



Troutlines

Special Points of Interest

Chapter Fly Tying Classes

Register Now for the Annual
Conservation Banquet

*Don't Forget to Send in Your
Chapter Raffle Tickets!*

Chapter Meetings and Events Calendar

February Chapter Meeting

Thursday, February 20.
Tom Cormier, Eldredge
Brothers Fly Shop

Annual Conservation Banquet

Saturday, March 8, 2014
Grappone Center

April Chapter Meeting

Thursday, April 17

Youth Fishing Day

Raffle Drawing

Discover Wild NH Day
Saturday, April 19

Trout Pond Opening Day

Saturday, April 26

*All chapter meetings at 7:00 PM,
Society for the Protection of New
Hampshire Forests, 54
Portsmouth Street, Concord
unless posted otherwise.*

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Life After Salmon:

Migratory Fish Restoration Programs in the Merrimack River Watershed

It's not as if humans have been unaware of their impact on nature, especially when it comes to migratory fish such as the Atlantic Salmon. The most obvious culprit for the decline of both Atlantic and Pacific Salmon has been the dam. Flowing water has been an important factor in the rise of civilizations and the control of water a source of power – both hydrological and political. The Europeanized landscape of New England included dams nearly from the beginning. But not until the American Industrial Revolution in the mid-1800s did the damming of large rivers complete the blockade of spawning grounds to Salmon and other migratory fish.

Woody Guthrie's 1941 song "Roll On Columbia Roll On" written for the Federal Bonneville Power Administration's extensive dam building in the Pacific Northwest includes the chorus "your power is turning our darkness to dawn, so roll on Columbia roll on." A combination of the idea of progress, taming nature, American "can-do", and plain old public relations, the building of mammoth dams on the Columbia and other large western rivers had a price, and part of that price was closing off migratory routes of anadromous fish such as the Salmon. Fish ladders came into vogue at many dams, but there was no turning back, and the aquatic resources of the past were history. In the 1890s, restoration activities such as fish hatcheries for salmon appeared. In fact, there was a Salmon hatchery in Plymouth, NH at Livermore Falls.

Chapter Fly Tying Classes Going Strong

Winter is the traditional time to spend time at the tying bench. It is a time to restock your depleted fly boxes, work on your tying, try some new patterns, and get through the long, cold, nights of the season. Of course tying requires materials and you always need more materials. An added benefit is a legitimate excuse to hit your local fly shop to find out what you are missing to fill those gaps, to get a better piece of elk hair or the right shade of a buggy-looking dubbing.

A long-standing winter tradition in the Basil W. Woods TU area is the chapter's winter fly tying classes. Some years have had a more active season and this is one of those. There are now 17 participants in our beginner's class. Although we limited the class to 15, we put the room stretcher to work for the additional pair.



Ken Welch demonstrates mounting quill wings on the Leadwing Coachman.

Presidential Commentary - George Embley



Ours is one of seven member chapters of the NH State Council of Trout Unlimited. An important function of the State Council is to take public positions that foster our mission of conserving, protecting, and restoring our coldwater fisheries and watersheds. Periodically, the Council receives requests to join other conservation organizations in taking a position on various environmental issues. Because these requests are often time limited and may involve complicated or controversial issues, the Council recently formed a Conservation Policy Committee tasked with reviewing such requests and submitting recommendations to the Council Chairman. In late January, committee chair Paul Doscher called the first meeting and two requests for advocacy were reviewed and passed on to the Council Chair with favorable recommendations.

The first request was from the Interstate Council on Water Policy asking for our endorsement of a letter which supports USGS (US Geological Survey) stream gauge funding. The letter – addressed to the House Appropriations Committee on Interior, Environment & Related Agencies – stresses the importance of the national network of stream and tidal gages in providing reliable data that meet a wide variety of needs – including scientific studies of water quality and climate trends. Such data are particularly valuable to programs that support coldwater fisheries. As federal budget constraints have become increasingly severe, not only have the number of active gauges been reduced but an increasing share of the cost has been shifted onto non-federal partners. Last year, a similar letter was sent to Congress, also requesting that the two USGS programs that sustain the stream gauge network be adequately funded. Last year's letter was endorsed by a wide variety of conservation organizations including Trout Unlimited (national) and the Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited.

