

# Newscasts

January 2026 serving the Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited



## Spotlight on Streams of the Northern Driftless Region

Learn some new waters to drift a fly at our Tuesday, February 13, 2026, chapter gathering

At our Tuesday, February 10 Chapter gathering, **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.

And if that didn't pique your interest, this picture Kasey shared just might!

Kasey Yallaly is the DNR Senior Fisheries Biologist out of the Baldwin office, managing the northern portion of the Driftless Area including Pierce, St. Croix and western Dunn counties. Some streams within her management area include the Rush River, Kinnickinnic River, Willow River and Eau Galle River. She has been in this position for 8 years now. Prior to her current position, she completed her Master's degree at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. She also worked in fisheries management in northern Idaho for 2.5 years which included work on trout rivers including the Coeur d'Alene and St. Joe rivers. She also received her Bachelor's degree from Southeast Missouri State University and worked for the Missouri Department of Conservation for 2 years in forestry and fisheries research.



Monthly chapter gatherings start at 7 pm, but join us anytime after 5:30 for ordering food, drinks and socializing. As always, the meeting will be held at Schwoegler's Lanes.

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

## March Auction and More! 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.

**March 10. SWTU Meicher's Auction returns to its traditional March time slot;** we hope you'll join us.

This is SWTU's only fundraising event in 2026 and it should be one of our most fun and worthwhile activities. We (including you) donate fishing gear you no longer need or want or can store. We (including you) bid on it with all the proceeds supporting SWTU. You might note that some members depart the meeting with more stuff than they donated. But it's all great stuff!



Normally our meetings start at 7. I hope we can start the auction at 6:30. We'll have lots to bid on and if the auction lasts too long it becomes less fun and less profitable. Show up anytime after 5 for dinner and drinks and to examine the auction items. We usually have a big crowd and traditionally this is the best meeting for visiting with old friends and making new ones.

One reason for the auction in March is to enable folks to gear up for the new season. For **any newcomers** to trout fishing or folks who need gear, **DON'T MISS THIS MEETING!** Cool stuff at great prices for a good cause.

We always feature flies tied for this area. In addition to our usual fabulous trout flies, this year we'll add some great warm water flies, even some for muskies and pike.

**A simple but key rule for auction donations:** Please, please, please only, only, only donate gear that's in good shape for fishing or other outdoor activities. No junk or trash. A prime example would be leaky waders. If they're so leaky you've stopped wearing them, no one else will want them. The auctioneer doesn't have time to test all the waders in Schwoegler's restroom for leaks.

If you're donating gear, please bring it to the meeting as early as you can. We'll need to sort and display it. If you can't bring it to the meeting, contact SWTU's officers (Topf Wells, Dyan Lesnik, Josh Reilly or Michael Westbury – contact info on the last page of this newsletter). We'll try to arrange a time for you to drop it off at one of our houses. We need volunteers to make the auction go smoothly. As examples, cashiers and folks to keep the items in good order and handed to the winning bidders.

We'll also have some different options for cool stuff; our experiment with bucket raffles was well received last year.

More detail in next month's newsletter.

**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.)

## TUDARE: A Brief History and Summary of Discussions About Stream Access

By Topf Wells

TUDARE is a regional stream restoration program in the Driftless Area (W WI, SE MN, NE IA) operated by national TU. It has functioned for a couple of decades.

At least as of 2014, TUDARE stream restorations in WI had to have permanent public access. An advisory council of TU representatives from chapters in the Driftless Area provided some guidance to the program.

Last year TUDARE and national TU announced a major restoration on Fancy Creek, an excellent trout stream in Richland County a few miles north of Richland Center. The restoration covers 1000s of feet of stream and will also involve the restoration of a big part of the Fancy Creek Marsh, drained in the 1950s. It does NOT have a provision for public, permanent fishing access.

This has created a significant controversy in WI TU. Most of the TU members I've talked to about this project were surprised, shocked and unhappy that the project lacked access. TUDARE officials have defended and publicized the project as having great conservation value.

While some of the discussion centers in Fancy Creek, much concerns the underlying TUDARE policy of not requiring permanent public access on its WI projects. A discussion of both issues will occur at the State Council meeting in February in Oshkosh.

Some questions seem worth asking, regardless of one's opinion of current policy:

When and why did the TUDARE policy change?

When and why was the Advisory Council disbanded?

