

Newscasts

December 2025 serving the Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited



Keeping and Eating Trout: Our Tuesday, Dec. 9, 2025 Chapter Gathering

It might have been a forbidden topic at TU meetings a decade or two ago. TU has always been a proponent of catch and release. In the old days you could hardly attend a TU meeting without being reminded that Lee Wulff said, "Game fish are too valuable to be caught only once."

Catch and release, when properly followed, was part of the foundation of TU's conservation ethic.

And one reason we have thriving populations of wild trout across southern Wisconsin. So much so that the DNR has liberalized regulations on many streams to encourage anglers to keep trout. In some cases, the DNR hopes enough anglers will keep trout to change the population structure so that a stream might have more trout larger than 12 inches.

They are delicious, too.

If some of us are going to keep and eat trout, we should do it right – just as we learned how to release a trout with the best chance of survival.

Ben Lubchansky is a professional cook and fly tier. He owns the 608 Community Supported Kitchen meal subscription service, as well as Two Wick Flies www.608csk.com and www.twowickflies.com Instagram @608csk and @twowickliving. He lives and works in Mazomanie, WI. At our December 9 gathering, Ben is going to discuss how to keep and prepare trout. It's gratifying to watch a trout swim off in good shape. It also can be satisfying to prepare a meal of fresh trout for you and yours, reminding you what a wonderful and multi-faceted natural resource trout are.



Please join us at Schwoegler's off Grand Canyon Drive on Madison's west side on December 9. Many of us gather for food, drink and conversation starting at about 5:30 (no trout, but good bar food) with the presentation at about 7.

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

The Lineup of Future Gatherings

January 2026 features the Flytying Jamboree; February, Kasey Yallaly, the DNR Fish Biologist for the northern part of WI's Driftless Region; March, the Meicher Auction; and April, Jason Freund.

Don't book any trips out west until you listen to Kasey's description of some of the streams in her neck of the woods. They feature strong populations of wild brown and brook trout with some offering excellent opportunities for large trout. The streams are wadeable with miles of public (free) access. Jason is an expert trout angler and fly tyer, a fun blogger, and a professor at UW LaCrosse, who is conducting some interesting research into brook trout and some other inhabitants of their streams. We appreciate Kasey and Jason for making time in their busy schedule and long trips to present to SWTU.

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.)

Member Meeting and Board Meeting schedule around the holidays:

Member gatherings remain the second Tuesday at Schwoeglers, Doors 5:30, Presentation 7:00: December 9, and January 13.

Board Meetings will remain the fourth Tuesday for November and January, but **will be the third Tuesday for December**, at Delta Beer Lab at 5:30 PM: November 25, **December 16**, and January 27. Anyone is welcome to join the Board meeting.

You Shall Not Receive a Fundraising Letter From SWTU This Year

By Topf Wells

We might be the only non profit which can say that.

Please consider donating anyway.

SWTU has tried to improve our performance in every way: stream conservation, education, outreach and fun.

We just completed our year of workdays. We held more on streams throughout SW Wisconsin with more volunteers to plant more oaks and remove more invasive vegetation. Streams are more accessible, stream banks more stable, and fishing more fun. Honeysuckle fears our name. We've helped fund two major stream restorations which are underway with a third starting in spring. We increased our support of the DNR brushing crew (they'll work on Mt. Vernon Creek this year) and enabled the fish biologists to have full survey crews this summer. Stay tuned for an announcement of our agreement with the DNR on a cool version of the DNR's Adopt a Fishery Area program.

We just renewed our annual support of Project Green Teen with cash, fly rods, and a promise of volunteers. We helped launch a Trout In the Classroom project in the Sun Prairie East High School. We had great field trips and tree planting with the fourth graders from Hollandale and Madison's South Side. Our free fly tying program is going strong as is Vets on the Fly. We offered three fly fishing clinics and hosted members at a stream shocking on Black Earth Creek followed by a picnic. We're trying to offer a variety of speakers and topics at our membership meetings.

We can only do all this and strive to improve in 2026 with your gifts of time and treasure. You are absolutely fabulous in your support.

