

Newscasts

January 2026 serving the Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited



Join in the Fly Tying Jamboree

A fun and informal chapter gathering on Tuesday, January 13, 2026

The popular Fly Tying Jamboree is returning for our January meeting. Whether or not you tie flies, you'll leave with some new ideas and ways to improve your fishing. **If you do tie flies, please bring your vise, light and select hooks & materials to demonstrate tying your favorite fly, and include a few stories.** Flies tied that night will be part of a special raffle with the proceeds going to support our free fly tying classes. The Fly Tying Jamboree will be a fun, relaxed, educational and conversational evening.



Monthly chapter meetings typically start at 7 pm, but for the Fly Tying Jamboree arrive anytime after 5:30 for setting up your fly tying station, ordering food, drinks and socializing. As always, the meeting will be held at Schwoegler's Lanes.

We'll hold a brief (we promise) business meeting about 7 and then back to fly tying.

For anyone who has wondered if fly tying is a) learnable, b) productive, and c) fun, please attend this meeting. You'll see some great and fun fly tying and have the chance to tie a fly yourself. Yes indeed, you can leave the meeting with a fly you tied, guaranteed by SWTU to catch fish.

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

Save the Dates! A Strong Lineup of Future Gatherings

Please join us for a great line up of membership meetings this spring on the second Tuesday of each month at Schwoegler's Bowling. After the fly tying extravaganza in January, you'll have the chances to learn about some of the best trout fishing in the Driftless Area and buy all the gear and flies economically (often cheap!) to catch them.

February 10. Kasey Yallaly, the DNR Fish Biologist for much of the Northern part of WI's Driftless Region, will discuss some of the streams she cares for. A short summary: big streams, little streams, lots of brown trout, lots of brook trout, big brown trout, big brook trout, lots of public access, lots of great DNR and TU work. Kasey is a great biologist, a great speaker with good stories to tell.

March 10. The return of the Meicher Auction to its traditional time! We already have some great flies and gear to auction with more to come. Gear up for the season and support SWTU. **This will be our only fundraising activity of the year.** The February newsletter will have details on donating items. If you wish to donate money to be put toward gift cards to raffle, checks can be mailed any time to SWTU, PO BOX 45555, Madison, WI 53744-5555, or checks/cash/gift cards can be given to Treasurer, Michael Westbury, or President, Topf Wells, at a monthly gathering.

April 14. Jason Freund will be our featured speaker of the year. He is an expert angler, tyer, historian, and scientist. His blogs are fun, his skill and knowledge impressive, and he is one of Wisconsin TU's most dedicated leaders. Based in LaCrosse, on the faculty of UW-LaCrosse and the President of the Coulee Chapter, Jason knows a lot about the streams we fish and some we should be fishing. This is also our annual meeting with chapter elections.

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.)

We occasionally receive donations from members or supporters via a giving program through their employer and often administered by a third party. We really appreciate those gifts, the generosity of the donors and the opportunities afforded by the businesses and the administrators. We just wish we could thank those donors personally. So, to whoever donated through a program administered by Benevity and the American Online Giving Foundation, thank you!

2026, A Good Start for Black Earth Creek

By Topf Wells

The Ice Age Trail Alliance and Dane County just announced the purchase of about 100 acres of land just west of Cross Plains. The purchase means the Trail will be moved off roads and cross some lovely and diverse land – great news for hikers. And great for Black Earth Creek. The land contains restored prairies, wetlands and a tributary. Thanks to Kyle, Mitch, and Josh of the DNR we now know this tributary is a source of highly oxygenated and extremely cold water to Black Earth Creek. It's also a nursery area for young brown trout.

The good news is the most recent example of the extraordinary importance of the partnership between local land trusts and Dane County to the conservation and public enjoyment of natural resources. County Executive Agard, her staff, and the leadership of all the land trusts active in Dane County are working to improve that partnership. To cut to the chase, enabling land trusts such as Groundswell Conservancy, the Prairie Enthusiasts, Driftless Area Land Conservancy, the Ice Age Trail Alliance, and the Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance to buy more land and protect more natural resources in Dane County will help our local trout streams.

