

Newscasts

April 2026 serving the Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited



Songbirds, Salmon, Steelhead, and *Salvelinus Fontinalis*

Learn about an extraordinary conservation project at our May 12, 2026 Chapter Gathering

Also in May – Storm-rescheduled chapter elections

John Griffith is a Life Member of TU and the leader of an effort by American Songbird Management and Recovery (ASMAR) and other conservation organizations to purchase and preserve the Gratiot River watershed on the Keweenaw Peninsula in Michigan's UP. This is a multi-million dollar effort to preserve thousands of acres for preservation and public enjoyment. The Gratiot is a lovely, wild stream with runs of Lake Superior salmon and steelhead with wild brook trout in the headwaters. It features some beautiful waterfalls.

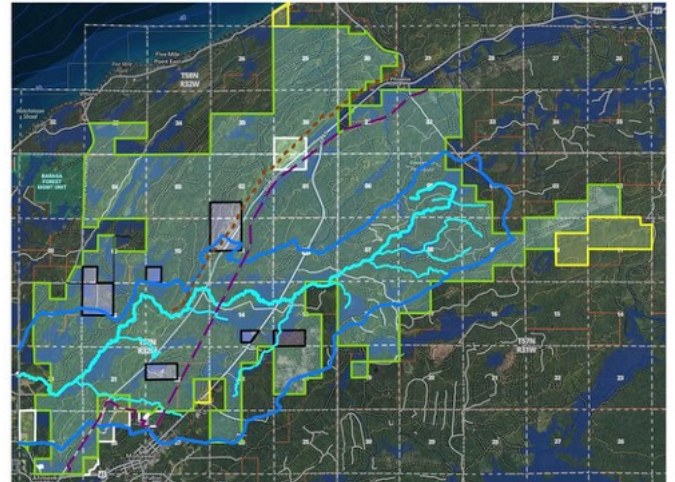
John Griffith is a conservation biologist, kitesurfer, and solar power advocate. He invented and sells the FlopStopper, which keeps boats from rolling while at anchor. John enjoys farm life and restoring historic Keweenaw buildings.

Since 1986, John and his wife Jane have owned and operated Griffith Wildlife Biology, performing research and management on endangered southwestern riparian and coastal sage scrub birds. They moved to the Keweenaw Peninsula from San Diego in 1989, founded the first local land trust (Keweenaw Natural Areas) in 1992, helped found American Songbird in 2020, and are life members of Trout Unlimited and the Audubon Society. The Griffiths have been working toward protection of the Gratiot River since 1990.

In 2022 the Griffiths achieved a life goal and placed a Conservation Easement on their private 1,915 acres with 1.1 miles of Lake Superior shoreline and the Turtle Lake wetland complex. The CE prohibits all splits, structures, and development in perpetuity. The Griffiths have 6 German shepherds and two children: Kate (35) is an ornithologist, and Evan (33) is a veterinarian and Tufts University professor.

For more information on the project, American Songbird, and maps and photos, please visit www.GratiotRiverWatershed.org

Please join us at our May 12 gathering for the presentation and chapter elections. As usual, we'll meet at Schwoegler's with food and drink available anytime after 5:30 and Jason's presentation starting around 7. Schwoegler's is on Grand Canyon Drive on Madison's west side with ample parking, good food, beverages, and service.



Board Elections (Storm-Delayed)

SWTU learned that the West Side tornado sirens work just fine and that Schwoegler' has a large and safe basement. The meeting occurred after the hail storm but during stormy weather. When the sirens went off everyone had to shelter in the basement. Schwoegler's staff was efficient and friendly and folks took the 30 minutes of confinement in good spirits. We certainly learned that restaurants and bars buy and store lots of paper and plastic products.

Jason Freund, our speaker, took the interruption in stride and completed an excellent presentation on the trout, habitat, research, restoration and fishing in the Driftless Area near LaCrosse. The DNR, UW LaCrosse, and Coulee Region TU have a great partnership that benefits trout, anglers, and students.

The downside of the stormy weather was a small crowd and some of our candidates not being able to attend the entire meeting. We postponed the Officer and Board Elections until the May meeting. More members will be able to meet our candidates and vote so here (again) is our candidate information.

The SWTU Officers will run for another one year term: **Topf Wells** (President), **Dyan Lesnik** (Vice President), **Josh Reilly** (Secretary), **Michael Westbury** (Treasurer) and **Michael Williamson** (State TU Representative). The floor will also be open for nominations.