Please consider continuing your generous support of SWTU. Direct donations can be made with a check mailed to SWTU at SWTU, PO Box 45555, Madison, WI 53744-5555. IRA distributions and donations from Donor Advised Foundations can be directed to that same address. You can also [give online through Paypal at our Donation page.](#)

If you are considering a stock donation to SWTU, please contact Topf Wells, President, at topfwells@gmail.com (608-231-3037) or Michael Westbury, Treasurer at mwestbury.swtu@gmail.com.

SWTU depends on members volunteering too. We need more volunteers to offer a full range of worthwhile and fun activities. Please contact any officer or board member if you have any interest in any Chapter activity.

Thank you.

Registration Open for the 2026 Women's Fly Fishing Clinics

Please register now or share this with someone who may be interested. These fill up and we want our members to have an opportunity to take part in these groundbreaking clinics.

There are two types of clinics detailed below with links and QR codes for more information. Both are set in Westby, WI (near Viroqua, in Wisconsin's Driftless Area) and the cost is \$375 (registration site adds a fee that does not go towards the clinics).

Thank You!

A few weeks ago SWTU received the largest donation in our history. The donor has asked to remain anonymous. Wow. The donor decided to direct the donation to the SWTU Endowment Fund, managed by the Natural Resources Foundation. This increases the amount of the Endowment to almost \$150,000. At that level, SWTU will receive a significant distribution every year to support our basic stream conservation work. To this donor, our most sincere and enthusiastic Thank You. We hope this spring arrives early so you can enjoy the streams you're helping to protect and improve.



Basics Clinic By Women For Women: June 12-14th, 2026

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. [Register here online.](#)

On the Water Skills Clinic – Intermediate: June 10-12, 2026

Personalized instruction streamside. Tune up workshops by women instructors to refresh skills in casting, matching the hatch & reading the water. Fish WI finest trout streams with experienced anglers. [Register here online.](#)

[Learn more here on swtu.org](#) – including lodging info, a link to the Facebook page and articles from past clinic attendees.



And be sure to note this extra opportunity in February!



The graphic features a stylized blue and green fish on the left, set against a dark grey background. To the right of the fish, the following text is displayed in white:

Women's Intro to Fly Fishing Clinic
Taught by Wisconsin Women's Fly Fishing
www.swtu.org/learn/womens-flyfishing-clinic/

Feb 7, 2026 9:30-4:30 pm

Oshkosh Marriott Waterfront
1 N Main St, Oshkosh, WI 54901
\$25, Includes lunch, Gear Provided

Register: Womenintroflyfishing.eventbrite.com

Sponsored by
Wisconsin State Trout Unlimited

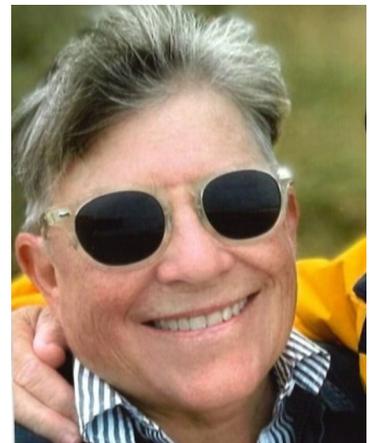
Remembering Sue Fey

By Topf Wells, SWTU President

Sue was a dedicated and important member and leader of SWTU. She served admirably as our President around 2004-2006. She was a cool head and steady hand. She was welcoming and always brought folks together. She was a lot of fun to be around. When you saw her at a meeting or event, you'd think oh I've got to catch up with Sue. She's already be on her way to greet you.

TU at any level did not have many women leaders in the years Sue was most active. Almost as remarkable as her decisions and achievements were was her style and demeanor. As a Board Member and President, she acted with the quiet confidence that no one would doubt her ability, dedication, and hard work. She was right on all counts. SWTU was and is a much better organization because of Sue.

A summer gathering will be planned to remember Sue. [Her obituary will be posted here when available](#) – for now, you can read many wonderful remembrances by Sue's friends and post your own if you like.



