

RipRap

Newsletter of the
Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter
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CHAPTER MEETING

January 6, 7:00 pm via Zoom
watch for an email
announcement

Eddie Rivard will speak on fly
fishing in Wyoming's Wind River
Wilderness

RIPRAP

Restoration, Improvement &
Preservation through Research
& Projects.

Next deadline for article submission
is February 8th. Send information to
econ4664@gmail.com.

Upper Kinnickinnic River
Photo by Molly Barritt
www.kinniriver.org

Conserve

Protect

Restore

The Drift

WORDS FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Water, water everywhere, but not a spot to fish.

“Water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink,” bemoaned the stranded sailor in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. “Water, water everywhere, but not a spot to fish,” yours truly bemoaned last season, as I hiked up and down the Kinni and Rush to my favorite, but already occupied, fishing spots.

If you think that I’m still upset about having such a tough time finding a place to fish during the work-from-home-and-fish pandemic last season, you are wrong. One of the benefits of belonging to an organization with so many high-minded conservation enthusiasts, is that occasionally these friends restore your skunked and humbled spirit and talk you off the proverbial cliff ledge after you’ve hiked to five of your favorite fishing spots and FOUND TROUT FISHERS ALREADY OCCUPYING EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THEM! Well, maybe I’m not quite off the ledge yet, but at least I’m moving farther away from it.

One of these friends said that if Trout Unlimited’s goal is to get more people outdoors and enjoying our terrific coldwater resources, like the Kinni and Rush, then I should be delighted that the pandemic caused so many people to do just that. And not just retired guys, but men and women of all ages, folks from all walks of lives, teenagers kicked off their screens by parents working from home, and entire families, as well. I don’t know if I’ve seen families out fishing together since I was a kid, but I saw them this year. And not just fishing with flies, but with spinners, crankbaits, soft baits and worms, too. Now some of us catch-and-release folks might take issue with the catch-and-keepers of the world (and granted all fisheries have a limit to how many mature fish can be taken out of them and still have the fisheries remain healthy), but the point is that A LOT OF NEW FOLKS got out and experienced the thrill of trout fishing this past year. That’s very good news for coldwater conservation, because people need to experience a natural resource before they can get excited about it and decide that it is worth protecting.

Another friend suggested using the busy fishing spots on the Kinni and Rush as an opportunity to get out and explore new areas and new streams. I did that a bit towards the end of the season and was surprised how many more streams there are to explore if one was willing to drive just 15 minutes farther than normal, not to mention the wide variety of streams that are available if one was willing to drive 45 minutes farther out. Even though I didn’t fully realize it until I was forced to get out and explore, we are truly blessed with a tremendous amount of fishable water in Western Wisconsin. It’s true that

a big part of our heavy stream traffic is due to being right next to a major metropolitan area boasting a population of over 3,000,000 potential stream cloggers. But things could be worse, much worse. How would you like to have less than half of the fishable water we do and be right next to a major metropolitan area with 9,500,000 potential stream cloggers?! You don't have to be a mathematician to figure out that our odds of landing on pristine, fishable water and catching a fish are a lot higher than our trout-fishing brethren on the other side of the state. True, we do have quite a few Minnesota plates escaping to Wisconsin every weekend, but this is small when compared to the literal monsoon of Illinois license plates pouring across the border on the other side of the state. Besides, Minnesota drivers get confused by our round-a-bouts and often times only make it far enough into Wisconsin to buy a case of Spotted Cow before turning around and heading back to the safety of their Gopher State. So, try driving a little farther looking for new places to fish this spring.

Let's review. First, it's good for cold-water conservation that more folks are getting outdoors now than before the pandemic. Second, we can drive farther into Wisconsin than most Minnesotans can, because we start in Wisconsin and because we don't get as distracted by all the liquor stores selling Spotted Cow. Third, and this is so obvious to Wisconsinites that it barely deserves to be mentioned here, we can travel lighter than Minnesotans can, because we know that in Wisconsin we are never more than 20 minutes away from a Kwik Trip with Glazer donuts and Karuba coffee (not to mention the Spotted Cow). We don't have to bring the dog to the kennel or cancel the newspaper to go on a fishing trip. We are so blessed here that all we need to do is, grab a fishing rod and waders (really these should be stowed in the car so as to eliminate step one), get in the car, head to the Kwik Trip nearest our fishing destination (anything we can't get at Kwik Trip we really don't need on a fishing trip, so we're good once we get there) and, start fishing.

