

Newscasts

October 2023 serving the Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited



What can you do to help native brook trout? Plenty! Learn all about a “fishy” volunteer opportunity at our Tuesday, October 10, Chapter Meeting

Melancthon Creek is one of the most important brook trout streams in our part of the Driftless Area. The Brookies have genetics that are native to the lower Wisconsin River drainage and are an important source of fish for the DNR’s wild trout management program. This program utilizes eggs from Melancthon Creek (and others) to provide for and maintain Brook Trout populations in the Driftless. The brookies, however are in decline and increasing numbers of brown trout are playing a role.

Justin Haglund, DNR fish biologist for Iowa and Richland Counties, Restorer of Smith Conley Creek, and Protector of Brook Trout, has a plan to protect those char and **HE NEEDS OUR HELP**.

During late October/early November (date TBD), Justin will collect Brown Trout from Melancthon Creek, PIT tag and clip, and release them downstream in the Pine River. He will cover the uppermost reaches of Melancthon creek over the course of 6 days and needs as many volunteers as SWTU and other conservation organizations can muster for this mammoth effort. (And perhaps catch a mammoth trout like the one Justin is pictured with at right!)

This occurs after the trout season. So if you didn't catch enough trout this year, here's your chance. The browns and brookies will be at peak condition. With enough volunteers, the work won't be that difficult and Justin can rotate folks through the different tasks. We'll be saving brook trout and boosting an already excellent fishery in the Pine River watershed.

About Justin – He is a fisheries biologist for the Wisconsin DNR stationed in Dodgeville and part of the southern district fish management team. Justin manages the waters of Iowa and Richland County and has been in this role for approximately 6 years. His primary focus involves managing over 400 miles of classified trout waters, although he also manages a few local impoundments within his territory. Today Justin will be talking with us about the assessment of the Pine River watershed in Richland County and an upcoming trout relocation project on Melancthon Creek.



Justin discovered that the brook trout need help as part of his assessment of the Pine River. In the course of those surveys, he found the magnificent brown trout in the photo. The Pine is a system worth knowing and fishing – Justin will also discuss that watershed.

We hope you can join us to learn more about our native brook trout and this unique volunteer opportunity. The meeting is Tuesday, October 10, at Schwoegler's Bowling on Grand Canyon Dr. on Madison's west side. Dinner and drinks will start at 5:30 and presentations will occur about 7.

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

Our next Stream Team Workday

October 7, 2023 – Big Spring Branch, Iowa County | 5465 Big Spring Road, Highland

By Jim Hess, Conservation Chair

We hope you can make this event – lots of details in this announcement, be sure to read carefully.

Time: 9 am to 12 noon (Chapter Approved Sawyers please arrive at 8:30).

Where: The work site is located in a beautiful wooded valley near Spurgeon Vineyards & Winery. Unless you know this area, it may be difficult to find. The Fire Code is 5465 Big Spring Road, Town of Highland, which can be entered into your phone or the Google Map Link is <https://maps.app.goo.gl/WabkPHPkFyWHqj6c8>



And for those of you that want written directions: Get to Cobb, then north on STH 80 to Highland, take County Rd Q west for about 2 miles, then turn right on Big Spring Rd and go 1 mile to our worksite.

What: This will be a joint workday with the Nohr Chapter, assisting the DNR with removing willows and box elders along Big Spring Branch in Iowa County. There are tons of willows to be removed. This will be a multi-year project. The goal is to remove all the willows and then plant oaks and native habitat. Justin Haglund, DNR Fish Biologist, and Lloyd Meng, Fisheries Technician, will be directing and assisting us, along with some other DNR staff.

It is absolutely critical that all willow cuttings are treated. If you are using loppers or a chainsaw, it is probably best to do your own treating. For those using a brush cutter, someone should follow you with herbicide. The willows will be left where they fall as they will soon “dissolve” and the box elders will be stacked into habitat/burn piles. There are some young red oaks that need to be left alone. When in doubt, check with someone to make sure before cutting.

Bring: Bring work gloves, sturdy shoes, and eye and ear protection. Also bring reusable water bottles that can be filled from our 5-gal water jug. Stay hydrated.

Parking: There are two DNR parking areas and lots of parking along Big Spring Creek Road. Traffic is light on this road, so it is okay to park on both sides of the road.

Future Workdays (detailed information will be provided later):

Oct 21 - Hefty Creek, Rudd Easement, Green County, removing box elders and invasive woodies and installing brush bundle upstream from where we worked last spring. The work area will be off of Disch Rd at the north end of the easement. Vince Schmitz, DNR Fish Biologist Habitat Specialist, will again be assisting us.

Nov 4 - Whitford Creek, TPE Sylvan Conservation Area, on Sylvan Road. Removing box elders and willows from the stream. We had two workdays there last spring and this will finish up this project.

