

Newscasts

October 2025 serving the Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited



Patagonia Adventures: Our October 2025 Chapter Gathering Plus updates on the Meicher Auction and Future Events

We are pleased to welcome our speaker for Tuesday, October 14 – **Kyle Zempel of Black Earth Creek Angling** on trout fishing in Patagonia. It's a legendary location with legendary fish (as the picture attests) ... hear from a "local legend" on the services he now offers there and what to consider and expect from a trip to Patagonia.



Kyle created Black Earth Angling Co. (www.blackearthangling.com), a fly fishing guide outfit focused providing clients with one-of-a-kind fishing experiences. Kyle guides full time for Driftless trout and the diverse warm water opportunities of the Wisconsin River. Kyle has become well known for his guide work on the Wisconsin River, specifically "The Crash," and his work with a camera in the field as a fly fishing photographer. His photo work has appeared in notable publications such as, The Flyfish Journal, Eastern Fly Fishing, The Drake, Fly Fisherman, Midcurrent.com, Hatch.com. Kyle has been lucky enough to fish in Mexico, Bahamas, Colombia, Argentina, Chile, New Zealand, and extensively throughout the United States. In 2025, he guided for Martin Pescador Lodge in Chile.

We hope you will join us on October 14. We gather, as always, at Schwoeglers on Grand Canyon Drive on Madison's West Side. Dinner and drinks will be available starting at 5:30 p.m. with Kyle's presentation following some brief updates at 7.

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

Meicher Auction, Present and Future

By Topf Wells

Thanks to everyone who donated to, attended, and bought usually fabulous gear at the Meicher Auction at our September meeting. We raised \$4900 (!) and lots of folks left laden with rods, reels, flies, etc. Local trout had best be prepared for the onslaught of these well equipped anglers.

The Board discussed the auction and some suggestions members have made. We've decided to switch the Meicher Auction back to March. Our next one will be in March, 2026. This was the most frequent suggestion and returns the Auction to its traditional time. We tried the September time to create an extra-attractive meeting after the summer hiatus. Our first September auction also coincided with our return to post-Covid, more normal activities. Our storage locker was overflowing since we had not held the auction for several years and we had to move lots of gear quickly.

The March time has several advantages. Occurring at the beginning of the season, buyers might think of the gear they'd really, really like to have for a new season. With our meetings in full swing and the weather not yet conducive to great fishing, we might draw a bigger crowd. We've not been able to offer guided trips at the September auction, probably because guides don't have many or any openings that late in the season. While we don't want to presume, perhaps a few guides will donate trips if they have a year to plan and schedule.

Stay tuned for more details. Perhaps the only drawback is that we'll ask you to donate gear and then bid in 6 months, instead of a year. So look through the garage or basement with March in mind and daydream of the cool stuff you should have purchased at previous auctions (why didn't I bid on Larry's Pass Lake flies this fall?) and don't miss the bargains this spring.

Speaking of Events

SWTU has held extremely successful Spring Fundraisers, Icebreakers and Banquets ... but not recently. All of these have been fun, worthwhile and lucrative but we can't host all of them every year. With some planning and volunteers, we can have a more regular schedule of these events as well as the auction. We probably don't recognize how much we don't gain if we forego these celebrations. The Meicher Auction is wonderful but with the biggest crowds and highly desirable gear and trips, the most we raised was about \$7,000. We raised between 12-15K with the Spring Fundraiser and the Icebreaker approached 10. We made some money with banquets and, more importantly, they enabled us to honor members, partners and landowners.

Dyan Lesnik, the best Vice President ever, has agreed to chair a committee to plan how and when SWTU can begin to host some of these events again. To ensure that the committee has enough time, the Board has decided not to hold any other fundraiser next spring besides the Auction. Now we need folks to serve on the committee: **please contact Dyan** at dmlgriffin@gmail.com or at one of our meetings.

Clinics, Please Help

SWTU Casting Clinics are in demand. The next is on 10/14 at 1PM in Dane County's Token Creek Park. Attending will be the 40-50 high school students from Sun Prairie's Trout In the Classroom program. Earlier that day they will have released their trout and watched the DNR shock part of Token Creek. Next they want to learn how to catch the trout. That's where we come in. We really need help on this one because our two key organizers of this clinic will be out of town. If you can help, just show up at the park about 12:45. A heads up that you'll help would be appreciated but not necessary (email Topf Wells at topfwells@gmail.com). And we need someone to be the chief organizer.

