

# Newscasts

September 2022 Serving the Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited



## How are Wisconsin Trout Doing?

**It's an interesting question! We'll see you at Schwoegler's on Tuesday, Sept. 13**

By Topf Wells

SWTU's September meeting will provide some answers. Our speaker is Bradd Sims, of the WI DNR. Bradd has just completed his first year as the DNR's Coordinator of Fish Management on streams and rivers, including all the trout streams. This position was formerly the Inland Trout Coordinator; the DNR has expanded it to include cool and warm water streams. Bradd will discuss how trout are faring across the state and will be happy to answer questions after his presentation.

Bradd was the fish biologist for Grant and Lafayette Counties and the Lower Wisconsin River. In addition, he was the fish biologist for or filled in as fish biologist for many other Driftless Counties including Dane, Green, Iowa, and Richland. We fish on his easements and restorations all the time including Gordon, Kittleston, Big Spring, Six Mile, the Blue, and the Big Green. He's also responsible for the thriving brook trout of the Steiner Branch, where he hosted a great SWTU workday.

**A REMINDER: The September Meeting is Tuesday, September 13, at Schwoegler's Bowling on Grand Canyon Drive on Madison's West Side. Dinner and drinks are available starting at 5:30, with Bradd's presentation at 7.**

We hope to see many members for this great presentation, especially new members. New members receive a warm welcome and free flies.

If you or someone in your household is not feeling well, we urge you to stay home. Please also consider CDC guidelines for gatherings, including staying up to date with vaccinations. Thank you for your kind consideration. Like most venues, Schwoegler's does not require masks but we'll respect any member's decision to wear one.

## October's Meeting Will Be Cool, Too: Hearing From the New Guy

The new guy is Tim Parks, the new DNR Fish Biologist for Grant and Lafayette Counties and the Lower Wisconsin River. Tim just transferred from Central Wisconsin, where he was a fish biologist who managed Trout populations in Marathon and Portage Counties. One of his final projects was assessing trout populations and habitats from the Plover River Watershed, including spring ponds (a lesser known brook trout habitat). Tim will talk about the Plover River, spring ponds, anomaly brook trout populations in drainage ditches, the Central Sands Streams and High Capacity Wells, and what it is like to manage unique natural trout populations in Central Wisconsin. He will also provide some first impressions on trout populations in Grant County.

The October meeting will be on 10/11 at Schwoegler's with the same starting time.

*Schwoegler's Lanes, 444 Grand Canyon Dr., Madison, WI 53719*

## Save the Date: Fall 2022 Workdays

By Jim Hess, SWTU Conservation Chair

Make some new friends, learn some new very fishable waters and, of course, make a big difference for our precious coldwater resource. Please mark these dates and plan to attend. There is something for everyone. All are Saturdays, start at 9 and are done by noon.

**Sept 17 - Sugar River** – looking at one of two locations, just south of Verona. The exact location will be determined in the next week and shared via email.

**Oct 8 - Smith-Conley** – Joint Workday with Nohr Chapter - 2800 Cty Rd H, Barneveld (same easement we have been working at)

**Oct. 29 - Hefty Creek (Rudd Easement)** – Meadow Valley Rd & Disch Rd (south of New Glarus) - this section of Hefty just recently had a major DNR stream restoration, which this chapter helped to finance. This workday will give you a chance to see this work and help complete a few details. There will be lunch following this workday at the Rudd's house.

**Nov 12 - Sugar River** – (same as above)

**Dec 3 - Smith-Conley** – Joint Workday with Nohr Chapter (same as above)

Be sure to attend our September 13 Chapter Meeting at Schwoegler's Entertainment Center, when we will draw 5 winners that have participated in our work days for the last year and half. Five \$50 gift cards will be given out from the following businesses: D&S Bait and Tackle, Musky Fool Fly Shop, and Cabelas.