Our Three Board of Director Candidates:

Linda Dorazio

I'm Linda D'Orazio and been with TU for about a year. I'm impressed with the educational and conservation efforts. Being involved with many events I see the camaraderie and sheer enjoyment of working with this group. I'm learning to fish and tying flies is my favorite! I would love to participate on the board and get to know more about the organization.

Dave Graczyk

I was employed by the U.S. Geological Survey-WRD for 36 years as a surface water- water quality hydrologist. Primarily I worked on NonPoint projects for the WDNR 's priority watersheds, including Black Earth Creek. I collected the water quality and hydrological data in the pre- and post- implementation periods. I have retired and would like to volunteer again (I was a TU officer in the late 1980's).

John Freeborg (incumbent)

John has been a SWTU member since 2016 and board member since 2022. He started taking the chapter's fly tying courses in 2017 and is still trying to graduate from the intermediate class after many attempts. Recently retired, he hopes to support the chapter in a greater capacity in another term.

Thank you to all for stepping up and **a special thanks to Mark Maffitt**, who is concluding his Board term after several decades of impressive involvement across many roles, including newsletter editor and President.

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

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.)

The board wants to thank everyone who completed our membership survey. We are closely reviewing and discussing all scores and comments and will share out some learnings and actions this fall.

And speaking of surveys, please take time to [fill out this survey as part of DNR Fish's strategic plan development](#).

Dang Near Perfect (Workday Report 1: April 11 Yahara River)

By Topf Wells

That would be the SWTU work day on the Upper Yahara on Saturday morning, April 11.

About 20 SWTU volunteers and friends gathered to continue to clear invasive shrubs from the Upper Yahara corridor in DeForest. We saw hordes of honeysuckle but once we cleared some we found thriving stands of buckthorn. The discovery provoked an interesting discussion: which is the worse invader? My vote is buckthorn because it can hurt.

Both fell before the brush and chain saws of SWTU and were swiftly hauled and stumps sprayed by the rest of the team. Greg Hall of the Village of DeForest worked with us and provided donuts, rides to and from the work site, heartfelt gratitude, and, most of all, the news that we could create as many unkempt, scattered brush piles as we wanted. Greg and his team will consolidate and compress the piles with skidsteers later. This is a bigger deal than it might sound. Without having to haul to only a couple of piles and without the need for trimming and stomping, we could cut and treat more and faster.



We increased the size of what we've cleared by 100% or more. The work site of last fall looked great. We had treated the stumps so that none were sprouting and Greg's burn of the brush was complete.

Greg also explained that in May the Village's 5 year restoration of the creek begins. Stream sections to be rehabbed have been flagged and we could see how much will be accomplished in the first year. That's a project to which the Village has committed taxpayer and grant dollars, including an SWTU contribution.

Several volunteers saw the creek for the first time and the universal response seemed to be: Holy smokes, it looks like a trout stream! Because, hooray, it is.

Today, might, just might lead to the creation of another one. Jefferson County, the second county in SWTU's official territory, is the only Wisconsin County without a trout stream. One of our new volunteers is Colton, who traveled from Watertown and is a Water Resources Specialist for Jefferson County (which despite the lack of a trout stream has some really cool rivers and lakes). Colton knew that some county and DNR folks have been pondering Mud Creek* in Jefferson County as a stream that might be hospitable to brown trout. Colton, SWTU is ready to help.



This day continued the happy pattern of new and veteran faces. The DeForest days also attracts folks who want to restore more natural systems (the fine fellow who'll pull garlic mustard near the Cherokee Marsh) and neighbors of the creek, such as the young man who thinks the project is really good for the DeForest community.

Jim Hess and Wayne Griffin handled brush saws all morning while Josh Reilly and Michael Westbury chainsawed, including the task of making sure all the stumps were flush to the ground. Future walkers and anglers will have a much safer time in the creek corridor. Don Golembiewski and others treated the hundreds of stumps. Dyan Lesnick wrangled all the proceedings and brought Juneberry muffins. Looking for a small, native tree that pollinators, birds, and you will love? Plant a Juneberry, aka serviceberry, aka saskatoon.

As always thanks to all, with heartfelt gratitude to Greg Hall of DeForest and Jim Hess, who planned and delivered another productive, safe, and fun work day.

* Don't let the Mud in Mud Creek put you off. Google AI tells me at least two of WI's trout streams are named Mud Creek.

