

Newscasts



Winter 2022 Serving the Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited

SWTU Spring Fair Fundraiser: Save the date

April 23, 2022, from 5 to 9 p.m.

John Wall Family Pavilion

Tenney Park | 1414 E. Johnson St., Madison

Our critical fundraiser has been delayed for two years, but our conservation efforts have not slacked in that time! We need your support to fund our outstanding local and regional efforts to conserve, improve and access coldwater resources. This ticketed social event will feature delectable street food, local beer and wine, fair games, SWTU conservation highlights, a B.E.A.C 'Drinking With Scissors' open tie area and Iron Fly event, bucket raffle, silent auction and more!

Tickets will be available online in late March.



Raffle/ auction item donation inquiries offering flies, handmade items, new or highest quality used gear, and other new items of value should be sent to Dave Fowler dfowler82@gmail.com.

A Christmas Gift for Southern Wisconsin Trout Anglers and Many More

*Twas the week before Christmas and near Baraboo
A wonderful gift was about to disappear from me and you!*

Groundswell Conservancy and the DNR wildlife and fish biologists had worked for months to purchase a 40 acre inholding in the DNR's Dell Creek Hunting and Fishing Area. The 40 acres has over 2,000 feet of double streambank frontage and a tributary. The land has some higher spots with oaks and creek bottom. Nancy Frost, the wildlife biologist, had advocated for this purchase for years because it would offer excellent hunting and because it filled a gap in a large tract of DNR owned lands. Nate Nye, the fish biologist, had just completed an extensive survey of Dell Creek and its tributaries and knew that the creek is a good and improving trout stream. Groundswell Conservancy took the lead on this purchase, as it typically and wonderfully does to improve natural resources in a broad swath of southern Wisconsin, and had all the funding lined up.

But an essential grant fell through; would a Grinch spoil this Christmas gift to the trout anglers and outdoor enthusiasts of southern Wisconsin? Nate contacted the Aldo Leopold and Southern Wisconsin TU Chapters to see if we could plug the gap. After reviewing Nate's and Nancy's information about the creek and property, Mike Barnikis, President of AL, and Jim Hess, President of SWTU, recommended to their Boards that both should help. The two and Topf Wells of SWTU contacted Mike Kuhr, President of the State Council, and Bob Harrison, President of TU's good friend and staunch ally, Badger Fly Fishers.



Thereafter ensued a whirlwind of incredibly positive and focused activity. Jim Welsh, the Executive Director of Groundswell, found another donation and negotiated with the conservation-minded owner so that the gap TU had to fill was \$20,000. Mike Kuhr contacted Kim McCarthy of TU's State Access Fund. Mike and Kim responded to the chapters' request within MINUTES (really!) with offers of help.

Within 10 days, the chapters' and BFF's boards had allocated funds: Kim and the directors of the State Access Fund were able to cover the difference. Groundswell had the \$20,000 and by the end of January Groundswell will have the property, which will soon be open to the public.

Whenever the wind chills subside and the tundra loosens, some folks from the chapters are eager to walk the property. Maybe we can have a joint workday there. Several of us have a new stop on our fishing tour this spring or summer.

Lots of thanks are due!

To Groundswell, Jim, Nancy and Nate for the hard, persistent work to make this purchase possible.

To the Aldo Leopold and Southern Wisconsin TU Chapters and the Badger Fly Fishers. AL showed great and quick leadership on this opportunity and all three had to use reserves that have been strained by the difficulty of fund raising during the pandemic.

Mike Kuhr, Kim McCarthy, and the State Access Fund. Their response was immediate, positive, enthusiastic-- "Let's get this done" was Kim's mantra. All of Kim's questions and suggestions were extremely helpful. The landowner needed to have the purchase closed by the end of January and Kim instantly recognized and acted on the need to work quickly.

As you read this, the purchase should be completed. While that is good in and of itself, it's a positive step forward for this area. The DNR has not been purchasing parcels with trout streams in southern Wisconsin. While easements are all well and good, sometimes landowners want or need to sell the land and not an easement. The DNR and conservation organizations need to find ways of making those purchases.

In the world of TU, COVID has crunched the State Banquet and the State Council will need some donations. This episode shows, in my opinion, how valuable the state organization is to local TU chapters. Simply put, Aldo Leopold and Southern Wisconsin could not have made this purchase without State Council and the Access Fund. State Council has earned our support and will make good use of any donations.