## FOUR ARTICLES ON AMAZING NEARBY WATERS

(the last one a bit somber, but also hopeful)

### Hefty Creek Done and Looking Great

By Topf Wells

Jim Hess and I just walked the completed Hefty Creek restoration (look for it in Green County at the intersection of Disch and Meadowbrook Rds) with Bob Rudd. Bob and Nan own the land, sold the easement to the DNR, and supported the restoration.

It looks fabulous. The stream banks are shaped with lots of on site wood and some rock providing fish habitat. Thanks to Bunny, Bob's friendly Lab, we got a good sense of the creek's depth as she bounded in and out. Some nice deep spots and some gravel is already being scoured out. Bunny also spooked some trout for us to watch. Anglers now have great access to either side of the stream. Bob is going to mow paths on both sides so the access will stay good.

Jim and Bob are discussing an SWTU Workday for some touch up work and to make sure some willows and buckthorn don't get out of hand. That day will be a wonderful opportunity for our volunteers to see the easement and restoration. Stay tuned.

Scott Harpold and Vince Schmitz, the DNR's crew, did a great job. They've already started on the big project at S. Valley Road on Black Earth Creek. Jim and I were pleasantly surprised at how much of the stream the crew worked on – just about the entire length.

Probably the biggest change is to the lower third of the easement, downstream of the Meadowbrook bridge. The corridor was choked with brush and boxelder and the stream was a mess. The crew left some nice trees but cleared much of the corridor and created some great cover. As Bob noted, you could hardly reach the stream, much less fish it. It's now that rare small stream that has decent habitat and some nice shade. The DNR could not have extended the restoration this far downstream without SWTU's financial assistance. Terry Geurkink's donation, in turn, made our help possible. Thank you, Terry, Bob, Nan, Scott, Vince, and Dan!

### News About Trout Streams With an SWTU Connection

By Topf Wells

Justin Haglund, Fish Biologist for Iowa and Richland Counties, and Nate Nye, the Biologist for Sauk and Columbia Counties, just released watershed assessments of particular interest to SWTU. We've spent time and money supporting the trout fisheries in both. Results are heartening. Justin's [report is on the trout streams of the Upper East Branch of the Pecatonica River](#). DNR's COVID restrictions prevented him from surveying the main stems of the Dodge and East Pec Branches but he reached all the numerous tributaries. Brown trout are faring well in several, most notably the Williams Barneveld Branch. SWTU conducted a workday on the best stretch of the WB last spring with the Nohr Chapter and The Prairie Enthusiasts, who own the land and had restored much of the stream. It's permanently open to public fishing. He also found strong populations of wild brook trout in several of the headwater tributaries.

Brook trout are the star of the show in [Nate's assessment of the Dell Creek Watershed](#). You might remember SWTU rallied with the Aldo Leopold TU Chapter, Badger Fly Fishers, State Council, and Groundswell Conservancy to rescue the purchase of 40 acres with a long stretch of double bank frontage on Dell Creek and a tributary. Dell has been managed and stocked for years with the general aim of supporting a fair to middling brown trout fishery. Nate showed that the watershed is tending toward brook trout with several tributaries, most unnamed and never or very rarely surveyed, holding strong populations of wild brook trout, some of whom are finding a happy home in Dell Creek. Nate ends his study with recommendations for changes in regulations, stocking, land and easements purchases, and stream classification to manage the watershed for brook trout.

The assessments are linked above. You can also find them and so MUCH more by Googling WI DNR trout stream assessments [or use this link](#).

### **Falk Wells Wildlife Area: A Birds Eye View**

Article by Marci Hess; Drone photos by Jim Hess (see larger versions in the article at swtu.org)

Falk Wells Wildlife Area, south of Verona, is situated in rolling farmland with a mixture of hay and row crops. It is a 379 acre property with 3 miles along the Sugar River. The pictured wetland restoration is one of the most ambitious of the projects undertaken in this ecological system. It includes 33 acres of previous row crop farming; the drainage tiles making this possible will be removed, returning the land to a healthy wetland.

This area was part of the Bruce Company tree nursery for many years and was sold to the county to protect the area from development. Much of the acreage was planted in nursery trees to be used in landscaping; other areas were in row crops. The river had been dammed at the southern end of the property resulting in the loss of many natural features of the land and water: wetlands, prairies, oak savannas, and a healthy river channel.