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From the Editor



Yes, it's winter. Our coldest month is upon us. But, as is our custom, we "Northerners" have learned to soldier through these darkened days in search of solace or a silver lining that provides us the gumption to warm our inner selves and make us mindful that spring is on its way, bringing with it longer days, warmer water, and mid-day hatches. So I ask you, my

brothers and sisters, are you ready? Have you taken your fly rod out of its tube, and given it a few swishes in anticipation of that first cast to a feeding trout? How about your fly reel, maybe a few drops of oil on its inner workings to assure that the gears will smoothly ply out your line when you hook that big one? Have you cleaned your line? You may have noticed at season's end that your floating line had become more of an intermediate sink-tip. How about those waders? Did you repair that pin hole leak you noticed at season's end? I keep my waders hung in a closet that serves as my fly gear storage room. It contains equipment garnered over 40 plus years — enough to restock our local fly shops should they ever run into major supply problems. A couple of years ago, I was getting my gear together for my first spring outing. While packing my waders, I noticed a hole in the left neoprene booty, no doubt put there by some creature belonging to the order Rodentia. It's worth knowing where you've put that Aquaseal and that mouse trap! And lastly, are you filling all those vacant spots in your depleted fly boxes with newly tied versions of your confidence flies, or with some newer patterns that you might have come across on YouTube during those long nights when sleep escaped you?

Now we can start looking toward spring through our frosted windows, with the hope that we may be on a path to normalcy or, should I say, a new normalcy. The length of that path and where it leads is yet to be determined. But as Yogi Berra so aptly put it when giving his friend Joe Garagiola driving directions to his

house, "If you come to a fork in the road, take it." I remain hopeful!

With this January issue comes a series of articles that will certainly start the spring thaw, well, at least in your mind. El Presidente starts us out with his thoughts on how to overcome the frustrations of crowded streams and offers some sound advice that just might convince you to leave your comfort zone and consider a fresh approach in tactics or the type of water you usually fish. From his side of the vice, Paul Johnson espouses on "guide flies," and how a fly that's perfectly good in its original form can be ruined by turning it into a "quick and easy tie." Kasey Yallaly outlines reasons for the consistent drop in brook trout populations in certain stretches of Cady Creek, and shares her strategies for managing the Eau Galle watershed as a key to their survival. Scott Hanson reveals the many ways squirrel fur can be used to tie nymph patterns. (My suspicion is that much of the squirrel fur he uses does not have a Wapsi or Hareline label on it.) Linda Radimecky breaks down the mechanics of the cast and offers valuable tips learned on her journey to becoming a certified fly-casting instructor. Bob Trevis continues his beginners fly fisher series, offering wisdom on fishing with dry flies and nymphs and on the importance of being a heron-type predator when approaching feeding trout. Mike Alwin (I fondly call him Mikey) delves into the entomology of the midge and provides full disclosure on his lack of success in fishing them. And from the Fly Tyer's Corner, Paul Johnson gives us his "Midge Emerger Special," with complete tying instructions and a brief note on how to fish the pattern. Whew! That wraps up our January issue.

The next time you hear from me, the sun will be approaching the celestial equator to start its northward journey in the sky, with the vernal equinox signaling the first day of astronomical spring. It's true, I looked it up! Ed

Black are my steps
on silver sod;
Thick blows
my frosty
breath abroad;
And tree and
house, and hill
and lake,
Are frosted like a
wedding cake.

RL Stevenson

But what if you don't have the time to drive farther into Wisconsin, or what if you only have so much juice in your super-charged golf cart before you have to bring it back to its charging station in Minnesota, or what if you're afraid you might run into a Bears fan if you drive too far into Wisconsin? What then? Well, all is not lost. A very wise trout angler, who just happens to be the current editor of this fine newsletter, confided in me that there are several ways to make fishing closer to home more interesting and enjoyable, even during times of heavy traffic.

Here are a couple of ideas:

- Try fishing at different times of the day and/or at different times of the week. Most of us are creatures of habit and like the fish to bite when it's convenient for us to fish for them. This doesn't always line up with when it's convenient for the fish to bite. So, try being there at the times that are not convenient for most folks. Remember, we're all in the same time zone, so we have at least a 30 minute jump on the folks from Minnesota for the early morning shift.
- Try learning how to fish different types of water. Most folks either plow straight up or down a stream, or walk along a stream and fish the kind of water they've had luck with in the past. Try to figure out how to fish pocket water if you don't fish pocket water, or flat water if you don't fish flat water, or riffles if you don't fish riffles. There are fish in all of these places. Expand your horizons and the types of water you fish.
- Try learning a completely different technique, like euro-nymphing, streamer fishing, or fishing with soft-hackles. Try focusing really hard on one specific technique and see how much you can learn from that one technique in a season.