Finally, I remember Dan Wisniewski, my sadly departed good friend and fishing partner, who always believed that land trusts would be a great ally to TU in conserving Wisconsin trout streams and making them available to the public. Dan's belief is wholly validated by Groundswell's leadership in this transaction.

--- Topf Wells

Women's Clinic Registration Now Open

Registration is open for the [By Women for Women Beginner Fly Fishing Clinics](#). The Basic clinic is designed to give a broad view of fly fishing and offer an opportunity to try it in a safe and fun environment. Skill level is not important; it is for women who know very little to those who would simply like a refresher.

The Women's Intermediate Clinic is On the Water and is designed to improve any level of skills through individual and small group instruction. Both clinics will be held in Avalanche, Wisc. (near Viroqua in Wisconsin's Driftless area).



By Women For Women Basics Clinic

June 17-19, 2022

Learn how to choose proper equipment, tie knots, cast, read water, select the proper fly and time on the water. You will learn new tactics, regardless of your level of ability. Equipment available for use.

Registration: <https://cvent.me/8wQRIG>

On the Water Skills Intermediate Clinic

June 15-17, 2022

Personalized instruction streamside. Tune up workshops by women instructors to refresh skills in casting, matching the hatch, and reading the water. Fish WI finest trout streams with experienced anglers.

Registration: <https://cvent.me/wQ7vLQ>

Clinic cost:

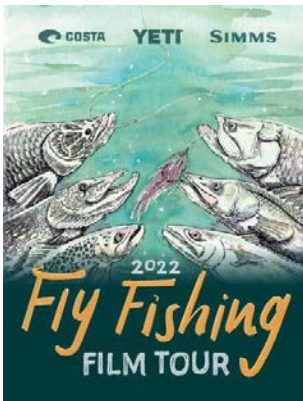
\$315 (First Time Participants); \$345 (Returning Participants)
Late Registration Cost (After 4/01/18): \$345 (Everyone)

Be sure to also check for [updates on the Facebook page](#).

Attend the Fly Fishing Film Tour

Barrymore Theatre, Madison

February 24, 2022 at 7:30 PM (CST)



The 16th annual F3T is back in action with a top notch selection of films that are sure to feed your fishing addiction. The 2022 show will feature locations from Costa Rica, Maryland, Belize, Louisiana, Alabama, Australia, Colombia and beyond. Follow a legendary spear fisherman across the endless atolls of Belize, watch as a mother passes her passion for fishing down to the next generation, and explore the history of one of the most legendary tarpon fisheries in the world at Casa Mar. [View a trailer of this year's film.](#)

SWTU will have a table at the Barrymore – **please drop by and say hi!**

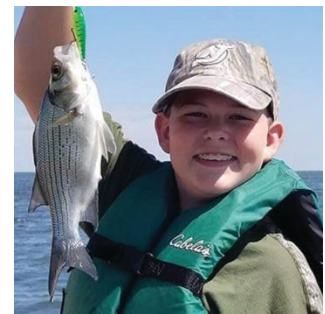
Get your tickets at: <https://www.barrymorelive.com/product/2202241.html>. Note that the Barrymore may have COVID policies in place (e.g., masking, vaccinations) and to please review their website to understand them.

Wisconsin Winner: TU National Teen Essay Contest

Last year, we shared the opportunity for teens to submit an essay to National TU answering the question, "Why are public lands and green spaces an important part of your life?"

Wyatt Kauth, a high school junior from Oostburg was one of the six national winners. His essay starts, "Even before I could tie my own shoes, I loved fishing." ... and just gets better from there.

[Click here to read Kyle's essay.](#) A final note is that Kyle is currently taking part in our virtual fly tying program. Congrats, Kyle. We wish you the best and hope to see you on the water someday.



Do you, Like, Facebook? Help tell our story! Fun volunteer opportunity

Our [SWTU Facebook page](#) is one important way we share successes, create engagement, promote events and attract new members. An ad hoc group of our leaders have kept it going, and we are now looking for a volunteer to manage the page more directly and actively. If you are savvy in the ways of social media and would like to help, please email president@swtu.org. It's not much work or time. Other volunteers help provide pictures, details, etc. to spin into posts.