Dec 2 - Kittleson Creek along Cty Rd H, Dane County, removing willows just west of the bridge on Kittleson Road. The willows will be stacked, with the assistance of the landowner with his skid steer, and used next spring to build a brush bundle.

The few, the proud ...

By Topf Wells

Maybe not the Marines but our workday on the Sugar River at the Davidson property seemed like an amphibious assault at times.

We were clearing the stream bank of invasive honeysuckle and the too common box elder and creating a brush bundle. Doing so stabilizes the streambank and provides excellent habitat for small fish and invertebrates. It also gives some native plants a chance. An example is downstream where most of the oak understory is honeysuckle and nothing but honeysuckle. But in the few places where honeysuckle is not present, some native spring ephemerals thrive.

We had 13 helpers. We suffered a casualty in the form of a lost cellphone, which triggered a search (alas, futile). The sawyers, haulers, and brush installers worked hard and well. As a result, anglers have better access to the river and the river has better habitat. It's a heck of a brush bundle. Our brush bundles have always worked well and are stable and secure. Jim Hess is now incorporating the anchoring system used by the DNR crew so that performance should improve.



We could have used some more folks. The combined age of the 3 installers is about 215 years and we felt every one of them. The folks on shore had to contend with a temperature that rose quickly.

The temperature should be cooler for subsequent work days and we can use the help. The brownies, cheese curds, pork sticks and camaraderie await.

Jim Hess was even more heroic than usual with his planning, new technology, hours of brush installation and, finally, taming a tree that fell just a bit too far in the river. Kathleen Falk spent as much time in the water and I finally joined them. Wading wet was cool but I brought home pounds of Sugar River silt. The effects of the drought are noticeable. Stretches of stream bottom that are usually pretty clean gravel have a couple inches of silt. A scouring rain before spawning time would be most welcome.

Our sawyers did a great job with a special shout out to John Freeborg, who found my car fob that I knocked off the table. I owe John a beer at the next meeting. The brush haulers and tossers were fabulous. They paced the flow of brush perfectly and not one log hit one head. Young Quentin from Belleville and his Dad, Chris, were wonderful additions to the crew. Quentin deserves a big fish on his next trip to the Sugar.



Our next work day is October 7 with the Nohr Chapter dealing with yet another prolific invasive, willows on Big Spring. They make accessing the stream impossible and are in the words of a retired DNR fish biologist, beaver candy. The beaver is a wonderful mammal but their dams are sometimes detrimental to Driftless trout streams. See details in the prior article.

Photos courtesy Jim Hess. [See more in the article on swtu.org](http://swtu.org).

Finance Committee Seeks Members

By Marty Chiaro, Treasurer

We are seeking volunteers to serve on SWTU's Finance Committee. Some of the primary functions of the Finance Committee include:

- Serve as a financial sounding board for the Treasurer and Board of Directors.
- Review the annual operating budget and provide a recommendation on the budget to the BOD.
- Review the annual Operating Report submitted to TU National.
- Review the annual tax return and prepare a recommendation to the BOD.
- Provide feedback on various financial analyses prepared to support major Chapter operational or financial initiatives.

I anticipate we will have somewhere between 6-8 Finance meetings a year, in addition to meeting prep time and occasional participation on various research or finance related projects. Committee members will have 2 year terms.

Please contact Marty Chiaro, SWTU Treasurer, no later than October 31, if you have an interest in serving on the Committee. chiaromt@gmail.com

Thank you for your consideration.

** Editor's personal note: Treasurer is a big and important job for our Chapter and we owe Marty all the help he can get. If you feel you're a fit for this, please at least reach out and explore the opportunity.*

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.)

Volunteering at Joy Trip Project Event

By Tom Thrall

The creator of this unique project is James Edward Mills. He is a nationally known journalist and is a Nelson Institute lecturer among many other things. He lives here in Madison. He is also a passionate fly fisher. This is a national program who's goal is to encourage and train Black Men to get out in nature and enjoy our public lands.

The theme is, **“Where do I as a black man, fit in nature? How do we hold space in nature for our next generation of young men?”**

James was here in Madison for a national showing of a film he produced which is being shown around the country.

The film, “Blackwaters: Brotherhood in the Wild” asks, follows five black men with five unique perspectives as they embark on a fly-fishing adventure in the Gates of the Arctic Circle National Park.

As part of this event, Dane County Parks Dane Co sponsored an event for invited participants at Black Earth Creek/Salmo pond. SWTU was asked if we would be willing to provide a morning of instruction on the basics of flyfishing and do some casting instructions. We agreed to do so and the event went very well and it was very rewarding to work with such a great group of people.

Many thanks to volunteers Curt Diehl, Andy Morton, Jim Beecher, Jim Hess and Tom Thrall ... and to Jim Beecher for the photos. [See more photos in the story on swtu.org](#).



James Edward Mills addressing group



Tom Thrall trying to cast a fly with spin rod



You can help! Short-term Volunteer Opportunities

Your chapter needs volunteers to join the fundraising event team, without which we may not be able to host another fun and social event in the Spring of 2024.