The clinics fit into another category of SWTU activities. They are fun for members, free, and great outreach. The clinics, fly tying, rod building, picnics, and other outings fall are examples. Fly tying and rod building are well in hand because veteran experts and instructors are willing to teach and organize these year after year.* The others, however, don't have the same consistent leadership and holding them is sometimes a bit catch as catch can.** The Board will address this topic and we might ask for another committee to plan and schedule these more systematically.*** Meanwhile, please help us at Sun Prairie.

* Let's not take these folks for granted. Besides thanking them, let's recognize that they'll pass the leadership of these events on to other members. We have to offer that help when they request it.

** As in Sun Prairie on 10/14.

*** You can tell I spent too many years as an English grad student; I still love footnotes. There's little to be gained in trying to create a bunch of committees all at once but matching our capacity and calendar with these important and fun events is a real need.

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.)

Workday Report 1

SWTU Members Are In Good Health

By Topf Wells

Years ago when I started a serious exercise program the expert at UW Sports Medicine told me, if you're sweating a lot while you work out, that's a sign you're in good health. The SWTU work day crew is in good health.

We were part of a multi-stage project. Pam Allen owns a lower part of Garfoot Creek with one of the oldest DNR easements in the Black Earth Creek watershed. As part of the easement, DNR agreed to fence and maintain it so Pam can graze her cattle in the pasture without harm to the creek. Years went by, brush grew, and the fence deteriorated.* It needed major repair but that would have put the DNR crew in the 9th Circle of Hell. Our job was to clear the brush so fence repair would be possible.



About 20 of us entered the fray, including Pam and a fellow farmer on a tractor and skid steer to move the brush, and Mitch Trow of the DNR. Jim wisely scouted ahead and brought a stepladder so the sawyers could climb the 6 (!) strand barbed wire fence. They cut the honeysuckle, box elder, buckthorn, and grape vines that had the fence in a death embrace. Haulers hauled (surprise) the stuff over the fence and stacked it on the machines.

This was the hardest work day I've ever attended. The sawyers were hacking their way through a jungle that had a barbed wire fence as its border. After pulling the mess over the fence, the haulers clipped it to manageable portions and loaded the skid steer and tractor. The weather upped the misery factor. Even though the temps stayed in the 70s, the dewpoint must have been high. Despite a break and Jim's wonderfully cold well water, we were creating little wetlands with our sweat. At the end of the day (and we wrapped up a bit early) more than one of us had hit the wall.

All that work was well worth it. We cleared hundreds of feet of the fence line. We might return for another work day but the DNR crew now faces an important but feasible task.**

Pam Allen provided a delicious sandwich buffet. The French say Hunger Is the Best Sauce – they might be onto something. That was the best ham sandwich I've ever had. The setting was restorative: the shade of a magnificent 80 year old sugar maple on Pam's front yard.

At our break and lunch, Pam provided some history of the farm, which occupies a place of honor in Wisconsin conservation history. Otto Festge, a former Madison mayor and Dane County Clerk, owned the farm. One of his best friends was Gaylord Nelson. Governor/Senator Nelson ran his gubernatorial campaign from Otto's dining room and created some of his conservation plans there, including a focus on stream conservation. Otto had planted the sugar maple to celebrate the birth of his son.

SWTU is honored to have helped Pam and the DNR. She is a great conservationist and hopes to improve her already impressive conservation practices on the farm, including, if possible, the conversion of row crops to rotationally grazed pastures. The DNR is working hard with grossly inadequate resources to fix that fence (the cattle having access to that pasture is extremely important to the economy of the farm).

So, lots of work and history and lots of fun. We had a great mix of veteran and new members and had the chance to share some fish stories. Our most sincere thanks to all. Leading the list as usual is Jim Hess, who organizes and leads our work days. This was a different task and setting than usual, which means more field work and consultation for Jim. Maybe one of our hardest but absolutely one of our best work days. Jim, THANK YOU! Always fun and informative to have someone from the DNR with us and Mitch is a hard worker, a great guy, and fun. Tip o' the Day, courtesy of Mitch: you might want to check out a downed tree/snag upstream of Scherbl Rd.-- with 0X tippet.