Carp are Game Fish

Bill Flader shares lessons learned from 75 years of fishing

That's actually the title of a book written by a Door County guide several decades ago. Back then carp were considered "rough fish" or "bottom feeders", and looked down upon. Not anymore. Have you noticed carp showing up in Orvis catalogs and similar publications?

My experience is that they are actually an ideal flyrod challenge, altho not easily fooled. (Perhaps you've heard Gary Borger say "if brown trout have an IQ of 5, carp have an IQ of 8). He would know. They are easily spooked and must be stalked quietly, with careful casting.

Most of my experience has been wading and sight-fishing them in Lake Michigan shallows of Door County (like fishing for bonefish in the salt, except that carp are easier to see, and are much bigger, on average 10-25 pounds in the big lake. Many readers never see the backing on their fly reels....not unusual with hooked carp, and they stay hooked due to their rubbery lips.

Finding something they will eat is another matter. I've had success with small crayfish patterns, but a leech sometimes works. They don't attack just anything that moves. Detecting the take requires a wet rod tip and tight line, with a short strip-strike when resistance is felt. Then hang on.

Unfortunately high water levels have been a problem in recent years, but hopefully that will subside.

(The author holds 11 flyrod line-class world records on carp.)



Make a difference: Help out with Project Green Teen

We're excited to (slowly) bring back opportunities to work with youth through a long-standing collaboration between SWTU and Shabazz High School in Madison! Due to district Covid precautions we can't bring back all of the same experiences of the past, but this is a step in the right direction.

Come pass on your **fly fishing** knowledge with the next generation of student fly fishers at Shabazz High School through a series of workshops with Project Green Teen (PGT).

Fly Casting Clinic

Shabazz High School
1601 N. Sherman Ave.
Madison, WI 53704

Date: **Thursday, April 21st**

Time: **12:25-3:15**

"Bluegilling" Casting/Fishing Practice

Tenney Park
402 N Thornton Ave
Madison, WI 53703

Date: **Thursday, April 28th**

Time: **12:25-3:15**

Black Earth Creek Fishing Day

Salmo Pond County Park
4809 Scherbel Rd
Black Earth, WI 53515

Date: **Wednesday, May 4th**

Time: **10:30-2:30**

*** **Late lunch included**

What do you need to do to help with Project Green Teen?

- Confirm interest in attending with Brian Counselman and/or Dave Fowler
- Bring your preferred fly fishing gear for demo or sharing (students will have standard gear and flies).
- Have a fun and flexible attitude passing on your passion for fly tying!

If interested in working with PGT, please contact:

Dave Fowler dfowler82@gmail.com (SWTU "Guide Wrangler") OR

Brian Counselman bdcounselman@madison.k12.wi.us (Shabazz Lead PGT Teacher)

Travel and Tying: Just the kit you need

By Don Golembiewski

I've had the very good fortune of being able to follow my love of trout fishing to some world-famous spots including the birthplace of Trout Unlimited, Michigan's Au Sable River. It's been a while ago, but I was given the choice of coming along to visit my wife's family in New Jersey or having a weeklong flyfishing excursion to Michigan in early June one year. Tough call but I found myself at a landing on the Au Sable but without an exact match for the local hatch predicted for that afternoon. I was able to rescue my fishing time by quickly tying some pale yellow duns with my small makeshift travel tying kit. That convinced me – don't leave home without it. Of course, it is always preferable to arrive at the stream with a supply of likely flies, but stuff happens especially when travelling to new water.

Here are the compact components I consider essential when I travel to trout destinations. All fit in a small plastic bin available from any hardware store.