Also, your board wants to improve the chapter's communication skills. To achieve this, we are forming a communications team which needs your help to expand reach and impact.

Both teams have a short window of commitment.

Contact John Freeborg at john-tu@freeborg.com or 608-695-8544 to learn more.

Participate in Survey for "Black Earth Creek State of the Watershed Report"

Black Earth Creek Watershed Association (BECWA) is preparing its first "Black Earth Creek State of the Watershed Report." The report will include survey results of folks interested in the health of Black Earth Creek and its watershed.

To participate in the brief survey visit:

https://uwmadison.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eXyqp5yXOFZXNDU,

or scan the QR code from your mobile device:



For more information on BECWA, including its Fall 2023 Newsletter, visit

<https://www.becwa.org>.

Welcome New Members

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

Caryl Terrell
Zach Rice
Charles Hodulik
James Yeadon
Nick Quint

Blaine Stott
Jim Hansen
David Branley
Howard Czoschke
David Franchino

Audrey Rice
William Christianson
Steve Roscoe
Jeff Humphry
Benjamin Mechelke

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

Fly fishing can be frighteningly complex. Every step of the process is fraught with decisions, decisions, decisions. What length of rod? What weight of line? What length of leader? What size tippet? Where to fish? Choosing flies can be even worse. Step to the fly bins of a well-stocked fly shop, and the decisions before you will make your head spin. Row after row. Bin after bin. Unrecognized flies of uncertain utility for unfamiliar waters. Fortunately, you can greatly simplify the process by returning to basics. The simplest flies are often among the best. This principle has been proved many times over by the wingless wet flies of the English north.

"North Country" wet flies originated near the English-Scottish border, a strikingly beautiful area home to wild, native, brown trout. It is a landscape of spirited, stony-bottomed, spate streams that drain the English highlands. It's the birthplace of simple, elegant, and remarkably effective wet flies variously termed 'North Country wets', 'spiders', 'wingless wets', or 'soft-hackled flies'. Such patterns are sparsely dressed jewels having slim bodies of silk, collars of soft feathers harvested from local game birds, and, optionally, a thin veneer of natural fur dubbed over the silk body. The hackle imitates appendages (legs, wings, antennae, etc) of insects emerging at the surface. Light hooks, sparse dressings, and water-absorbent materials cause wingless wets to enter the stream quietly and drift lightly on or under the surface. They are excellent flies for trout taking emerging nymphs just under the surface. Don't be misled by the simplicity of soft-hackled flies. Trout all over the world enthusiastically endorse them!

The exact origins of North Country wet flies are not well

chronicled, but their use in the UK increased steadily through the 1800s, especially in the north. Two influential and popular books published near 1900 are acknowledged landmarks of the fully mature North Country school: *Yorkshire Trout Flies* by T.E. Pritt (1885) and *Brook and River Trouting* by H.H. Edmonds and N.N. Lee (1916). The books introduced anglers worldwide to North Country patterns and methods.

The effectiveness of soft-hackled flies derives from the feathery movements of their materials underwater. The flexible fibers of water-soaked feather and fur wiggle with every puff of current, thereby imitating emerging nymphs struggling near the surface to escape their nymphal shucks. Soft-hackled flies work well when dead-drifted, but they can be even more effective when deliberately swung, twitched, or lifted upward before trout. Quivering movements of the soft materials and action of the fly imparted by the angler scream "this thing is alive" to otherwise wary trout.

Thomas Evan Pritt (1848-1895) described 36 soft-hackled flies in *Yorkshire Trout Flies*. Pritt did not design the patterns, but he cataloged popular flies of Yorkshire, detailed their materials, and matched individual flies to specific insects. His Snipe and Purple (also called Dark Snipe) is one of Pritt's most famous flies. It imitates Iron Blues, a mayfly species of early spring that hatches throughout Britain. Iron Blues are not found in North America, but they are very similar to the many species of American blue-winged olives. Pritt described the Snipe and Purple as "*a splendid (fly) on cold days in the early part of the season*". Indeed, it is. The Snipe and Purple is excellent when small dark-bodied mayflies are on the wing. It is a favorite of many discriminating anglers, including some wily English trout poachers! That's quite a recommendation, and you should snipe a few trout yourself when the olives of a Driftless spring come calling. Rusty Dunn, 2023

----- Snipe and Purple -----

Digital copies of *Yorkshire Trout Flies* (Pritt, 1885) and *Brook and River Trouting* (Edmonds & Lee, 1916) are available as free downloads at <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc2.ark:/13960/t80k28p1c> and <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc2.ark:/13960/t43r12n1m>, respectively.

Hook: Wet fly, #14 - #20

Thread: Pearsall's Gossamer silk, purple (color No. 8)

Body: Tying silk

Hackle: One or (at most!) two turns of a dusky, dark, marginal covert feather of an English snipe's wing



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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