BTW, if you want to fish this stretch of Garfoot, parking is tricky on KP, a busy and fast county highway. Pam has extended an invitation for TU members to park in her yard. Park on grass, not any driveway.

* One might be tempted to think, well what's wrong that darn DNR, why didn't they fix the fence sooner. For some reason, projects such as this (and access) along trout streams is the responsibility of the Operations wing of State Parks. In the southern part of the state, the Legislature has cut the number of those positions from 40 to 2.

** As the fence doglegs to the west from where we stopped, it's a mess. Pam asked, pretty nervously – she doesn't want to presume – if we might have another work day in the spring if that would precede the DNR's fencing work. That depends on the DNR's schedule and our spring schedule, but I told her I'd inquire. So, Jim, blame me, not Pam.

A TU Halloween Maze

By Topf Wells

[Carol Murphy](#) would have enjoyed the work day in her honor (of course, one of Carol's numerous good points was that she enjoyed all the work days). We worked hard, accomplished much, had fun, and ate good food. And created a unique Halloween Maze.

Our task was to clear clumps of trees, many of them box elders, along Big Spring Creek, where DNR Fish, Wildlife, and Forestry are cooperating to re-create an oak savanna. This summer produced good growing conditions for the oaks but even better for other woody vegetation and ragweed, Canada goldenrod, and sawtooth sunflowers. Much of the ragweed and sawtooth sunflowers towered up to 10 ft. tall and they packed the land. The DNR was blazing trails with a UTV and then sawyers and haulers, equipped with loppers and clippers, advanced. Thoroughly but slowly.

The trees are down and stacked into "rabbitat" and the various trails form quite a maze. Who needs a cornfield when you have sawtooth sunflowers? If you're on Big Spring Road, drive past the parking lot until you come to another public fishing sign. Believe me, you can't miss the new trail. Wander along and see a truly lovely stretch of Big Spring Creek. Then mail a \$10 donation to either the Nohr Chapter or SWTU as the entry fee to the maze. I think that's pretty reasonable compared to other S. WI mazes.*

That digression aside, we got a lot done and have put the DNR in a position to improve the vegetation management and access to the creek. We might return for a bit more clearing and in a couple of springs for more oak planting.

This was another tough day. With the 20 volunteers and the 3 person DNR crew spread out in search of the tree clumps, taking a break would have taken too much time. We powered through and knocked off 30-40 minutes early. We were tired. Not only was the vegetation difficult to move through, it traps heat, especially in a creek bottom.** As we finished work along the creek, all of us probably would have said the heat was stifling. At the Big Spring parking lot, considerably higher than the creek and with some shade, the temperature was pleasant.

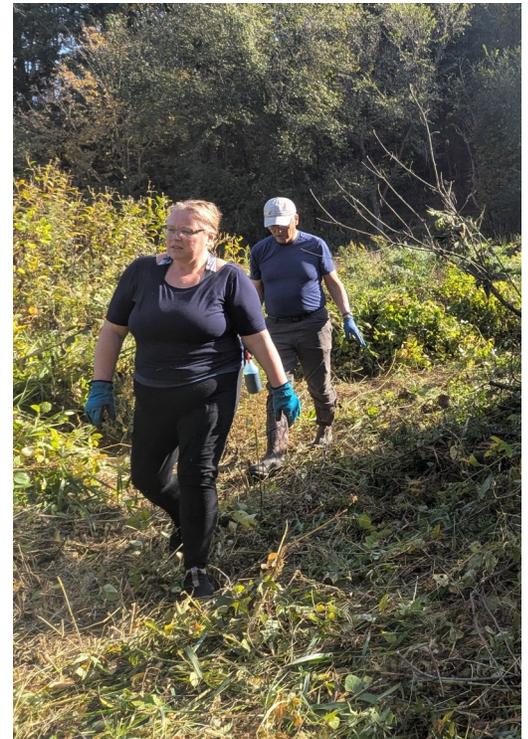
A breeze, a bit of shade, and a fabulous picnic. The Nohr Chapter grilled brats and provided cookies and chilled drinks and folks brought great sides. Dyan made a killer coleslaw and a pasta salad – oh my, I had 2 helpings and I never eat seconds of any salad. Michael and Josh continued one of Carol's traditions. She always brought fruit to a work day and they offered grapes, strawberries and bananas. This was probably the healthiest TU picnic ever.