Classes are filling up fast: As of publication, 1 open seat in intermediate and 10 in beginner!

Trout Unlimited Fly-Tying Courses – 2026

Trout Unlimited invites you to learn fly tying or improve your tying skills this winter. Experienced SWTU instructors will teach both beginning and intermediate level fly-tying courses in Fitchburg starting Wednesday January 14, 2026. Both beginning and intermediate courses meet on **Wednesday evenings from 6:30 to 8:30 PM** at the Fitchburg Community Center (5510 Lacy Rd., Fitchburg) beginning January 14, 2026. Courses run for eight consecutive Wednesdays (final class March 4, 2026). Classes consist of instructor-led demonstrations and hands-on tutorials. The courses are completely free of charge, and all materials needed during in-class instruction are provided. You need only supply fly-tying tools and thread, a list of which is available at <https://www.swtu.org/learn/flytying/flytying-classes/>.



Beginning Fly Tying is intended for those with limited previous fly-tying experience, including complete beginners. General techniques needed as a foundation for fly tying are established, and basic but effective trout fly patterns are demonstrated and practiced. An instructional booklet with pattern sheets is provided free of charge.

Intermediate Fly Tying is intended for those who have a solid foundation of fly-tying experience and want to improve their proficiency. The course builds on the foundations of Beginning Fly Tying and progresses to more challenging fly patterns. Techniques and materials are more varied than Beginning Fly Tying, the patterns can be more complex, and the hook sizes are considerably smaller than flies of the beginning course.

Advanced registration is required! Register online at the Fitchburg Recreation Department (<https://anc.apm.activecommunities.com/fitchburg/activity/search>). If you've not previously created a customer account with Fitchburg Recreation, you must do so before registering.

Questions? See <https://www.swtu.org/learn/flytying/flytying-classes/> for additional information. Or, email questions to Phil Anderson at swtu-flytying@outlook.com.

[Workday report: November 1, 2025]

DONE!

By Topf Wells

About 20 SWTU volunteers arrived at Dane County's Duerst property on the Sugar River for the second of three work days to clear invasive brush, mostly honeysuckle, in Phase 1 of the County's restoration of the river on this property. James Brodzeller, in charge of the County's trout stream program and other wetland restorations, led the effort with Jim Hess.

This is a tough site. The honeysuckle has been growing for decades on a narrow embankment created from dredge spoils from the river. Removing that mound of dirt and reconnecting the river to its floodplain, wetland, and springs are the principal aims of the restoration. That narrowness means we're working in tight quarters, always a concern with chainsaw operations. And it's a long walk in, the last part through another miserable invader, reed canary grass.

Always game, we got to work. A bit more than an hour in, we spotted the County boundary sign. Reach that and our part of the project is DONE. As in, no more work days at this site. We worked a bit longer, refueled with Dyan's homemade blueberry muffins and cinnamon rolls, and then decided we are finishing this task today.

By 11:30 we had. The amount of clearing we've accomplished this spring and today is awesome. The Stihl chainsaw crew that will volunteer in May should cut through the box elders like a warm knife through Landmark Creamery butter. The County will then be able to remove the embankment.

We had a great mix of sawyers and haulers. Maybe even better was the mix of some of the regulars at our workdays with some great newcomers. One said his wife had read our work day notice and told him, "You fish the Sugar all the time; you should help." A true helpmate and partner. BTW, our magnificent efficiency might have been even better if we would have had another sprayer or two. For all our focus on sawyers and haulers, sprayers and folks who can check folks in and direct them to the site are every bit as essential to the success of a work day. So don't let the facts that you don't run a chainsaw or can't haul brush stop you from being part of fun and productive work days.

BTW2, one of our most welcome newcomers made another great point. Some folks would like to join the work days but find the transportation or the length of some of the trips difficult. The Board is working to make this excellent suggestion a reality for the spring work days.

Huge thanks to everyone who showed up today and put this project to bed. Special thanks to James and Jim for their planning and direction of the day. I think we should ask whoever makes ibuprofen to sponsor SWTU work days. Cutting and hauling that old, gnarly honeysuckle requires stooping, bending, squatting, pulling and tossing. I'm ready to reach for the bottle of ibuprofen capsules.