To the south of this project, is a wetland restoration Dane County, US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited have been restoring with funding from the Waterfowl Stamp. Additionally, Dane County did intensive restoration of the river channel and has converted 35 acres of crop land to nesting habitat and 20 acres of restored savanna habitat.

Falk Wells is a minor migratory corridor with year round mallard and wood duck populations. Restoring wetlands and nesting habitat adjacent to the river will increase migratory and breeding capacity, provide habitat for many native bird, plant, and insect species, while providing a lovely and healthy setting for the outdoor recreation. This wetland restoration will keep it as an excellent trout stream in the face of climate change.

Funding for these projects has come from USFWS, DNR Waterfowl Stamp and Pheasant Stamp, Dane County, and North American Wetland Conservation Act Grant administered by Ducks Unlimited.



## Improving Streams and Rivers in SW Wisconsin

Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited, along with Wisconsin Smallmouth Bass Alliance, the Badger Fly Fishers, and the Harry and Laura Nohr Chapter of TU are addressing the decline of trout and smallmouth bass streams in SW Wisconsin. Specifically, the catastrophic loss of trout and smallmouth bass fisheries in the Martin Branch in Grant County and Otter Creek in Lafayette County. Up until five years ago the Martin Branch was an excellent Class II trout stream, but now the trout are gone, not diminished they are gone. And Otter Creek was at one time was an excellent smallmouth bass stream. The smallmouth bass were so abundant that the DNR restocked the Yellowstone River with Otter Creek bass. But after several fish kills from manure runoffs, the bass are gone.

To attest to the quality of these two streams, DNR had purchased miles of public fishing easements on these two streams. After seeing a report which stated the DNR was in the process of declassifying these streams, SWTU Vice President, Topf Wells, decided it was time to take action. He drafted a letter in January 2021 to be sent to the DNR Secretary, DNR Board, and department staff addressing our concerns not only for these two streams, but for all the streams and rivers in SW Wisconsin. After reviewing this letter, the SWTU Board decided we should be including other like-minded groups and reached to Badger Flyfishers, the Nohr TU Chapter, and Wisconsin Smallmouth Alliance, which were eager to join us.

After correspondence back forth with the DNR, it was decided we should work with David Rowe, WI DNR Fisheries Supervisor Southern District, which we have been doing.

One course of action we agreed upon is to work with Producer-Led Watershed Groups and conservation-minded farmers. Producer-Led Watershed Groups are organized by local farmers that submit grant requests to DATCP, which are funneled to local farmers for conservation projects. Since 2016, DATCP has provided \$4.5 million in grant money for these groups. So far, Jim Hess, SWTU Board member and Conservation Chair has attended two producer-led field day events where he discussed our concerns with the watershed groups and their attendees.

Otter Creek is within the Pecatonica Watershed, which is represented by LASA (Lafayette Ag Stewardship Alliance) in Lafayette County. At a recent LASA Field Day on the Wilson Organic Farm, Hess talked with Jim Winn, President of LASA, about our concerns and the response was very positive.

Jim has worked really hard to establish communication with the farmer led groups in Lafayette County. Stay tuned for updates. And a similar request, if any of know landowners near Otter Creek who might be interested in improving the creek, contact Jim.

Martin Branch does not have any producer led organizations. With some suggestions from the DNR we are trying to reach out to some of the farmers who own land along the creek to start a conversation about the creek's history and, we hope, its future. If anyone in the Chapter knows folks who live on or near Martin Branch and who might be interested in the creek, please let Topf or Jim know.

We have a long way to go, but as the proverb says, "a trip of a thousand miles begins with the first step."

## 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. (Note that you may need to click the "Last Modified" header at the top to sort the list with the latest minutes at the top.)