Another fun feature of the work day was a nice mix of Nohr and SWTU folks with veterans and newcomers. We had two new SWTU members!

We ended the day with some memories of Carol and comments from her brother. Generosity of spirit and graciousness run in the family.

Huge thanks are due for another excellent work day. You've read these names before and thank goodness they persist in their dedication to TU and conservation. Ted Swenson led the effort for Nohr, Jim Hess for SWTU, and the DNR's Justin Haglund and Lloyd Meng prepped the site so it was workable.

The day was filled with thoughts of Carol. She would have loved the ending – and the beginning too. Amy, new to SWTU and fly fishing, won the Nohr box of flies, which included Carol's favorite pattern.



* I'm being silly, a bad habit that Sister Mary Paula warned me of in the 6th grade. Enjoy the stream, no donation required.

** Let's not be silly but serious. The vegetation is extremely thick in prairies, grasslands, and marshes across S. WI. Hunters will soon be hunting ducks and pheasants in those habitats. If the weather stays mild, much less warm, that vegetation with its heat trapping ability, poses a real risk to hunting dogs. Please, please be careful if you hunt with your dogs in those environs.

BTW, one pleasant aspect of work days with the DNR is that the ever patient and ever helpful biologists have interesting information. Justin noted that brook trout numbers are significantly increasing in Melancthon and Trout Creeks where the brown trout removal occurred. The ops crew has finished the restoration of the more downstream easement on Pompey Pillar. That might, just might, be worth a look. I'll check with the ops crew to be sure but they might be heading to a long awaited project on Black Earth Creek, just east of Cross Plains. (Photos courtesy Dyan Lesnik. [See more on swtu.org.](#))

Mark Your Calendars for Fall's Remaining Workdays (detailed info will be provided later):

***Special Workday - Oct 15, Wednesday 9:30 to 12:30 – Ley Creek (Iowa County).** TUDARE is working with Cummins Emissions Solutions, Inc out of Mineral Point on this workday, which is why it is on a weekday. Cummings will bus their employees to and from the site. Their employees can't use herbicide or power equipment, so the DNR is needing our help with those activities, as well as how to build burn piles. Lloyd Meng, DNR Fisheries Technician, is coordinating this event.

Oct 25 - Upper Yahara River in DeForest – yes there are trout there. We will be working with the Village of DeForest clearing honeysuckles and other invasive woodies. We will meet at 4601 Innovation Drive. The Village will provide transportation to and from the worksite, as it is located on the Upper Yahara River Trail. We need a big turnout for this one.

Nov 1 - Dane County Duerst Property on the Sugar River (7309 Riverside Rd) – clearing honeysuckles and other woody invasives. This is the site where TUDARE has arranged for a team of STIHL professional sawyers to clear large box elders that are encroaching the river. This workday will continue the work of clearing out the invasive understory so the STIHL crew can focus on the large box elders.

Nov 15 – Returning to the Duerst Property.

New Watershed Reports: Always Something to Learn

By Topf Wells

New reports at the DNR trout stream survey site for Sheboygan County features Nichols Creek and Onion Creek. The former is a high quality trib of the Milwaukee River; the latter has received the persistent care and attention of the Lakeshore Chapter for many years. With all the fish passage work in the Milwaukee River watershed, I wonder if Lake Michigan trout or salmon could make it to Nichols Creek and successfully spawn there? The Onion is an excellent trout stream; the DNR's paragraph on its history is a tribute to the many folks and organizations which have supported the creek over the years. With over 1,000 acres in the Fishery Area, much of the creek should be well protected. Can you imagine the Gordon Creek system if 1000 acres of it was in public ownership? You've probably read about Whitewater Creek in Wisconsin Trout because the SE WI Chapter has held several work days there – to good effect it seems.

Vets on the Fly Activities

By Dyan Lesnik

Vets on the Fly activities are free for all Vets and their family members. All equipment is provided so just show up for their events for socialization and fishing fun. [Learn more at their Facebook page.](#)

Welcome New Members

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

Scott Spevacek

David Roloff

James Duffy

We are honored to have you among us. Please join our next meeting as we'd love to get to know you better. If you will be attending your first meeting, please contact [Dyan Lesnik](#) so we can expect you.

