributing about \$50,000. About five miles of stream have been protected. The county is now working on a couple of easements on upper Gordon Creek. These will complement the project work our chapter is now doing a little downstream.

Where does TU fit into all this? Last year, National TU launched a pilot program designed to encourage cooperation between TU chapters and local land trusts to protect coldwater streams. Land Trusts use conservation easements primarily to protect sensitive land from development but usually don't pursue public access as part of their agreements with landowners. The goal of the new TU program is to encourage both land trusts and landowners to consider public access and stream restoration as well as protection by offering financial assistance in the easement process.

What is a conservation easement?

A landowner retains ownership of his/her land but agrees to sell certain rights on all or a portion of their property to another party, such as a conservation organization or government agency. These rights could include future development or splitting of the property, public access and the right to do restoration work on the property. Streambank easements typically have run 20 years but permanent easements are a better investment of public funds. The landowner receives a negotiated payment based on the land's value. Sometimes a landowner may receive a charitable tax deduction for giving up the development rights to the property.

Dane County Permanent Easements continued...

At the suggestion of Dan Wisniewski, SWTU member and Wisconsin's representative of the National Leadership Council, TU National agreed to support the Dane County effort as one of three national pilot projects. TU National will work with our Chapter, the State TU Council and the Natural Heritage Land Trust to raise additional funds for the Dane County program. The estimated total cost of purchasing permanent easements on all Dane County trout streams is approximately \$2 million. Even at \$200,000 a year, even with some matching state funding, the effort could take up to ten years, all in the face of mounting development pressures. The aim of the TU collaboration with the county and the Natural Heritage Land Trust is to shorten the timeline as much as possible.

The Natural Heritage Land Trust (NHLT) has been involved in protecting land in the Black Earth Creek Valley and along Token Creek for a long time. Since 2001, NHLT has helped conserve 625 acres on BEC and Garfoot Creek. As part of this pilot project, NHLT has agreed to concentrate their efforts on Vermont Creek, the biggest tributary of BEC. Their staff will be contacting all of the two dozen landowners on Vermont Creek to try to persuade them to agree to a county stream protection easement. Vermont Creek Valley has very little development and there is enormous potential for stream restoration and improved access.

What can we do as a chapter?

Earlier this summer, the SWTU Board agreed to contribute \$2,500 to support the county program. This spring the TU State Council contributed \$5,000. The entire \$7,500 will be used to purchase easements on the Dane County portion of Gordon Creek. We will be working with NHLT to ask other conservation groups and TU chapters to contribute. Badger Flyfishers has already given \$1,000. TU National will contribute financial and staff support. Laura Hewitt, TU National's Watershed Project Director, who is based in Madison, is assisting our efforts.

What can you do?

Our board believes the permanent protection and restoration of and access to our home waters is such an important goal that it deserves the full support of our membership. Shortly, you will receive a letter asking you to make a special contribution to our easement purchase fund. Every single dollar will go to support a county permanent easement purchase and it's all tax deductible. Dane County has pledged that every dollar donated by TU members will go to purchasing easements and not a penny to administrative costs. Please send your contributions to Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited, P.O. Box 7051, Madison, WI 53707.

The last time the chapter made this kind of special appeal was 1998 as part of an effort to restore Token Creek. Nearly 200 of our members contributed about \$27,000. One of our partners in that effort was the Natural Heritage Land Trust, so we have a history of successful collaboration. Please take time to read the letter when you get it and consider a contribution. You'll enjoy the results all over Dane County.

Fountains of Youth

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

by Rusty Dunn

Seine a stream, and the insects you capture won't look anything like those glamour photos of a fly fishing book. Instead of flawless specimens, you'll see a rag-tag collection of fluff and rubble that only loosely resembles the insect world. "Stillborns," "cripples," "failed emergers," "stuck-in-the-shuck." Call them what you like, but insects of the drift are disheveled knots of legs, wings, and body parts splayed every which way. What flies are needed to imitate this untidy mess? Untidy flies, of course. Soft-hackled flies are perfect for the task. If you've not discovered the pleasures of fishing with soft hackles, it's about time you softened up a little.

Soft-hackled flies originated in the English north and Scottish border country. They are deceptively simple flies whose sparse dressing reflects the austere and frugal anglers who invented them. But don't be deceived by their simplicity. Soft hackles are very effective when fished as emergers in or near the surface, as nymphs drifted more deeply, or as swimming adults, pupae, or nymphs swung through a riffle. Soft hackled flies have been around since fur and feather were first married to a hook, and some of the oldest patterns are still some of the best.