(Photos courtesy Dyan Lesnik. [See more in the story on swtu.org](https://www.swtu.org))

Pam Allen, the Hostess with the Mostess (Workday report 2: April 25 Garfoot Creek)

By Topf Wells

I usually start these reports with the report before thanking folks but Pam Allen, the landowner on Garfoot Creek, gets pride of place today. Her easement is probably the oldest DNR easement in the Black Earth Creek watershed. She takes great care of her creek, welcomes anglers, and, as a member of the Black Earth Creek Watershed Association, is an advocate for the entire watershed. As a high school teacher, she introduces many students to conservation and sustainable agriculture. She is a shining example of both with her management of her farm and cattle. Today's project was to clear brush so the DNR can re-build the fence along the creek and an important pasture. Grass fed beef and a protected trout stream are the ultimate goals of today's project. She is also an extremely gracious and generous host, providing a spread of pastries, including apple fritters, and beverages, including chocolate milk. Folks agreed that the combination of apple fritters and pork sticks was the best SWTU breakfast ever. Finally she ran her tractor all morning to move brush to its final resting place.



We sure tried to return the favors. About 20 of us finished clearing the fence line. DNR Crew, you're up next. Just about every work day I think oh, the honeysuckle can't get much worse. Don't bet against honeysuckle. It was thick and old with its frequent neighbors, buckthorn and grape vines. I was once in a

fancy restaurant where they proudly noted they grilled their meats over grape vines. They could have grilled a steer over the grapevines "harvested" today. We also had to cut and haul some box elders intruding on the fence line.

Today was just flat out hard work with sawyers, brush cutters, clippers, haulers, and sprayers. Pam still has a couple of piles to haul and that was after 3 hours of steady tractoring. The weather was great and so far I've only found one tick. It was luxuriating in the spot I had sprayed the most. Hmm.

We had a wonderful mix of folks with veterans and some new folks. A special shout out to Sam, the founder of the Edgewood High School Fishing Club, and his associate Evan. Sam thinks the club should provide community service and conservation in addition to fishing knowledge and experience. Way to go, Sam and Edgewood. Grace returned as one of our sawyers. She and all the sawyers were relentless in the face of the tangles. Just don't call her Amazing Grace; she's heard that about 6,000 times. Thanks also to many Board Members who showed up. Actually, huge thanks to everyone; this was a tough and great day.

Kyle Oliverncia, our Dane County DNR fish biologist, worked all morning with us. That would be praise and thanks worthy any Saturday but Kyle is in the middle of his spring lake surveys. Heavy work, especially with nets, and nocturnal. He has just completed a stretch of 11 out of 12 days and nights on the water. SWTU is really, really lucky to have him as our biologist.

Jim Hess organized another productive and safe day and manhandled a brush saw all morning. Jim, our most heartfelt appreciation.

Please join Jim, many of us, and members of the Nohr Chapter for our next work day. NO honeysuckle! We'll plant oaks at the DNR's Smith Conley restoration. The holes will be dug. We'll put the cherry on top of a superb restoration that we started with three work days and supported with a \$12,000 donation. So check out what our donation of time and treasure have wrought. The date is Saturday, May 16. Details coming soon.



(Photos courtesy Dyan Lesnik. [See more in the story on swtu.org](http://www.swtu.org))

Future Workdays (Detailed info will be provided later):

- **Saturday, May 16 - SWTU and Nohr Joint Workday**
Tree Planting, Smith Conley Creek -2800 County Rd H, Iowa County
9am to 12 noon.
This will be a joint workday with the Nohr Chapter, assisting Justin Haglund, DNR Fish Biologist, and Lloyd Meng, Fisheries Technician, with planting oaks and other native trees to create a healthy environment along this stream. Our chapters have had several joint workdays removing box elders and other invasive woodies along Smith Conley and the DNR has made some significant improvements to the stream. Now it is time now to plant some oaks. The holes for the trees will be pre-drilled by the DNR and they will be providing fencing and anchors to secure the fencing. Bring shovels.
- **Saturday, May 30 – Big Spring Branch** – A joint workday with the Nohr Chapter clearing out invasives, 5465 Big Spring Rd, Town of Highland
- **Tuesday, June 9 – Duerst Property** – working with professional STIHL sawyers clearing large box elders, 7309 Riverside Rd (Note this workday is on a **Tuesday**, not a Saturday)

Openings for Red Cross First Aid Training

SWTU is looking for people who attend work days and other chapter activities to learn some First Aid and Emergency Care. SWTU is offering an Adult First Aid/CPR/AED certification training with life threatening bleeding tourniquet application, taught by the Red Cross.

We work in some rather remote locations, far from emergency services, on challenging terrain and with dangerous equipment. Luckily we haven't had any accidents, but accidents can happen despite how careful we are or a volunteer could have a medical emergency during a workday. Hopefully neither of these things ever happen, but SWTU plans to be prepared.