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).



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](http://www.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!



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](https://www.womenintroflyfishing.eventbrite.com)

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Fall 2025 Workday Roundup

SWTU had a total of 131 volunteers at our fall workdays. This brings our total number of volunteers for the year to 216! A big thanks to all the volunteers that show up with big smiles and ready to work. The camaraderie is contagious. I especially want to thank Wayne Griffin and Dyan Lesnik for being responsible for the trailer, as well as their backups Josh Reilly and Michael Westbury.

Here is a brief summary of our fall workdays:

[Garfoot Creek \(9.14.25\)](#) – a warm humid day with the smell of bug spray in the air. We cleared small box elders and invasive woodies so the DNR could repair the fence along the easement boundary. Lunch was provided by the landowner, Pam Allen, on her beautiful front lawn which was enjoyed by all. Pam shared some of the history of the farm, as it was one of the first easements by the state. Otto Festge, a former Madison mayor and Dane County Clerk, owned the farm. One of his best friends was Gaylord Nelson. Nelson ran his gubernatorial campaign from Otto's dining room and created some of his conservation plans there, including a focus on stream conservation.



[Big Spring Creek \(9.27.25\)](#) – a joint workday with the Nohr Chapter, where we honored Carol Murphy, past president of the Nohr Chapter. A great leader of Trout Unlimited and friend/partner of SWTU. The Nohr Chapter grilled up some brats.



[Ley Creek, Iowa County \(10.15.25\)](#) – a unique workday as it was on a Wednesday and we were working with 20+ employees from Cummins Emissions Solutions out of Mineral Point. TUDARE coordinated this workday with the DNR and Cummins Emissions, and asked if we could provide some additional sawyers and burn pile builders. Which we did.

[Upper Yahara River in DeForest \(10.25.25\)](#) – worked with the Village of DeForest Public Works Department in clearing honeysuckles and other invasive woodies on this section of the Yahara River, which was recently classified by the DNR as a trout stream. Duerst Property on the Sugar River (11.01.25) – our third time at the location, clearing the understory of honeysuckles and other invasive woodies to clear the area for a team of STIHL professional sawyers who will be clearing large box elders at a workday this spring.

[Deer Creek in Donald Park \(11.15.25\)](#) – a beautiful day to end our year. We cleared hundreds of square feet of stream corridor, providing access to the stream. Everyone worked hard and with good cheer. We had a great mix of newcomers and seasoned hands. We also ended another season without injury!

Plans for our 2026 spring workdays are already in the works.

Jim Hess
SWTU Conservation Chair

Ed. note: Fall workday write ups are linked above and full of great pictures in addition to the two group photos shared here and a very fun one to the right ...

For the Upper Yahara River workday (10.25.25), we were working in a suburban area in De Forest and Mike Kuhr thought we should be swiping away the limbs and leaves on the walking/jogging trail. He is using a honeysuckle limb to do it.



Fox Valley TU 2026 Cabin Fever Days
Saturday, January 24, 2026 from 10 am to 4 pm
New location: Fox Cities Exhibition Center, Appleton, WI



This is a tremendous TU chapter that has often supported our chapter and its events. This looks to be an amazing day of informational sessions, lunch, gear sales, auctions and a chance to go home with a stellar bamboo rod. Learn more and plan to attend:
<https://foxvalleytu.org/cabin-fever-day-2026/>

Vets on the Fly Activities

By Dyan Lesnik

Veterans on the Fly starts back up on Wednesday, 4 February. They meet 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 any 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!