The Council subcommittee also considered a letter from the National Wildlife Foundation requesting that we endorse a letter to President Obama in support of common-sense efforts to address the threat of climate change. The letterhead lists a number of supporting national conservation organizations including Trout Unlimited.

At our January chapter board meeting, we agreed to provide funding for two important conservation easements. In the first case, the chapter is contributing \$2,500 to the Frankestown Land Trust in support of the 180 acre Avery Brook Conservation Easement. This project will protect nearly all of East and West Avery Brooks and a section along the Piscataquog River – all good trout habitat. The board also approved a pledge of \$2,000 that can go either to land protection or riparian restoration on the Amey Farm which borders on Indian Stream. This work will be carried out on land that is newly protected by a conservation easement on 285 acres including 2/3 of a mile of frontage on Indian Stream and the confluence of Indian Stream and the Connecticut River.

Our winter projects are going very well. Both fly tying courses have filled to capacity, and the students and instructors are having a great time. The banquet committee, which has been meeting since early January, recently mailed out registration forms, along with raffle information. This information is also on the chapter website. The two main raffle items are a CZ Redhead Deluxe 20 gauge shotgun and an Escape 12 Angler Kayak, and the tickets should sell quickly. We can use a few more people to help on banquet day (March 8). If you are willing, please send us an email at concordtu@yahoo.com.

Our featured speaker at this month's chapter meeting is Tom Cormier, a lifelong fly tier and fisherman who has travelled extensively North America and abroad. His presentation will focus on fly fishing the Bob Marshall Wilderness...a pack-in expedition! Bob Marshall was an early forester, conservationist, and co-founder of The Wilderness Society. The Bob Marshall Wilderness Area is 1,577 square miles of wilderness managed by the U. S. Forest Service and located in western Montana. I look forward to seeing you at the meeting (February 20 at 7:00 PM).

Chapter Conservation Banquet Coming Soon

Saturday, March 8 at the Grappone Center, Concord

This year marks the 26th Anniversary of the chapter's annual conservation banquet. The banquet mailing has gone out and you should have received yours in the mail. We mail to all our members and to friends of the chapter that we have addresses for. If you didn't receive the information or want additional forms, you can get them from the chapter website: www.concordtu.org. Go to the Banquet Page.

The banquet committee is planning for another enjoyable evening of camaraderie, good food, friends, laughs, raffles, auctions, and a game or two. Banquet chair Tom Ives says we always try to improve the banquet and we hope that this year is no exception. Although this is the chapter's premier fund-raising event, Ives said, getting to spend a March Saturday evening with TU friends is just as important.

We hold the banquet at the Grappone Center in Concord which has ample parking, a great facility, good food, and friendly staff. The chapter has always felt very welcome here. We hope you will attend this year - if it's your first: Welcome! If you've been to banquets before: Welcome Back!

Editor's Soapbox

Gordon Riedesel

My non-fishing brother from Minneapolis asked me the other day, "what do fish do in winter?" I'm not exactly sure what they have been doing under the extra thick ice from Minnesota's liquid nitrogen-like winter, but it was a good question. He was the brightest guy in his class - I managed to graduate - so it seemed like a golden opportunity to sound like I knew something he didn't.

Of course I began with the deep pools in rivers as a place of refuge. The benefits of springs in both rivers and lakes came to mind. Although Minnesota's license plates claim it is the "Land of 10,000 Lakes" the number is higher with over 12,000 that are 10 acres or more. So like a good teacher, I let him do the math in figuring out how many springs there might be in those 12,000+ lakes. And I wanted to make sure that he became aware that river fish with access to lakes will head there, rather than Florida, for the winter. I knew too that he has seen open water on the Upper Mississippi River which runs a few blocks from his house. So it made sense to him that open water and spots where tributaries flow into "Ole Man River" provide winter resorts for fish.

"Do they eat?" Another good question. Well, if the opportunity is there and no serious energy expenditure is required, a trout will gladly snack on a nymph drifting by its chilly nose. A bait fish might prompt more movement with a larger reward possible. Now I was sounding pretty smart.