The training includes about 3 hours of online instruction at your own pace that must be completed prior to the in-person session. The in-person training is 2.5 hours of hands-on classroom instruction. **The in-person training will take place on Wednesday June 3rd at 6 pm at the Fitchburg Community Center, in their "Fitchburg" room on the upper level.**

This training has a limit of 12 participants; 7 workday volunteers have already signed up. This is first come, so if for some reason you can't attend after signing up, please email Josh Reilly ASAP so that we can fill your spot. SWTU will cover the cost of this training.

If we have more than 12 interested workday participants for the class, we should be able to increase our class size by requesting an additional instructor.

[Sign-up for First aid/CPR/AED with life threatening bleeding Red Cross Training](#)

College Fishing Clubs Rendezvous at West Fork Sports Club

By Henry Nehls-Lowe

John Freeborg and I represented SWTU at this year's TU Costa 5Rivers College Clubs Midwest Rendezvous, held at the West Fork Sports Club on April 24-26. Six Midwest college and university fishing clubs were represented by 58 attendees, including 6 UW-Madison Hoofers. To accommodate late arrivals, TU's Cliff Watson postponed the Friday welcome session until breakfast on Saturday morning, which allowed John and me to get acquainted with the Hoofers (AnaGracia Brunette is the Hoofers Outing Club chair for Conservation and is very interested in SWTU workdays). The evening weather was perfect so we set up fly rods for casting instruction (only 1 had previously cast a fly rod). Saturday morning activities included introductions, orientation to TU & 5Rivers, my providing a fishing report, and planting of over 60 trees along the West Fork of the Kickapoo on Vernon County property just north of Avalanche.

Saturday afternoon was dedicated to fly fishing and we relocated to a fav spot on the WFK. I'm delighted that 5 of 6 Hoofers caught fish, including AnaGracia who not only caught her first trout on a fly rod, but it was her first fish ever. Saturday evening we happily reconvened at the WFSC for awards on fishing success and garbage collection, then enjoyed SWTU's sponsored dinner of brats, grilled veggies, potato salad, and dessert. It was another perfect Spring evening for enjoying time around the campfires. On Sunday morning everyone broke camp, said goodbyes, and on the way home the Hoofers stopped to fish on the WFK and again reported success.



Photo is of AnaGracia (holding her first trout!) and Hailey. See more of Henry's photos [in the story on swtu.org](#).

Driftless Drive In Fly Fishing Show (June 5th) Tickets

June 5th 2026 at the Starlite 14 Drive In, Richland Center WI

Helps support key activities of Coulee Region TU. Ticket gets you into the show, a place for the film tour at night AND entry into the grand prize bucket raffle. Plus your ticket stub is good for 20% off in the Driftless Angler shop for the month of June! Learn more at the Driftless Angler website ...

<https://www.driftlessangler.com/estore/gift-cards/driftless-drive-in-fly-fishing-show-tickets>

... or find details on [the Coulee Facebook page](#). It looks like a ton of fun for a very good cause!



Help Support the Southern WI Annual Women's Clinics

The clinics are full with waitlists for each

Donate your crafts for raffles to raise Scholarships. Each year the SWTU offers 6 scholarships for women to attend the clinics. Ideas include lanyards, nets, rods, art, unique flies, gift cards, etc. Gently used gear others may see value or uniqueness in are also welcome.

If you'd like to mentor a woman on the water; take her fishing and answer her questions, show her your way of accomplishing a new task and have a great time please contact Lisa Wilson to indicate which days / sessions you would like to participate. Wednesday, June 10th 5 pm to dark. Thursday June 11th, 10 am - 12:30 or 2 - dark. Snacks provided and a great lunch on Thursday June 11th. Contact info for Lisa is lawfinnee@gmail.com or (608) 213-6267. Please don't wait to contact her if interested. We need 16 guides / mentors each of these 3 sessions. The participants get to go out with different mentors 3 different times during the Women's on the Water Clinic (Wowsc-i)



We thank everyone who supports SWTU's Wi Women's Fly Fishing Clinics. We serve approximately 100 people every June enrolling next generation conservationists and enthusiasts to the sport.

Thank you! Tina Murray swtu.women.diversity@gmail.com

Vets on the Fly Summer Activities

By Dyan Lesnik

Veterans on the Fly offers fly fishing opportunities for all veterans and their families. 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.](#)

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.

Major step completed for Kinnickinnic River dam removal

Great progress on a project SWTU has helped back!

Read all about it ...