Tony Antoniewicz
Robert Spoerke
Donald Mueller

Richard Williams
Theodore Halbach

Kirsten Magedanz
AJ Sue

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

On a glorious late April day in England in the early 1800s, daffodils trumpet spring's arrival and songbirds sing in harmony. 'Tis Shakespeare's proverbial "sweet o' the year". A gentleman of leisure prepares for an angling getaway on nearby private waters. He consults books authored by fly-fishing's leading authorities to learn what mayflies might hatch in late April. One book suggests a hatch of 'Little Dark Watchets'. Another says 'Dark Bloas'. Yet another, 'Jenny Spinners'. The next, 'Little Blacks'. The angler is puzzled and confused, because each book says something different about late April hatches. He wonders which, if any, of them is correct. Unknown to the gentleman, however, all the books are correct. Their predicted mayflies for late April are all the exact same species.

The names of insects important for trout angling was chaotic and unorganized prior to 1836, when Alfred Ronalds published his landmark book *The Fly-Fisher's Entomology*. Ronalds pioneered insect identification and hatch matching for fly fishers. He was the first angling author to identify insects by their scientific genus and species names. Prior to Ronalds, insect names were haphazard at best. Discussing a hatch of 'Whirling Duns', 'Cow Ladies', or 'Bracken Clocks' was cute, but the names were informal, strongly regional, inconsistent, and very confusing.

Ronalds made order of the nomenclature chaos. He presented both the common names recognized by anglers and taxonomic names established by scientists. Accompanying illustrations depicted naturals and imitations side by side. Ronalds was an engraver and lithographer by trade, and he personally engraved, printed, and hand-colored the exceptionally beautiful book plates. Ronalds described *The Fly-Fisher's Entomology* as "the amusement of an amateur", but few books in angling history have had such a lasting impact on the practice and literature of fly angling.

Ronalds had the inquiring mind of a naturalist and the experimental skills of a scientist. About half of *The Fly-Fisher's Entomology* concerns insects and their imitation, but the other half concerns trout behavior. Ronalds built a "trout blind" hanging over a river from which he could secretly observe trout behavior. He discharged a shotgun over feeding fish and demonstrated that trout are oblivious to noise above the surface. He understood the physics of light reflection and refraction and was the first author to describe a trout's view of the world above the surface ("the window"). He doctored natural and artificial "baits" with various concoctions and deduced that trout have excellent discrimination of edible vs. inedible based on vision, but very little discrimination based on taste. Ronalds discovered by trial and error that insect translucency is best imitated when colors of the tying thread show through a thin veneer of overlying dubbing. Ronalds was not the first to suggest this, but his methods were adopted universally due to the influence of his book.

The Fly-Fisher's Entomology describes 47 insects relevant to British anglers. One of them, the grannom, is a caddisfly common in Europe and North America. American grannoms (often called "Mother's Day Caddis") comprise several species of the genus *Brachycentrus*. They hatch in late April to early May and last a couple of weeks. Hatches can be intense, as noted by author E. Powell in *The Country Sportsman*:

"A hatch of grannom is a sad affliction, for it is generally so brief that there is little time to think and the trout seem to find it so satisfying that they are difficult to stir for the rest of the day."

Grannoms vary somewhat in size and color, but most are size #16 to #18 with dark gray-brown bodies and green or olive highlights. Egg-laying females carry a green egg mass at the tips of their tails. Ronalds' grannom imitation was the Green Tail fly, which first appeared in J. Chetham's *The Angler's Vade Mecum* (1681). Its distinguishing feature is a tag of bright green at the tail to imitate the egg sack of gravid females.

© Rusty Dunn, 2026

Green Tail

Ronald's imitation for grannoms follows below. Grannoms of the Driftless are generally very dark green (so dark that they are usually called "Black Caddis"). They vary in size from about hook sizes #16 to #18.

Hook: Light wire, #14 - #18

Thread: Brown silk

Tag: Bright green silk floss or dubbing to represent an egg sack

Body: Fur of a hare's mask spun on tying silk and left rough

Wing: Feather of a partridge wing, tied very full

Hackle: Pale ginger hen hackle, tied as a collar to imitate legs



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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