We were scheduled to return to Duerst on Saturday, November 15. Ha, ha, ha, no way; done with that. See the next article for a great final chapter to the season at Donald Park.

[Workday report: [November 15, 2025](#)]

A Glorious End to an Excellent Year of Work Days

By Topf Wells

About 25-30 folks showed up at Deer Creek for our last work day of the year on November 15.

This part of Deer Creek flows out of some improved sections and is in pretty tough shape. It then joins Frye Feeder and forms Mt. Vernon Creek. This is another staging work day for Dane County's more comprehensive restoration of this lowest part of the creek. The work will sound familiar – take out the dense understory of honeysuckle and small box elders so that a professional crew (Dane County's in this case) can remove the large box elders and begin the hydrological restoration. Eventually, Deer Creek should be much healthier with more trout, best access, better habitat, and a stream corridor of prairie and wetlands, including some sedge meadows to be rejuvenated.

James Brodzeller, the County's stream and wetland restoration specialist, described these prospects; Jim Hess and he then led an extremely productive day. At our break at about 10:20 he remarked that we had already accomplished what he had hoped to see for the day. So we worked harder and knocked off 30 minutes early with clear consciences.

And full stomachs. I had wondered if Dyan would bake her corn or blueberry muffins. She topped that with her corn muffins with blueberries. Goodness gracious. Pork sticks, brownies, energy bars, oranges and Jim's excellent well water kept us stoked and hydrated.

We cleared hundreds of square feet of stream corridor. For all its issues with high eroding banks, Deer Creek looked pretty good. One could see enough gradient, gravel, and rock to be hopeful for its future.

Everyone worked hard and with good cheer. Again we had a great mix of newcomers and seasoned hands. We also ended another season without injury thanks to Jim's cautions and the care all of us take. Way to go!

Several of our newcomers are interested in becoming sawyers. We can cover their training, usually with Dane County, but Jim and the Conservation Committee might want to consider whether a new and additional chainsaw would be helpful. The electric ones seem to be performing well. We might also need an electric brush saw. The honeysuckle at our previous day bested our current model.

Deer Creek and Donald Park are an important part of SWTU's history for over 40 years. One of our volunteers described how his parents had been caretakers and residents of the Donald/Woodburn homestead for many years. He had some great stories about Delma Woodburn, the matriarch of the family, who lived well into her hundreds and inspired the family to work with Dane County to create the park.



Thanks to all. As far as I can tell, just about everyone who attended had a good time. Jim Hess makes all the good work and times possible. He deserves our most sincere thanks and a restful winter.
(Photos courtesy Dyan Lesnik. [See many more in the story on swtu.org.](#))

Vets on the Fly Activities

By Dyan Lesnik

Veterans on the Fly meets Wednesday's at The V (VFW Post 1318, 2740 Ski Ln, Fitchburg). Fly tying starts around 5:30 but come early and have dinner at the VFW grill. We do a different fly each week, and all veterans and their families are welcome. Even if you are just curious about tying or fly fishing come on out – there is never a cost. [Learn more at their Facebook page.](#)

Welcome New Members

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

Jordan Nolle	Allen Comer
Rebecca Hudson	Merritt Singleton

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.

Honoring Chuck Bayuk

All are welcome to this December 13, 2025, event honoring [Chuck Bayuk](#).

- At The Harmony Bar & Grill -

Honoring the Memory of
CHUCK BAYUK

Dec. 13 | 2-5 PM | \$15 SUGGESTED DONATION

Chuck Bayuk raised thousands of dollars at his many popular shows at the Harmony Bar. Musical friends and family of Chuck will perform in his memory and in support of the Goodman Community Center.