<https://www.stcroix360.com/2026/04/major-step-completed-for-kinnickinnic-river-dam-removal/>



Welcome New Members

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

David Burke
Joseph Marik
Colton Hutchinson

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

A few dozen miles southeast of London lie peaceful valleys of the Hampshire countryside, where legendary rivers such as the Avon, the Test, and the Itchen flow to the sea through wooded meadows of magnificent beauty. Fed by mineral rich springs of a "chalk" (white limestone) aquifer, the rivers support immense populations of insects and trout. The area is steeped in tradition, and some of angling's finest literature sprang from its gin clear waters.

George Edward Mackenzie Skues, one of history's most insightful and entertaining angler-authors, boards the two o'clock train in London bound for the cathedral city of Winchester in central Hampshire. Worldly concerns of his busy law practice at James Powell solicitors fade away as Skues prepares for the evening rise at Abbott's Barton on the River Itchen. He settles into a window seat on the sunny side of the train and pulls out his portable fly-tying kit. He glances out the window and discovers a handsome traveling companion. A splendid blue-winged olive spinner sits beside him on the lower ledge of the carriage window. Skues affixes a hook to his hand vise and carefully blends seal's fur to match the spinner's reddish-brown color. He selects hot orange thread, which glows faintly through the seal dubbing and gives a fiery translucence much like that of his traveling companion. That evening, Skues' handiwork fools several large and wary trout. He later christens the fly the "Rusty Spinner" in his 1921 book *The Way of a Trout With a Fly*.

Skues' fly was the very first to be named "Rusty Spinner", but similar flies had been tied since the origins of angling. Indeed, the first English-language angling book (*The Book of St. Albans*, 1496) describes twelve artificial flies, one of which (the "Ruddy Fly") is believed by angling scholars to be a reddish brown mayfly spinner. Spinners are sexually mature mayfly adults (imagos) that develop from recently hatched sexually immature mayfly duns (subimagos) following a streamside molt. Spinners of a surprisingly large proportion of mayfly species are reddish-brown in color, very similar to Skues' rusty-red

seal's fur. Spinner imitations through the centuries bear many charming names, such as Mahogany Spinner, Sherry Spinner, Houghton Ruby, Jenny Spinner, Lunn's Particular, Claret Spinner, Spent Gnat, and many others.

The wings of all mayfly spinners are glassy and clear ("hyaline"), and their imitation has plagued fly tyers for centuries. Author Francis Francis described the challenge of imitating spinner wings in his 1867 book, *A Book on Angling*:

"The wings – ah! those wings! What shall we do to imitate their clear, delicate, watery transparency?"

History's quest for imitative spinner wings included all sorts of peculiar materials, such as trimmed fish scales, shavings of whale bone, the clear membranous stems of flight feathers, and many others. Prior to the late 1800s and development of dry-fly fishing, spinner imitations were primarily soft-hackled wet flies. Wings (if present) were tied either upright and divided or sloping backwards. George Selwyn Marryat was the first to tie spinner wings in the now standard flat position outstretched horizontally on the water's surface. Marryat's wings were tips of hackle feathers, but tyers today typically use sparkly synthetics or perhaps stiff hackle feather barbs.

America's Vince Marinaro contributed an elegant and effective solution to imitating spinner wings. He tied spinner patterns with a thick collar of white rooster hackle at the thorax and then trimmed fibers from the top and bottom, leaving only the hackle barbs pointed laterally (*A Modern Dry Fly Code*, 1950). The sparseness of Marinaro's wings imitates the glassy clearness of spinner wings, and the stiff hackle gives excellent floatation. Many spinners land on the surface with upright wings, after which they droop slowly down to the surface. Marinaro's clever design can imitate fully or partially spent wings depending on which of the hackle fibers are trimmed. Spinner imitations usually fish equally well just under the surface as they do atop the surface.

Look for spinners in glassy smooth waters especially in the evenings and early mornings. With a good spinner imitation you will enjoy dry-fly fishing right through to the very end of a mayfly hatch. © Rusty Dunn, 2026

----- Rusty Spinner (Marinaro-style) -----

This Rusty Spinner recipe is that of G.E.M. Skues, but the wings are affixed as did Vince Marinaro. Skues wrapped a collar of rooster hackle, but he did not trim the fibers on the top and bottom.

Hook: Dry fly, size to match the natural

Thread: Hot orange silk

Tail: A bundle of honey dun hackle fibers, split

Body: Dry-fly dubbing, a rusty reddish brown color to match the naturals

Rib: Fine gold wire

Wings: White, cream, pale watery dun or similar light colored rooster hackle; trimmed top and bottom, leaving only lateral fibers



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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Board Member	John Freeborg
Board Member	Don Golembiewski
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