1. A compact vise. Because you may find yourself at a three-inch thick picnic table out west, I suggest a pedestal model and I like my Renzetti Traveller (named appropriately!) or a similar compact type. Pay for a good one you'll enjoy for many years. One very famous fly tyer, Lee Wulff, was reportedly able to tie flies without a vise but few are able to match that skill.
2. If you don't have a pedestal vise, and the opening of your c-clamp model is too narrow, an alternative is to bring along a ¾ inch board or a section of white shelving material. When I travelled for a former job, I took along a small board for after-hours tying. I was once stuck using the local phone book because the desk wouldn't accommodate my vise. I didn't resort to using a Gideon's bible but that might have helped with some holy intervention.
3. Some shops sell a "complete tool kit" but you can likely do better with higher quality tools you will like and use. Ask at a fly shop or a veteran fly tyer at SWTU's fly tying class for advice on essential brand name tools.
4. Lighting. I use a very small, portable and lightweight folding rechargeable lamp that looks like a metallic praying mantis when deployed. It's compact at about 3"X7"X3/8" when folded. Slypnos is the brand but others would work or a headlamp will do but get a hands-free battery or rechargeable light for those after-dark tying sessions.
5. Dry fly hackle. My first choice is high quality grizzly as it will take you pretty far. You might add dun and brown as well.
6. Hair. Deer/elk hair has been used for so many patterns because it catches so many fish. It floats, is durable and cheap, and has the right look.
7. Fur. Hare's ear fur has been responsible for the demise of so many trout as has squirrel hair. Get some!
8. Feathers. I suggest you get some pheasant tail and peacock. Peacock's iridescent fishiness is tops for many nymph patterns! Mallard and wood duck flank feathers make fishy looking tails and legs.
9. Dubbing. I have a number of packs of synthetic dubbing named for the insects they "match." Sort of. I instead suggest you start with some basic colors you can blend to match most insects you'll encounter. Olive, brown, gray, tan, yellow and black will do for almost all of the bugs you'll need to match. If in doubt, look at the color of the stream bottom and that's the color of most immature insects as they have evolved to blend in. If you mostly nymph fish, get some natural fur from rabbits, mink, beaver and squirrel in natural "buggy" colors. Blend as needed and use ribbing for a nice contrast. Synthetic sparkle yarns come in handy. Note: the color of natural dubbing changes (darkens) when wet so check it out and adjust as needed.
10. Wire. Get some fine copper and silver for ribbing.
11. Hooks. I prefer to use dry flies when I can so carry a supply of light wire hooks. You can add a bead to a light wire hook but can't lighten up a heavy wire hook. Most of my fishing is with size 14 – 18 with some 20s and 22s when needed. A veteran fishing friend often said his #1 searching pattern fly was a size 16 tan caddis dry and that makes sense to me.

12. Beads. Gold, brass and silver are my go-to colors in various sizes.
13. Thread. If you only carry one color, get black. Add tan, olive, yellow and gray along the way for tying and ribbing.
14. Foam. Foam is essential and durable for so many larger insect dry patterns especially hoppers, beetles and ants. Black, yellow and tan foam are my choices.
15. Scissors. I use comfy pairs with loops large enough to accommodate my chunky fingers. I suggest you look for a small pair with sharp blades and narrow tips. Add a heavier duty pair for snipping wire, fur and tough hair. Pay more for good ones and you'll be happy for a long time.
16. Bobbin. Get more than one so you can leave differing threads in place. You can tie with black thread and rib with yellow or olive easily.
17. Head cement is used to coat your knots at the head of the fly for durability. Some recommend clear nail polish, thinned Goop, or plain wood finishing varnish instead of "fly tying cement". Your choice but I seldom use it anymore as I am confident in my whip finish knots.

If you look in fly shop catalogs, you will see so many choices of tools and materials on which you could spend plenty. You can catch many trout without putting out too much money or having to upgrade to that larger SUV or pickup to carry your modest travelling fly tying kit!

Cheers to a great 2022 season!

Pictured right: Small pillbox organizers work for holding hooks and beads and are useful as dubbing dispensers with 1/4" drilled holes.



Learn what your Board's been up to

Minutes from SWTU Board of Director meetings can be viewed [in this Google Drive](#). If you have questions on what you read in them, reach out to one of the Board members listed on the last page of each newsletter.

Welcome New Members

We're pleased to announce the addition of the following new members to our ranks!

RP Petrowski	Elizabeth Laing	Derek Boeldt	Jacob Valentine
Brent Stanley	Brett Katzman	Phillip Brunstad	Trudi Jenny
Michael Sheets	Jason Matthews	Aaron Onsrud	Tim Onsrud
Terry Jahnke	Logan Steinhoff	Mitchell Laken	David Emmerich
Reuben Berman	Marc Chipault	James Baumann	Jesse Carr
Michael Budiash	Eric Heiligenstein	James Best	Craig Mc Mahon
Robert Pearson	William Clancy	Joe Stoll	Charles Barnhill

We are honored to have you among us. Please join our next meeting – whether virtual or in person – as we'd love to get to know you better. **If you will be attending your first meeting**, please contact [Topf Wells](#) so we can expect you. (Note that some longer-term members may be captured in the list above. A glitch in the excel file made it harder to sort ... but it's better to be inclusive and we're happy to have your continued support!)