What is the role of national TU staff in TUDARE?

Proponents of the current policy note that because TUDARE is a national program it does not have to abide by the State Council policy that neither State Council nor WI TU chapters funds or volunteers can be used on stream restoration projects without permanent public access. Such funds are not being used for Fancy Creek. More importantly, they note

that stream restoration projects can improve water quality, habitat, and trout populations in other parts of the stream or watershed. Opponents question why TUDARE should not observe the WI TU principle of public access on WI projects. They believe that projects such as Fancy Creek will make it more difficult to persuade landowners to agree to public access as part of a stream restoration. They are concerned that a stream restoration without cost to a landowner or public access is too great a private benefit to that landowner.

The SWTU Board discussed this matter at some length at our January Board Meeting. Topf Wells, SWTU President, and Michael Williamson, SWTU Representative to State Council, will attend the Oshkosh meeting. Among the ideas and resolutions to be discussed is one that would create a task force to study this issue thoroughly and fairly and present recommendations to State Council in the relatively near future. The sense of the SWTU Board is that this is probably the best option at this point.

## **Wheeler Wilcox Creek? What's That?**

By Topf Wells

Wheeler Wilcox Creek (WWC) is a tributary to the Upper Yahara River. It enters the river in Windsor downstream of the current restoration work in DeForest. A vigilant SWTU member alerted the Board to some concerns about WWC in connection with the proposed data center on 1600 acres west of DeForest.

WWC is not a trout stream but it's spring fed and provides cold water to the Upper Yahara. Folks were concerned that the data center would discharge stormwater to the creek, which would probably raise its temperature, especially during warm weather.

As far as SWTU knows, the potential of the Upper Yahara below the now designated trout water is yet to be studied. However, we believe it might well function or be able to function as a worthwhile cold or cool water stream. Accordingly, WWC should be protected as a source of cold water to the river. Even though the data center is now on hold, we documented that concern in a letter to the regulatory agencies that should protect the creek. [See the article on swtu.org to read the letter.](#)

Who, you might wonder, is WWC named after? Ella Wheeler Wilcox, an American poet who lived in that area in the latter half of the 19th Century. If you don't know Ms. Wilcox, you probably know her most famous line of poetry: "Laugh and the world laughs with you; Weep and you weep alone." Let's not have anyone with cause to weep over her namesake creek.

## **Remembering Landowners Who Made a Difference**

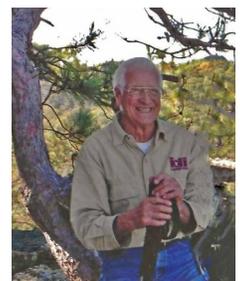
By Topf Wells

Throughout '25 we mourned the loss of great SWTU members and leaders. Alas, 2026 starts with more losses; this time of great allies of trout, trout streams and conservation.

[Herb Schraepfer](#) was a dedicated farmer and bulwark of his family on Kittleson Creek in Iowa County. He sold two large easements on the creek to the DNR and permitted the DNR to restore both stretches. SWTU held a work day on the more downstream segment several years ago. I've fished his parts of the creek many times with wildly varying results. I've landed big fish, lost my biggest trout ever, and been skunked numerous times. But every trip has been a hoot in large part because of Herb's stewardship of his land. Eagles are frequent companions along with other wildlife and pastoral beauty. When he did not have his cattle on pasture, his gates were open for easy access. He also let his pastures green up longer than most farmers. I hope that was good for his pastures and cattle; it definitely benefited the stream and trout. If you fished that area, a nice older farmer would be patrolling in his red pickup and stop for a chat. That was Herb.



[Jim Sime](#) was a dedicated Madison high school teacher; he and Rose, his wife, are among the greatest of SW Wisconsin conservationists. Early in their marriage, they purchased two parcels of 100s of acres with extraordinary natural features. They then spent decades of their time and labor in preserving and restoring those properties. Before he died this January, Jim and Rose donated a big chunk of the Boscobel Bluffs and the Big Rock of Big Rock Creek to land trusts. Before donating the land along Big Rock Creek to the Driftless Area Land Conservancy (DALC), Jim and Rose worked with the Nohr Chapter to restore the Creek. DALC will open the property to the public soon. We'll keep an eye for that and let you know. The creek is a little gem and the Big Rock is mis-named.