**And also ...** in addition to the article directly above on *Improving Streams and Rivers in SW Wisconsin*, your Board also took steps to sponsor Grayson Yerges and Tristram Morris at this year's State TU Youth Camp, the first camp since the onset of COVID. By all accounts the kids and instructors enjoyed the experience. We hope Grayson and Tristram continue to enjoy trout fishing and TU activities. If you know a child who'd enjoy the TU Youth Camp experience, keep an eye out for the notice next spring. SWTU tries to sponsor two kids every summer and we want to hear from anyone who wants to attend.



## TWO GREAT WOMEN'S FLYFISHING UPDATES

(Building on [the success shared in last month's Newscasts](#))

### Featured in Trout Magazine

Check out page 72 of your latest issue of Trout Magazine, the quarterly publication of Trout Unlimited. It features an impressive two-page writeup of last year's Women's Leadership Institute. Many congratulations to Tina Murray for her leadership and everyone who is involved in this impressive initiative.

### Introducing Women to Fly Fishing

Jim Hess donated an introduction to fly fishing for women to a silent auction for sustainable farming. On Sunday Jim and Marci, assisted by several SWTU Board Members, welcomed four women from the Blanchardville area to the Lake Belleville/Sugar River Park in Belleville. A spectacular thunderstorm ended 30 minutes before starting time, clearly a sign this was going to be a fun and worthwhile day.

The instruction included an introduction to many aspects of fly fishing; the casting clinic featured individual coaching. The afternoon concluded with cheese, crackers, brownies, watermelon, beer, and fishing for smallmouth bass in the Sugar. The food bit better than the bass but all enjoyed the afternoon. The women appreciated the clinic and are planning expeditions to gear up and fish. One of them announced she has a nice spring pond loaded with brown trout that haven't seen a hook for years. The next fishing trip is going to be a success.

Thanks to Jim, Marci, Henry, Tom, Don, and Topf.



### Welcome New Members

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

Ben Lizdas

William Allen

Benjamin Dickey

David Dybdahl

Gage Dykema

Steve Verhage

Matt Frazer

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

Have your children ever been so completely costumed that you no longer recognized them? Frank Sawyer, originator of the legendary Pheasant Tail Nymph, probably wouldn't recognize many of his "children" today. Sawyer's original Pheasant Tail is a model of simplicity, but the modified, substituted, customized, and dolled-up variants today often bear little resemblance to their stately ancestor.

Frank Sawyer (1906-1980) was a gentle and observant Englishman who gave us one of the greatest trout flies of all time. His two books, *Keeper of the Stream* (1952) and *Nymphs and the Trout* (1958) are rich in thoughtful observation and practical advice about trout, trout streams, and angling. Sawyer was river keeper, water bailiff, and chief steward for 52 years of the Officer's Fishing Association, a private club owning 6.5 premier miles of the fabled River Avon in Wiltshire. Sawyer spent his lifetime studying intricacies of both the river and its trout.

Sawyer was a pioneering environmentalist and conservationist, one who learned stream ecology standing hip-deep in his laboratory. He developed techniques for cleansing polluted waters with powdered limestone, pioneered use of tributary spring ponds as protected habitat for juvenile trout, established insect hatcheries with which to repopulate degraded streams, and invented a humane trap to control vermin. Sawyer was especially concerned about human impacts on trout habitat. His books articulate major concepts of stream management, including the importance of bank stabilization, rock diversions, erosion control, removal of organic debris, storm water management, and nutrient excess. Sound familiar? The needs of a healthy trout have never changed.

Sawyer's most famous legacy is his Pheasant Tail Nymph. Sawyer learned fly tying and fishing by first studying nymphs and emergers in excruciating detail.

He was initially obsessed with making exact copies of each species and stage of growth, but angling experience taught Sawyer that exact imitation is not essential:

*"I found that there was no need for any exact likeness of one or another [insect] and that if most of the details and characteristics of several could be incorporated ... fish could be taken consistently on them".*

Like anglers before and since, Sawyer learned that size, shape, and approximate color are far more important for success than precise imitation. Presentation, not imitation, catches trout. Sawyer's books describe only five fly patterns, but he caught trout, salmon, grayling, and char throughout the world on them. His Pheasant Tail imitates darkly colored mayfly nymphs, and his Grey Goose imitates lighter varieties.