Before moving from Minnesota to New Hampshire over 30 years ago, I went ice fishing for the first time on a sizeable lake north of Minneapolis. Needless to say, I was relieved after having to sit between my considerably larger friends in a big pickup as we drove onto the ice that we didn't break through while they escaped and I was stuck on the stick shift. The 20 inches of ice reassured me the ride back to dry land would be safe. Not having ever driven on lake ice, it didn't seem smart to drive on it. I knew I couldn't walk on water, let alone drive on it. But it all worked out. We got plenty warm using the manual ice auger, but being free spirits, we didn't bother with shelter. My friends knew where to drill and we caught plenty of fish, but by the middle of the afternoon, the schooling fish seemed smarter (they knew where the temperatures were better) and riding in the middle of a pickup across uncertain lake ice, started to sound like a good idea.

Now my brother knows a little bit about fish in winter. And maybe I do too but I really hope that, come Spring, I can figure out what fish do when it's not Winter.



Fly Tying, continued from page 1



Tim Pease shows how to proportion and set quill wings.

A challenge for any TU chapter is finding a facility to hold classes. In our case, the 6 week beginner and 5 week intermediate classes requires an 11 week commitment of the facility as well as from the instructors. The chapter was fortunate to have W.S. Hunter's Fly Shop in Concord provide the space and extra time for our classes over several years. Having classes in a fly shop means you are surrounded by fly tying materials as needed. After Hunters closed, we managed a one-day class the following year but then we found a new home at Parker Academy in Concord – thanks to chapter member Dave Parker's generosity to use his facility.

This year, the chapter found a new home and a motivator. The new site is the Passaconaway Club on Garvins Falls Road in Concord. Passaconaway member and TU board member, Bob Ives secured this excellent facility for the chapter's 11 weeks of fly tying instruction. Jim Timmins, former board member and now chapter advisor, was the motivator. Jim put in lots of time and effort to bring the chapter's fly tying classes up to speed. He re-wrote the fly tying instruction book, determined the needed materials, and put together fly tying kits for each week's flies. This was no small effort and the chapter is grateful for Jim's persistent efforts.

Classes can't be held without instructors / helpers and this year's recruits have been abundant and generous with their time. Aside from Bob Ives and Jim Timmins, this winter's cast of characters include: Ken Welch, Bill Hall, Bob Sturke, Tim Pease, Jeddy Waterman, Paul Doscher, Angus Boezeman, George Cummings, and Alex Hicks. This number of instructors ensures that personalized instruction will always be there. Alex Hicks set up a video camera system so that when the fly-of-the-night is demonstrated, everyone in the room can easily see all the steps.

The chapter doesn't make much money from fly tying classes but that is not the point. Many of us got started in TU after taking a fly tying class. By introducing this creative outlet in the middle of our dark and cold New England winter, we hope that a few students will find their way into the chapter as a good number of current TU members have.

The beginner's class ends February 11. The intermediate begins February 18 and runs through March 18. Responses have been overwhelmingly positive from participants which means trout better watch out come Spring and that our member roster should swell with new and increasingly talented fly tyers and anglers.



The Beginner's Fly Tying Class at the Passaconaway Club's main hall.

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Our February chapter meeting speaker, Fisheries Biologist Matt Carpenter of New Hampshire Fish and Game, presented the latest efforts on migratory fish restoration in the Merrimack River Watershed. Matt pointed out that while dams have been considered the largest obstacle to migratory fish, there are other factors that contribute to the decline of fish like the Atlantic Salmon that spend part of their lives in fresh, and part of their lives in saltwater. Matt's talk was entitled "Life After Salmon: A new focus for migratory fish restoration in the Merrimack River Watershed." The title was prompted in part by the September, 2103 decision of the US Fish and Wildlife Service to end its participation in the Merrimack River Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program. This decision effectively ended the 37 year effort to bring *Salmo salar* back to the Merrimack River Watershed. Although a few years had sizeable numbers of Salmon returning to the Merrimack, the overall returns were lower than target levels believed to be the bare minimum needed for a sustaining population. Research has shown that while dams and their power turbines impact migratory fish, predation at sea by Silver Hake, White Hake, Spiney Dogfish, and other predators like Strippers, are the biggest problem for migratory fish. At sea, the survival rate is estimated to be only 12% in the second year of ocean life for Atlantic Salmon. And there is a twenty year temperature cycle, known as the Atlantic Oscillation, that plays a role in migratory fish mortality. Matt also noted that during the last 500 years, fishing pressure from both overseas and at home have changed the North Atlantic fish stocks, as most of us know.