Humongous Rock would be more accurate. I'm guessing thousands of years ago the creek or something split it and the creek now runs through the middle of it. Wow.

I hope SWTU will be able to schedule a work day with DALC to continue the Sime's conservation work on Big Rock.

The deaths of these two kind and generous gentlemen remind us of how important partners, friends and allies are to SWTU. We deeply appreciate their care for natural resources, especially their trout streams and offer our most sincere condolences to their friends and family.

## **Spring 2026 Workdays: Save the Dates!**

**Saturdays – 9am to 12 noon (Except for Wednesday, May 13)**

By Jim Hess, Conservation Chair

We would love to have you join us. If you are interested in carpooling to a workday, contact Dyan Lesnik ([dmlgriffin@gmail.com](mailto:dmlgriffin@gmail.com)) and she will try to find a contact for you.

**Saturday, March 28** – 9m to 12 noon – Site to be determined.

**Saturday, April 11** – 9m to 12 noon - Upper Yahara River in DeForest, 4601 Innovation Drive. We will be working with Village staff clearing honeysuckles and other invasive woodies. The site is on the Upper Yahara River Trail, so vehicles are not allowed on the trail. Village staff will provide transportation to and from the worksite. This is the same location where we worked last year.

**Saturday, April 25** – 9am to 12 noon - Garfoot Creek, Dane County, where it crosses County Rd KP between Cross Plains and Black Earth. Working with DNR Fish Biologist, Kyle Olivencia, clearing box elders and invasive woodies just north of where Garfoot crosses County Road K. Same location where we worked last year and is one of the earliest easements along Black Earth Creek and has a lot of history.

**\*Wednesday, May 13 – 9am to 3pm Special STIHL Workday\*** – Sugar River, Duerst property, 7309 Riverside Road. Just south of Verona on Hwy 69. Note: this is on a Wednesday. We will be working with a team of STIHL professional chain sawyers clearing large box elders. We have had three workdays at this site clearing the understory of invasive woodies, so the professional sawyers can focus on the box elders. Should be an exciting day.

**Saturday, May 16** – 9am to 12 noon – Tree Planting – Smith Conley Creek, near 2800 County Rd H, Barneveld. Along with the Nohr Chapter, we will be assisting Justin Haglund, DNR Fish Biologist, with planting trees. This stretch of stream has been cleared of box elders and invasive woodies by our chapter and the DNR brush clearing crew and is now ready for native oaks.

**Saturday, May 30** – 9am to 12 noon – Big Spring Branch, Iowa County (5465 Big Spring Rd.) This will be a joint workday with the Nohr Chapter, clearing willows and other invasive woodies. We have had several joint workdays at this site and hopefully with a big turnout we can finish the job. Justin Haglund, DNR Fish Biologist, and Lloyd Meng, Fisheries Technician, will be directing and assisting us, along with some other DNR staff.

**Chainsaw training opportunity:** We will do what we can to flag any upcoming opportunities in Dane County but wanted to point out [this chainsaw class at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve](#). Completion of this training is required to use a chainsaw at our workdays.

## **Learn About and Help Out Project Green Teen (PGT)**

SWTU has long supported this important program at Madison's Malcom Shabazz High School. Brian Counselman runs the program there and has shared a great summary of the program's accomplishment – as well as key dates of fly tying, fly casting and, of course, fly fishing! They could use some help so [give this two-page flyer a look](#) and reach out to the contacts listed at the end of it if questions. Many of our members have volunteered for PGT in the past and found it enormously rewarding.

## 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](#) – including lodging info, a link to the Facebook page and articles from past clinic attendees.

## And be sure to note this extra opportunity!



**Women's Intro to Fly Fishing Clinic**  
Taught by Wisconsin Women's Fly Fishing  
[www.swtu.org/learn/womens-flyfishing-clinic/](http://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.eventbrite.com)

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## SWTU Fly Tying Classes: Teaching a New Vise

Students and instructors have been busy improving skills and whipping out flies as they approach halfway through SWTU's 8-week Beginning and Intermediate fly tying classes. Here are a couple photos courtesy Henry Nehls-Lowe ... [see many more in the article on swtu.org.](#)



## **Vets on the Fly Activities**

By Dyan Lesnik

Veterans on the Fly **starts back up on Wednesday, February 4**. 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!