Fountains of Youth

Classic trout flies that have withstood the test of time ... flies that remain "forever young"

by Rusty Dunn

The behaviors of trout can be infuriating at times. They might refuse your best imitations during a hatch but at the same time inhale some ugly concoction of fur and feather that looks more like a hairball than an insect. You might catch dozens of trout on a bright, sunny, lifeless afternoon, but next day – same time, same place – you get skunked when the weather is wonderfully overcast and mayflies emerge endlessly. Those objects of our attention – the ones with the pea-sized brains – are hard to understand. But who are we to second guess the mind of a trout? The best we can do is experiment with fly patterns and allow trout to tell us what they like. Such is the case with three of the unlikeliest of classic flies" the variants, spiders, and skaters. These flies may not look like any insects you've seen, but the angling literature is full of testimonials to their uncanny ability to enrage trout.

Variants, spiders, and skaters are three increasingly extreme fly designs. All are lightly dressed, high floating, wingless, dry flies tied with unusually long hackle. Skaters are the most extreme, consisting of nothing but a hook, thread, and 2+ inch hackle. Spiders have somewhat shorter hackle, and variants have hackle that is a more modest 2 or 3 hook sizes large. Variants have the profile of traditional dries, but their hackle and tail are sufficiently long that the entire hook rides above the water's surface, with the fly supported only on the tips of its hackle. Variants are sprightly flies that land softly, dance lightly, and respond to every little swirl of current or puff of wind.

Englishman William Baigent (1864-1935) originated the variant style in the late 19th century. He was a dedicated dry fly angler living in the English north at a time when the "dry fly revolution" was in full flower in the south. Baigent's approach to dry fly design, however, was quite different from the highly imitative

methods of the south. Baigent was an amateur entomologist who knew the insects of his home waters very well. But rather than tie excruciatingly exact replicas of captured naturals, Baigent designed his patterns by trial and error to be, at best, rough approximations of the naturals. He didn't care what the final fly looked like. Baigent began with simple generic imitations, varied their size, profile, components, and colors, and took them fishing. Experiments continued only on those flies that caught the most fish. Baigent's "survival of the fittest" approach yielded remarkably effective flies. Trout told Baigent what a fly should look like, not some angling author or self-anointed authority. Baigent was one of the earliest impressionistic fly designer, for whom exact imitation was unnecessary. His long hackled flies may seem monstrous to human sensibilities, but trout are much more tolerant. Baigent was once asked what his most famous fly imitates, to which he responded, "*It is not tied to represent any fly, it is tied to catch a trout*".

Americans Preston Jennings and Edward Hewitt admired Baigent's designs. Both were keenly interested in underwater optics and the light patterns of flies riding atop the surface. Baigent corresponded with Hewitt, whose Bivisible and Neversink Skater were likely influenced by Baigent's ideas. Art Flick, an influential author of the mid-19th century, thought highly of the variant style, and he popularized them in his 1947 book *A Streamside Guide To Naturals and Their Imitations*. As described by Flick, "*There is something about flies tied this way that seems to excite the trout, and often they will come up and smash them when they do not want them.*" Flick suggested that an angler could do very well through an entire trout season using only three flies tied in varying sizes: a Dun Variant, Cream Variant, and Grey Fox Variant.

Why do such ill-proportioned flies work so well? Only one expert knows for sure, and that's the trout. Ask one when you next meet but be sure to phrase the question with oversized hackle.

© Rusty Dunn, 2022

----- Art Flick's Grey Fox Variant -----

A size #10 - #12 Grey Fox Variant is a very popular imitation of eastern Green Drakes.

Hook: Dry fly, #10 - #16

Thread: Pearsall's Gossamer silk, primrose yellow

Tail: Ginger hackle barbs

Body: Light ginger or cream hackle quill, stripped

Hackle: One each of light ginger, dark ginger, and grizzly, oversized by 2-3 hook sizes and wrapped together,



Stay Connected



Know what's happening by connecting to our [Chapter Calendar!](#)



[SWTU's Instagram account](#) is a great place for interesting news, facts and photos.



Check out [Southern Wisconsin Trout Unlimited on Facebook](#) to connect to activities, discussions and friends. (You should be able to view the page without a Facebook account.)

If you know of a member not receiving emails from SWTU, please have them email madkasel@gmail.com

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