

Newscasts

Summer 2023 Serving the Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited



Have a great summer – See you this fall!

We'll see you at our Tuesday, September 12, Chapter Meeting

By Topf Wells

Put September 12 on your calendar when we resume our meetings at Schwoegler's Lanes. We'll have some surprising and excellent news about SWTU!

At our June meeting, members elected **Steve Musser** as SWTU President. We're excited to work with and support Steve as we continue to do great things for our precious cold water resource.

Chapter member John Gribb passes

We were deeply saddened to learn of the passing of John Gribb, whose friendliness, caring and generosity made a deep mark on our community. You can learn more about John by [reading his obituary here](#) and consider leaving a note or remembrance on the memory wall.

Pat Hasburgh shared the following personal email with the Board and agreed it could be shared in Newscasts. It exemplifies the tremendous, positive difference John made in the lives of so many.



While John lived a long and fulfilling life, this is devastating to me.

John was literally the first person to welcome me to the Chapter at the first meeting I ever attended, asking me to sit at his table when I was a budding fly angler. Actually, everyone at the table was very welcoming and at the time I had no idea the heavy hitters I was sharing dinner with.

The second time I met John was at a workday. He was probably in his early 70s at the time and trying to start his piece of junk Poulan chainsaw. It was also my first ever SWTU workday and I had some experience with chainsaws so I took over and wound up felling many willows on German Valley with him and others that morning.

I learned that John was the creator of the Skitting Caddis, a fly I had been turned on to by the fine folks at On The Creek Fly Shop in Cross Plains. I was told "This fly is the Woolly Buzzer of dry flies" and it really is a fantastic fly. I had just started taking the fly tying class and had somewhat naively asked if John would be willing to teach me how to tie the Skitting Caddis and the other flies he tied. I drove to John's house every Tuesday evening for an entire winter and learned to tie all the flies in his catalog. Those sessions will always make me smile as our relationship then was much like that of an old Kung-Fu movie where the master is unusually hard on the apprentice...making me destroy any fly with even the slightest flaw until I got them right. My homework might be to tie a dozen of a certain pattern and I would show up proud of what I had accomplished and he would usually say something like, "Good job! Now take these 10 flies and axe them to save the hook. They'll fish...and will probably catch fish, but when you look at all the other flies in your box, the shitty ones will be the last you choose." and he was 100% correct. NEVER glue a fly until you know it's perfect. Many traditionalists scoff at his innovative designs but if you've ever fished them you know that they're hard to beat when it comes to catching fish.

A memorial service in John's honor will be held at Gunderson Camacho Funeral and Cremation Care, 500 N. Eighth St., Mount Horeb, at 3 p.m. on Saturday, July 29, 2023. Visitation will be held at the funeral home from 1 p.m. until the time of the service on Saturday.

Donations in John's honor may be made to the West Fork Sports Club (<https://westforksportsclub.org/>) or Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited (<https://wicouncil.tu.org/donate-to-witu>).

We became good friends through those many cold nights in his basement and we started fishing together regularly. He showed me how to fish in the same way he taught me how to tie flies. He shared some of his favorite water with me and basically taught me everything I know about fly fishing. He was funny, patient and a wonderful teacher. To this day one of the best casters in the game.

I generally prefer fishing alone and John was one of the only people I fished with for many years and I have so many fond memories I will always cherish. John's health started to fade a bit before Covid but we would still get out occasionally. I remember several times, driving 1.5 hrs to the Blue River to only fish for an hour before he would have to quit and we would drive back home. Some might be frustrated by such a trip but as I'm sure many of you know, the trip to, and from a stream with a good friend is often the best part of a day "on the water". He always made me stop at a Culver's so he could get ice cream...Marietta didn't want him to have ice cream.

I checked in with John occasionally during Covid but we didn't fish out of an abundance of caution. When I saw him post-covid I actually thought he looked, and was doing better than ever. We talked about getting back on the water but with me buying the shop...and life generally getting in the way of fishing, it never happened. This is one of my greatest regrets. I will however have the many great times spent with him and the knowledge he imparted to me that I will cherish forever.

Save your Saturdays – Fall Stream Workday Schedule

By Jim Hess, Conservation Chair

I hope everyone is enjoying your summer. It is certainly zipping right along, almost August already, and time to start planning our 2023 Fall Workdates. Below are the dates for our fall workdays to place on your calendars.

Still working on the sites for our workdays and will be completing that in the coming weeks. There are many good options, including a new Dane County Easement on BEC, but this easement has not been finalized yet. Hopefully it will be, so we can have a workday there.