David Ciske	Mark Osinski
Allen Comer	Gene Mueller
Wayne Bellcross	Eric VandenAkker
Audrey Rice	

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

The period shortly before and after 1900 was a time of upheaval in the fly-fishing world. Centuries-old methods of wet-fly fishing were abruptly cast aside in favor of floating dry flies. Angling historian Tony Hayter characterized the period as "The Dry Fly Revolution". Indeed, revolution was in the air, but it landed softly and floated atop trout streams with wings upright and divided. The chief revolutionary of the time was the great English angler Frederick M. Halford (1844-1914), who authored what could be termed the 'Revolutionary Manifesto' of fly angling in a series of seven books from 1886 to 1913. The first two, *Floating Flies and How to Dress Them* (1886) and *Dry Fly Fishing in Theory and Practice* (1889), are arguably the most influential fly-fishing books ever published.

The first unambiguous description of angling with dry flies is that of G.P.R. Pulman in *The Vade Mecum of Fly-Fishing for Trout* (1841):

*"Let a dry fly be substituted for the wet one, the line switched a few times through the air to throw off its superabundant moisture, and judicious cast made just above the rising fish, and the fly allowed to float towards and over them, and the chances are ten to one that it is seized as readily as the living insect."*

Popularity of dry flies in England increased steadily through the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, but dry-fly fishing quickly overtook the angling world following publication of Halford's first two books. Halford's logic, clarity, and eloquence made him the voice of the dry-fly revolution. He led a new generation of anglers committed to dry-fly methods and often intolerant of subsurface alternatives. Although Halford was the public voice of the new orthodoxy, he collaborated with an influential mentor behind the scenes. George S. Marryat met Halford by accident in 1879 at a fly shop in Winchester, England. They became fast friends and explored together all aspects of stream entomology, dry-fly fishing, and dry-fly tying. Marryat contributed extensively to Halford's *Floating*

*Flies* book, and Halford requested that he be a co-equal author. Marryat declined, but much of his genius is contained in the writings of Halford.

*Floating Flies and How to Dress Them* systematized the tying of dry flies and matched 90 imitations to English aquatic insects. Among its innovations were the first description of a dubbing loop and the first mayfly spinner pattern tied with wings outstretched laterally on the surface. *Floating Flies* is almost entirely about fly tying. One brief chapter discusses fly fishing, but Halford's second book, *Dry Fly Fishing in Theory and Practice* (1889), remedied the situation. The two books together are a major milestone in the history of fly fishing.

Halford defined angling success by the method of catching trout, not by their size or number. He advocated a precise 5-step protocol for fishing the dry fly: (i) locate a fish feeding at the surface on winged insects; (ii) identify the hatching insect and select an imitation to match its size, form, and color; (iii) present the imitation in its natural posture floating atop the surface with wings upright ("cocked"); (iv) deliver the fly lightly upon the water such that it floats without drag; and (v) perform all of the above in such a manner that the fish see neither the angler nor the rod. Any other method would be an egregious breach of Halford's sporting ethics.

Halford probably did more to shape methods of fly angling than any other author. Current dry-fly fishing is similar to that of Halford, although today's anglers additionally imitate emergers located near, but not floating above, the surface. Halford strongly influenced the origins of dry-fly fishing in America by his lengthy correspondence with Theodore Gordon, including sending Gordon a complete set of Halford's favorite dry flies, which Gordon adapted for Catskill insects and waters.

Halford was an extreme imitationist in fly design. He attempted to tie the most precise insect replicas that fur and feather would allow. His flies had slim well-defined bodies, wings of quill slips that are upright and divided, and stiff tail fibers plus a bushy collar of rooster hackle for good floatation. Halford's Rough Olive, which imitates large dark olive mayflies of spring, is perhaps his most famous pattern.

© Rusty Dunn, 2026

### ----- Halford's Rough Olive -----

Heron is a protected species but any finely textured dry-fly dubbing will substitute admirably.

- 
- Hook:** Dry fly, #15 - #16  
**Thread:** Unspecified; olive dun used here  
**Wings:** Dark starling  
**Body:** Heron herl, dyed medium olive  
**Rib:** Fine gold wire  
**Tail:** Hackle fibers dyed brown olive  
**Hackle:** Brown olive rooster
- 



## 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](mailto:madkasel@gmail.com)**

### Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited Leadership:

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Secretary	Joshua Reilly
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State Council Rep.	Michael Williamson
Board Member	John Freeborg
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