Scotsman W.C. Stewart (1832-1872) designed three of the most enduring soft-hackled flies of all time. His Black, Red, and Dun Spiders – named because they resemble a spider in appearance, not because they imitate one when cast before trout – are described in Stewart's 1857 book *The Practical Angler*. Stewart fished all three of his spiders simultaneously on a single leader ("a cast of three"), the logic being that one would be effective no matter what was hatching. Stewart made his living catching and selling trout for the local market, so the idea proved sound.

Stewart is perhaps best known as the angler who persuaded others to turn around while fishing. He

advocated upstream presentation at a time when most fly fishing was done downstream with a wet fly swing. Instead of fishing a long line downstream, Stewart fished a short one upstream. The benefits seem obvious today, but not so in 1857. The dry fly had only recently been developed, and it was not widely used. Downstream angling with wet flies was simply "the way it was done." Stewart wasn't the first author to recommend upstream presentations, but he was the first to thoroughly and convincingly describe why it was better. Stewart cited four reasons in his book: (i) An angler remains unseen by the trout; (ii) it improves hooking ability; (iii) it avoids disturbing unfished water; and (iv) an angler can better imitate the behavior of natural insects. Stewart was articulate and persuasive. His case was so convincing that nobody disputed it (a rarity in the angling literature!). Fly fishers simply adopted the method, and, to this day, most casts are made upstream.

Like many north country anglers, Stewart believed that exact imitation was not needed for flies to be effective. For example, English fly dressing had long stressed the importance of precise color imitation, but Stewart disagreed. He emphasized instead the overall size, form, and sparseness of dress:

"The great point, then, in fly-dressing is to make the artificial fly resemble the natural insect in shape, and the great characteristic of all river insects is extreme lightness and neatness of form. We wish to impress very strongly ... the necessity of avoiding bulky flies."

Stewart believed that the single most important aspect of fly fishing was close imitation of a natural insect's behavior:

"The nearer the motions of the artificial flies resemble those of the natural ones under similar circumstances, the greater will be the prospects of success."

Stewart had it right, and you'd do well to adopt his methods and his flies. Stewart's spiders are not in the bins of your local fly shop, but if you can tie a knot, you can tie his flies. And, you'll be fishing with a piece of fly fishing history.

----- Stewart's Black Spider -----

Hook:	#12 - 22
Body:	Brown thread over the front 1/3 to 1/2 of the hook shank
Hackle:	Starling feather, palmered over thread base; fiber length equal to shank length; reinforce the feather stem with thread;

Stewart's Red Spider is tied of yellow thread and a red-dish brown landrail feather (use quail or grouse as a substitute). His Dun Spider is tied of an ash-colored dotterel feather (use starling underwing as a substitute) and thread whose color Stewart failed to specify.



Endangered Species Act Needs our IMMEDIATE HELP

By Dave Sanders, SWTU President

Earlier this month the Bush Administration launched an executive order to make an end run around congress gutting the Endangered Species Act (Act). In 1973 the Endangered Species Act was signed into law. (7 U.S.C. § 136, 16 U.S.C. § 1531 et seq.) The stated purpose of the Act is to protect species and also "the ecosystems upon which they depend." It encompasses plants and invertebrates as well as vertebrates.

As an individual who cares about ensuring that endangered species are protected for future Americans, I strongly urge you to do everything in your power to stop damaging changes to the Act.

These changes – [FWS-R9-ES-2008-0093] and [0808011023-81048-01] – are outlined in the Federal Register on August 15 and would undermine the protection of salmon, trout, polar bears, wolves and the nearly 1,400 other wildlife species now safeguarded by this landmark law.

The Act is administered by two federal agencies, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

(NOAA) (which includes the National Marine Fisheries Service NMFS). NOAA handles marine species, and the FWS has responsibility over freshwater fish and all other species. Species that occur in both habitats (e.g. sea turtles and Atlantic sturgeon) are jointly managed.

The Bush/Cheney proposal would severely limit scientific review by the Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service of projects that could harm imperiled wildlife.

Instead, agencies proposing projects such as highways, dams, mines, oil or gas drilling and virtually any other activity would be allowed to decide for themselves whether a project is likely to impact any of the nearly 1,400 species currently protected by the Endangered Species Act without the independent review now provided by the FWS and NMFS.

The proposal would even limit this self review to a time of no more than 60 days, even from Federal agencies that had no biologists or scientific staff.

This proposal has established a 30 day window for public comments and no public hearing. I urge you to act today and contact your Senators and Representatives, urging them to do whatever is necessary TO STOP THIS ASSULT ON OR NATURAL RESOURCES.

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