I worked around Thanksgiving weekend, the 10-day deer gun season, and try to work around Badger home football games. Unfortunately, Wisconsin has a lot of home games this year, which good for the fans, but makes scheduling workdays more difficult. So to avoid going a month without a workday, I have scheduled October 7 as a workday, which is a home game against Rutgers.

All are Saturdays from 9 to about Noon.

- September 23
- October 7
- October 21
- November 4
- December 2

Let me know if you have any questions. Thanks.

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.)

Chuck Valliere Passes – TU Leader and Friend to Veterans

It is with sadness that we announce the passing of Wolf River TU Chapter President Chuck Valliere. Chuck was a constant, friendly presence at trout events and gave a great deal of his time, energy and expertise to the Vets on the Fly program. There will be a Celebration of Life on August 7, 2023. Details are below.

Time: 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Location: Rex's Innkeeper (Restaurant)
301 N Century Ave
Wauunakee, WI 53597



Vets on the Fly – All Veterans Welcome

By Dyan Lesnik

SWTU Veterans on the Fly will start their next fly fishing/casting session on August 2. Vets on the Fly meet at a different location every Wednesday at 6 p.m. All Vets and their families are welcome – there is never any cost and all gear is provided.

Watch for weekly destinations on [SWTU Vets on the Fly](#) or contact [Mike Johnson](#).



Chuck Valliere (right) at a Vets on the Fly event.

Pine River Assessment Raises Eyebrows

By Topf Wells

Justin Haugland, Senior DNR Fisheries Biologist, has published [an interesting report on the Pine River in Richland and Vernon Counties](#).

My takeaways from Justin's assessment:

1. Wow. This is a big watershed with lots of streams. Justin and his crew had to work hard to cover all this water and the analysis must have taken a lot of time and thought.
2. This report will interest anglers because Justin describes some streams with large populations of trout that are not well known.
3. His key recommendation is extremely important for SWTU, other chapters, TU DARE and other conservation organizations like BFF to pursue. Justin strongly recommends that easement authority be created or expanded for a number of streams in order to better protect and improve them and to increase angler access. One such stream is Fancy Creek and its tributaries. It's stuffed with trout, browns in Fancy and brookies in the headwater tribs. It has only two small easements and one would have to have the agility and stamina of an orangutan to fish one of the two. I've driven the full length of Fancy for years longing for easements. When I finally had the nerve to ask a landowner and walked to his pasture, a Holstein bull awaited me (no fishing there).



Our opportunity to see this recommendation approved is to have all those organizations and as many TU members as possible participate in the Western Coulee Regional Master Plan. SWTU submitted comments at the earliest opportunity but comments on the draft plan will be crucial.

David Rowe also mentioned the importance of this planning effort at our May meeting. I'm on the email list for the process and I've also asked Justin and Dave to remind us when and how to submit comments.

Several other biologists in several other assessments have also recommended expansion of easement and acquisition authority. We can support all of those.

Thanks to Justin for more great work.

I Didn't Know a Drought Could Do This

By Topf Wells

I was preparing to fish my favorite stretch of my favorite Columbia County trout stream but demurred when I reached the creek. What happened, I wondered. Where I was used to stepping onto a nice patch of gravel with a prospect of pleasant wading and fish eager to eat dry flies, I found a mess: big stretches of sediment topped by dense clumps of aquatic vegetation. The small amount of current that showed was shoved under overhanging clumps of reed canary grass topped by wild parsnip. I went elsewhere but wondered if I wasn't becoming a bit of a wuss.

Nope. The fish biologist for that stream said he had never seen such build ups of sediment and vegetation in the 11 years that he has surveyed that site. Where the wading is usually easy, he and his crew were sometimes sinking up to their waists. The change is this part of the creek was so drastic that he thought the amount of fish habitat had been reduced. Had I tried to fish there, I might still be stuck.

Nor was this a wholly isolated occurrence. A Dane County staff person had noticed the same situation on Token Creek while a scientist with the USGS reported that a section of Black Earth Creek at one of the gauging stations had a similar set of sediment bars and dense mats of vegetation. At Token Creek and BEC, the water was nearly out of the banks even though the drought had reduced the amount of water in the stream.

The drought is the cause of this phenomenon. Without flushing rains, the sediments form those bars and the vegetation finds an ideal spot to grow and proliferate in lower gradient parts of streams.

I don't know if this accumulation of silt and vegetation hurts the stream in the long run. I hope a strong storm or two will restore the streams to a more normal state. It might force you to find another part of the stream to fish. It's also an example of a change that droughts and climate change might have on our streams.