The HARMONY BAR & GRILL

Goodman Community Center

Fountains of Youth

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

by Rusty Dunn

The hopes and dreams of most dry-fly anglers rest on the shoulders of but two groups of insects, the mayflies and the caddisflies. Admittedly, stoneflies, midges, and terrestrials have their periods of glory, but day in and day out, mayflies and caddisflies are the bread and butter of fly fishing. But look inside your fly boxes. Are the bread and the butter represented equally? Probably not. Most anglers practice what famous authors or influencers preach, and mayflies have been the darlings of fly-fishing books and media for centuries. Caddisflies and other insect orders received their justified recognition in recent decades, but mayflies still enjoy an inherited legacy of prominence and privilege. For example, fly tyers often discuss mayflies in code (aka. Latin names) and dwell on minute details of size, color, form, and behavior. They carry multiple fly boxes onstream, each devoted to a single mayfly species. Those boxes, furthermore, hold flies of immense variety. High floating, low floating, half-submerged, wings held up, wings held back, wings held forward, no wings, no hackle, hair hackle, reverse hackle, and on and on. Such is the legacy of mayfly privilege.

But what of caddisflies? Latin is not often spoken when discussing them, and caddis patterns are correspondingly simpler. A handful of generic imitations tied in varying sizes and colors, plus a smattering of larval and pupal imitations are sufficient for most anglers. This simplicity of approach does not stem from a lack of caddisfly diversity. Entomologists estimate that North America is home to ~1,400 aquatic caddisfly species, which is twice the estimated number of mayfly species. Being of simpler design and reduced variety, are our caddis imitations less effective than our mayfly imitations? Should we be more precisely imitative when tying caddis patterns? Or alternatively, should we be less concerned with the details of mayfly imitation? These are questions best answered by your own experiences, rather than by the opinions of 'authorities' with influence. In the words of the great G.E.M. Skues,

"An authority is a person engaged in the invidious business of stereotyping and disseminating information, frequently incorrect. Never believe a thing you are told about fishing until you have proved it, not only once, but over and over again."

Caddis dry flies come in two basic designs: (i) high floating patterns that imitate adults drifting or laying eggs atop the surface, and (ii) low floating designs that are awash in the surface film and imitate emergers and spent caddis. Examples of high floating designs include the Elk Hair Caddis, Bivisible, and Henryville Special. Examples of low floaters include the Goddard Caddis, X-Caddis, and CDC & Elk.

The most popular caddisfly imitation today is probably Al Troth's Elk Hair Caddis, a high floating design floated by stiff rooster hackle palmered along the length of the body. Troth credits G.E.M. Skues' Little Red Sedge for inspiration when designing the Elk Hair Caddis in 1957. Troth admired the excellent floatation of the Little Red Sedge and the way in which Skues secured the palmered body hackle with fine gold wire. Troth replaced Skues' wing of landrail feather barbs with elk hair (a material he could obtain more easily), and he eliminated the collar of hackle in front of the wing. Otherwise, the patterns are much the same.

Skues is most famous for his pioneering contributions to imitative nymph fishing, but the Little Red Sedge is one of his most famous flies. Its wing of rolled feather barbs is lightweight, durable, and presents a strong tent-like (i.e. caddis-like) wing profile. The fly floats exceptionally well even in turbulent riffles, which are prime caddisfly habitat. Leslie Magee, author of *Fly Fishing, the North Country Tradition* describes the Little Red Sedge as *"the best ever all round dry fly for North Country streams and for rough streams anywhere"*. Skues himself describes it as, *"without exception, the most killing fly I have used on chalk streams at all times when (mayflies are) not hatching"*. Skues popularized high floating caddis imitations, but he did not claim to be the originator of the Little Red Sedge. Indeed, it is very similar to the Red Sedge of H. Chomodeley-Pennel, published in his 1885 book *Fishing - Salmon and Trout*.
© Rusty Dunn, 2025

----- Little Red Sedge -----

Landrail is a protected species and substituted here by feather barbs of wood duck flank.

Hook: Dry fly, #14

Thread: Pearsall's Gossamer silk, hot orange

Body Hackle: Red-brown rooster; length to hook point

Rib: Fine gold wire

Body: Dark hare's ear spun on tying silk

Wings: Feather barbs of a landrail wing, bunched and rolled

Collar Hackle: Red-brown rooster; length slightly longer than body hackle



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

Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited Leadership:

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