Fountains of Youth

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

by Rusty Dunn

If you fly fish long enough, you will probably encounter one of angling's most enjoyable but puzzling events. After you've landed a few trout, your fly becomes a bit disheveled. That manicured imitation carefully crafted at the vise is no longer neat and tidy. Land a few more fish, and the fly is totally bedraggled. Perhaps the tail is chewed off. Or that handsomely dubbed body thins to little more than a geriatric comb-over. Land a few more, and the fly begins to shed body parts. Maybe one of the wings is missing. Or the hackle stem breaks, and the long feather trails behind the fly. Or a broken thread causes half the pattern to be entirely missing. Trout flies do not fall apart gracefully and, by now, your fly resembles nothing in the aquatic or terrestrial world. Yet it continues to catch trout. Lots of trout. You are rightfully puzzled how such an amorphous lump of fur and feather would appeal to trout. Mumbling to yourself, "Why do we even bother with imitation?" you eventually just accept the good fortune and have a wonderful hour or two of fishing.

Angling folklore is replete with such stories. The seemingly inescapable conclusion is that insect imitation is not very important for success, at least at certain times. Many insightful angler-authors have discussed how severely damaged flies can be effective. The more convincing speculations usually involve periods of insect emergence, when hatching juveniles accumulate near the surface and transition to aerial adults. Emergence is a lengthy struggle as winged adults extricate themselves from their juvenile skins, pierce the rubbery film of surface tension, crawl atop the water, dry their wings, and fly away. Author G.E.M. Skues rather mischievously described the process as, "(Emergers) pass through a stage of untidy struggle not distantly resembling that which a golfer or a footballer displays in extricating himself from a tight-fitting pullover or sweater or jersey" (*Side-Lines, Side-Lights and Reflections*, 1932).

Many (sometimes most!) individual attempts at emergence are unsuccessful, and a hodgepodge of living, dying, and dead hatchlings accumulate at or just under the surface. Such failures include every ragtag, aberrant, or malformed monstrosity imaginable. If hatches are strong or if weather disturbs the delicate process, trout can gather for insane feeding frenzies where any semblance of fluff or rubble is taken aggressively.

Such feeding frenzies are a rare treat, but how important is insect imitation during "normal" times, when trout rise to emergers but do so more judiciously? Anglers who understand the vagaries of insect hatches often purposefully include untidiness in their emerge designs. Perhaps Gary Borger described the logic best: "(Emergers) are a ragtag, ruffled, and disheveled group. The very best imitations are themselves a disreputable-looking lot" (*Nymphing*, 1979).

Calvert 'Cal' Bird designed in the early 1980s a remarkably effective attractor fly that serves equally well as an emerger or a nymph. Bird was a San Francisco calligrapher by trade and had an artist's sense of form, color, and perception. His fly patterns are all strongly impressionistic (as opposed to imitative). They have a looseness of form and a decided raggedness, being tied of soft materials that quiver and breathe when wet. Bird's most famous fly, the Bird's Nest Nymph, proves the point that excellent trout flies need not closely imitate specific insects. The fly is essentially a hybrid between a generic nymph (think Gold-Ribbed Hare's Ear) and a wingless wet fly (think Soft-Hackled March Brown). It looks vaguely like a caddis pupa, but caddis pupae don't have tails. It resembles mayfly nymphs, but mayfly wing cases and wing buds are missing. It looks a bit like stonefly nymphs, but the tail is all wrong and the fly is too scraggly to imitate hard-bodied stoneflies. A Bird's Nest contains elements of all these insects, but it realistically imitates none of them. Rather, it is an all-purpose attractor whose design suggests juveniles and emergers of many different insects. Fish it near the bottom during non-hatch periods and just under the surface during a hatch.

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----- Bird's Nest Nymph -----

Tie Bird's Nest Nymphs in sizes and colors to match prevailing insects. Cal Bird's favorite color was natural tan. Tie the wing behind the thorax and brush the thorax such that its fibers merge and blend with the wing. Add a beadhead or weight to fish deeply.

Hook: 1X-long wet fly or nymph, #10 - #20

Thread: Tan, 8/0 or 6/0 depending on hook size

Tail: Wood duck flank, length ~½-¾ hook shank

Rib: Fine copper wire

Abdomen: Natural fur dubbing mixture: 50% Australian possum; 40% hare's mask (with guard hairs); 10% natural or synthetic seal fur.

Wings: Wood duck flank, tied "in the round"

Thorax: Dubbing same as the abdomen



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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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