Welcome New Members

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

Bob Gurda	Eric Statz
Brent Schmaling	Tina Poster
Jon Sharp	Joseph Sanford
Jeffrey Neterval	Ken Genskow
Elliot Tanin	Elizabeth Seyer
John Hunter	David Klingbeil
Steve Verhage	

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

On a cloudy cool day in April, you arrive onstream to find blue-winged olives in the air and on the water. Fish rise steadily below each riffle. Jackpot! You tie on a size #16 BWO dry fly and stealthily approach the first pool. You cast to a riser, and a nice trout ascends from the depths, approaches your fly, but turns away at the last moment and descends into the pool. Another cast, same result. You've just suffered a fly angler's classic indignity. The trout refused your perfect presentation. A proverbial slap in the face. Not to worry. You've read all about the situation and know exactly what to do: switch to a smaller version of the same fly. You remove the size #16 and tie on a #18. A few more casts, and another nice trout rises from the depths. Another look, another slap in the face. You're thinking, "These BWOs must be smaller than I thought". You clip off the size #18 and tie on a #20. More refusals. In desperation, you try a size #22. Not even a look. You switch to a different BWO dry and repeat the progression. You catch a few trout but, despite all the fly swapping, feel that you missed out on a bonanza. The hatch wanes, and you walk away thinking, "What did I do wrong?"

You were probably mere inches away from success! Hatching mayfly nymphs ascend from the stream bottom and accumulate just under the surface, where they transition to aerial adults. The process of transition is quite lengthy, and trout feed heavily on the intermediate stages. We collectively call these stages "emergers", a term that was first used in the literature in two influential 1971 books (*Selective Trout* by Swisher & Richards and *Hatches* by Caucci & Nastasi). The concept of insects physically transitioning at the surface from nymphs to adults, however, is ancient. William Blacker accurately described the process in 1842 (*Blacker's Art of Fly Making*), and his Winged Larva is arguably the very first fly that unambiguously imitates what we today would call an emerger. Hundreds of authors since Blacker have emphasized the importance of emergers and designed thousands of flies to imitate stages of an emergence.

Trout feeding on emergers – even those under the surface – usually produce a visible disturbance (a "rise") on the surface. As described by the legendary F.M. Halford in *Dry Fly Fishing in Theory and Practice* (1889),

"The apparent rises are bulges, and instead of sucking in the duns when hatched, the fish are busily engaged in chasing and securing the Ephemerae in the nymph state, before they have emerged from the shuck".

Experienced anglers recognize bulging rises vs. surface rises and act accordingly with their imitations.

Mayfly emergence is an untidy process involving sustained quivering motions as the winged adult struggles to escape its shuck, pierce the surface film, and extend its wings, legs, etc. Generations of talented anglers have struggled to imitate emergers. George Marryat, a famous contemporary of Halford, described the frustration of fly choice when trout are bulging: *"You can imitate the nymph, but you cannot imitate the wiggle"*.

Au Contraire! Wet-fly practitioners dating to the earliest of times showed the way. Wingless wets, winged wets, fuzzy nymphs, and ragged flies tied of soft water absorbent materials imitate nymphs and emergers quite well. Their soft flowing fibers of fur and feather quiver with every little puff of current. The key is to fish such flies just under the surface, where they imitate struggling emergers. Soft feathery flies also imitate failed hatches, in which drowned naturals drift near the surface as disheveled tangles of body parts.

Englishman G.E.M. Skues was a master of nymphing near the surface with soft-hackled flies. He popularized the methods worldwide, and his book *The Way of a Trout With a Fly* (1921) is a landmark in the history of fly angling. This year marks its 100th anniversary. The book describes trout behavior, and it remains fresh and relevant today a century later. Skues' Medium Olive Nymph is an excellent emerger imitation during a BWO hatch. Fish it trailed behind an indicator dry (e.g., parachute BWO) and allow the nymph to sink an inch or two below the surface. Be ready for that bulging rise, only this time you will know what to expect and likely be hooked up on a beautiful trout. © Rusty Dunn, 2021

----- Medium Olive Nymph -----

Skues greatly enjoyed olive hatches, and his writings describe well over a dozen different imitations keyed for use in differing months. This Medium Olive Nymph pattern for the early season was published in *Side-Lines, Side-Lights & Reflections* (1932).

Hook: Wet fly, #15 or #16

Thread: Pearsall's Gossamer silk, primrose

Hackle: Dark blue dun hen

Tail: Two strands of dark dun hen hackle

Abdomen: Stripped brownish peacock quill taken from near the eye

Thorax: A small wad of dark hare's ear



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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