George Cummings, Matt Carpenter, and Alex Hicks chat after Matt's presentation.

The Atlantic Salmon restoration program in the Merrimack River Watershed got started in 1976 seeding



Photo courtesy <http://wild-scotland.org.uk>

both Salmon fry and smolts into the river. In 1997, targets for returning fish were established for both the fry and smolts stocked earlier. Biologists hoped to see 1 to 2 smolt returns per 1,000 stocked and 30 fry returns per one million stocked. Genetic testing allowed the scientists to determine captured returning fish origins. Unfortunately, the supply of smolts and fry was irregular and fish were limited. Since 1982, biologist had target a return rate of 300 fish (stocked as both fry and smolts) but the average return from 1982 – 2013 was 110 fish. In 2012 there were 137 fish, in 2013 only 22. By contrast, 2011 was an exceptional year and successful spawning in the Baker River was documented. In 2013, NH F&G biologists documented parr from the 2011 spawn in both the Baker and Souhegan Rivers. The Souhegan was viewed as having the potential for a self-sustaining Atlantic Salmon population. The watershed above Ayers Dam in Bristol was considered very good Salmon spawning habitat. In September, 2013 the US Fish and Wildlife Service ended its participation – effectively killing the 30+ year restoration effort. All Atlantic Salmon efforts are plagued by low return rates. Maine's Salmon are a distinct genetic population and are listed as Endangered. The only bright note is that this Spring 700 brood stock Salmon will be released into the state's waters. The dark note is, this is the last time, the end of the Brood Stock program.

Now that the Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program is over, the focus has shifted to the other migratory species of the Merrimack River Basin. These include the River Herring, the American Shad, the American Eel, and even the disparaged Sea Lamprey. Populations of all these species are at a record low.

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After Salmon, continued from page 5

The River Herring is a prey species which was successfully restored into Maine's Kennebec River. The hope is to use out-of-basin transfers to boost populations so the River Herring can be self-sustaining. The American Shad, once wildly abundant, are stocked above dams but fish passage over dams is a problem. The Lowell Dam is the biggest obstacle to Shad, due somewhat to their nervous schooling behavior. Although Americans are not big fans of Eel, the American Eel are under some pressure because they are highly valued in the lucrative international market. Ironically, American Eel are a big food source for larger fish when small. When large, they are the top predator. The restoration programs need to better understand the actual and potential distribution of Eel. American Eel live in Lake Winnepesaukee and can reside there 20 years before returning to the Sargasso Sea in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean to spawn. In spite of their "vermin" categorization, Sea Lamprey evolved alongside Atlantic Salmon and other migratory fish. As with nature, we do not know all of the interactions between species but fisheries biologists have shown that Sea Lamprey improve the spawning gravel in Salmon nurseries, their larvae are filter feeders (not blood suckers until they mature) which cleans the water, and they are a source of marine-derived nutrients in upper freshwater tributaries. Like some Salmon, Sea Lamprey die after spawning.

Matt covered a lot of water in his presentation and helped our understanding of the now-defunct Merrimack River Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program. His remarks about the restoration efforts for other species were important to hear. But it was clear that most attendees felt of sense of resignation over the status of the King of Fish in our region.



Bob Wyatt's Goldfinch Lilac
Full Dress Atlantic Salmon Fly - 2013.

Newsletter Information

Troutlines is published September through May. Chapter members who have given TU national their e-mail address will receive an e-mail notice from us through the TU national server that the latest newsletter is online at our chapter website. Paper copies are sent to members who don't have an e-mail address listed with TU national.

If you would prefer to receive paper copies of **Troutlines** rather than electronic copies, drop us a line to either our e-mail or mailing address. If you now receive a paper copy and would prefer to read it online, drop us a note and update your membership information with TU national.

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Calendar

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| February 20 | Chapter Meeting, 7:00 PM. Tom Cormier, Eldridge Brothers Fly Shop |
| March 8 | Annual Conservation Banquet, Grappone Center, Concord |
| March 20, | Spring Begins, the Vernal Equinox, 12:57 PM |
| April 17 | Chapter Meeting, 7:00 PM. Chapter Elections |
| April 19 | Youth Fishing Day, Merrill Park, Concord
Chapter Raffle Drawing
Discover Wild NH Day
at NH F&G Headquarters, Concord |
| April 26 | Trout Pond Opening Day |

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