*"Simplicity is an aim to be desired"* Sawyer wrote, and his fly patterns reflect that principle. The Pheasant Tail Nymph contains but two materials besides a hook: pheasant tail fibers and fine copper wire. That's it! No thread ... no thorax of herl ... no dangling legs ... no flashback of tinsel ... just pheasant and wire. Many mayfly nymphs tuck their legs tightly against the body when swimming, and Sawyer's flies have no legs. Their streamlined profile and underbody of wire sink the fly quickly, which is often important for success. Al Troth of Dillon, MT modified Sawyer's design by adding a thorax of peacock herl and fashioning legs from the tips of pheasant tail fibers. Troth's Pheasant Tail, published in *The Masters on the Nymph* (1979), is arguably the most popular of all Pheasant Tail Nymphs today.

Add weight to your leader and fish a Pheasant Tail Nymph near the stream bottom during non-hatch periods. It is excellent when trailed behind a larger weighted nymph (e.g., scud, Hare's Ear) as part of a two-nymph tandem. Or grease your leader and fish Pheasant Tail Nymphs just under the surface to rising or bulging fish during a mayfly hatch. Either way, you'll fish one of history's greatest-ever trout flies.

© Rusty Dunn, 2022

### ----- Sawyer Pheasant Tail Nymph -----

---

**Hook:** Wet fly / nymph, #10 - #20

**Thread:** None; fine copper wire only

**Tail:** Center tail feather barbs of a rooster pheasant

**Abdomen:** Pheasant feather barbs used for the tail

**Ribbing:** Fine copper wire

**Thorax:** Underbody of copper wire overwrapped with the butt ends of the pheasant feather barbs used for the body

---



## 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](mailto:madkasel@gmail.com)**

### Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited Leadership:

President	Mark Maffitt	<a href="mailto:mark.maffitt@gmail.com">mark.maffitt@gmail.com</a>
Vice President	Topf Wells	<a href="mailto:topfwells@gmail.com">topfwells@gmail.com</a>
Secretary	Henry Nehls-Lowe	<a href="mailto:henry.nehlslowe@gmail.com">henry.nehlslowe@gmail.com</a>
Treasurer	Nick Jackson	<a href="mailto:jackson@themendotagroup.com">jackson@themendotagroup.com</a>
State Council Rep.	Michael Williamson	<a href="mailto:mlwilliamson.53@gmail.com">mlwilliamson.53@gmail.com</a>
Board Member	Pat Hasburgh	<a href="mailto:patrick.hasburgh@gmail.com">patrick.hasburgh@gmail.com</a>
Board Member	Curt Reidl	<a href="mailto:curt_riedl@oxfordcorp.com">curt_riedl@oxfordcorp.com</a>
Board Member	Tom Thrall	<a href="mailto:tthrall2@yahoo.com">tthrall2@yahoo.com</a>
Board Member	John Freeborg	<a href="mailto:john@freeborg.com">john@freeborg.com</a>
Board Member	Don Golembiewski	<a href="mailto:don.golembiewski@gmail.com">don.golembiewski@gmail.com</a>
Board Member	Kevin Maes	<a href="mailto:kevin.maes@outlook.com">kevin.maes@outlook.com</a>
Past President	Jim Hess	<a href="mailto:jimhess5599@gmail.com">jimhess5599@gmail.com</a>
Newscasts Editor	Drew Kasel	<a href="mailto:madkasel@gmail.com">madkasel@gmail.com</a>
Conservation Committee Chair	Jim Hess	
Women's/ Diversity Initiative Chair	Tina Murray	<a href="mailto:swtu.women.diversity@gmail.com">swtu.women.diversity@gmail.com</a>
Youth Education Chair for SWTU	Tina Murray	<a href="mailto:swtu.women.diversity@gmail.com">swtu.women.diversity@gmail.com</a>

### Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited

P.O. Box 45555  
Madison, WI 53744-5555