Yvon Chouinard spent an entire season fishing only with pheasant tail nymphs. Dave Hughes spent an entire season fishing only with size 20 and 22 flies. Tom Rosenbauer, when he doesn't see a definite hatch taking place, almost always starts out with a size 14 parachute Adams. Come up with your own game or challenge or technique to learn. The fish don't stop learning. Nor should we if we want to keep catching them.

Oh, and one final note. Be nice to those trout fishers you run into with Minnesota plates. It definitely is confusing for them to drive into a state where holiday bonuses for our road engineers are determined by how many round-a-bouts they place in a given year. Plus, Minnesota plates account for one-third of our membership dues and probably more than one-half of our donations. If that isn't enough, MN plates belonging to both Kiap-TU-Wish members and Twin City Trout Unlimited members who log 100s of volunteer hours every year clearing trees and brush and working to improve our stream habitat. So, they've earned their place to fish and recreate here, along with those of us who are so lucky to live here. Happy Fishing! Scott

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Wisconsin DNR provides newly revised trout fishing maps of classified trout waters, sorted by county. Each county provides a link to an interactive map highlighting the stream of interest. Anglers can choose from 2,989 trout streams stretching more than 13,175 miles, an increase from 2,677 streams and 9,562 miles in 1980. These gains reflect improved farming practices, habitat protection and restoration work, regulations, stocking of wild strain fish, and other factors. Streams are identified by their classification — either class 1, 2, or 3.

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Fishing/trout/index>

Views from this Side of My Vise

PAUL JOHNSON

I often cringe when I hear the term "Guide Flies". To some people, they assume that if a guide is using a fly that it must be a really good fly. Sometimes it is. Sometimes the guide took what was a really good fly in its original form and dumbed it down to make it quick and easy to tie. My personal goal is to always tie a good-looking fly that will also catch fish.

One fly that could earn legendary status as a guide fly is a CDC & Elk Hair Caddis. The only materials that you need other than a hook and tying thread are CDC feathers and elk or deer hair. With only two materials, the fly is pretty straightforward to tie. With the proper proportions you also end up with a really good-looking fly.

This is one of my favorite caddis patterns for our local early spring caddis hatches. Those first caddis tend to have a dark gray body and by picking a natural dark dun CDC feather, it matches the hatch pretty well. This pattern also rides lower in the water compared to a standard Elk Hair Caddis that has an abdomen wrapped with dry fly hackle.

Here it is, the middle of January and I am thinking spring, imagining the caddis dance across the stream and hungry fish coming up to eat my fly!

If you have any questions, please let me know.

See you on the stream.



photo by
Paul Johnson

From the field

Kiap-TU-Wish Monitoring

Although summer is the peak of the Kiap-TU-Wish monitoring year, monitoring will continue during the winter months at several streams and rivers, including three restoration project locations (Pine Creek, Plum Creek, and the Trimbelle River) and the Willow River, where the Little Falls Dam (Willow River State Park) was replaced in 2020, re-filling Little Falls Lake. Deployment of 21 temperature loggers will continue through the winter, to evaluate the year-round impacts of climate change, to provide data for assessing the impacts of the new Willow River dam, and to evaluate the ability of our stream restoration projects to improve temperature regimes.

WiseH2O mApp Project

National Trout Unlimited is placing a high priority on Community Science and the benefits it provides for angler education and cold-water resource management. Trout Unlimited's national science team partnered with MobileH2O, LLC to develop a customized mobile application (WiseH2O App) that can be used by anglers to monitor water quality and habitat conditions in Driftless Area trout streams. Although the 2020 monitoring season was short, we are pleased to report that the iPhone version of the App is available, and the 2-in-1 test strips can be used to measure nitrite/nitrate concentrations. The App also has an updated look and educational messaging that should be more user-friendly.

Those who are interested in WiseH2O App monitoring in 2021 can take the following steps to prepare this winter:

- Download the WiseH2O App: Android and iPhone versions of the WiseH2O App are available for free download at the Google Play Store and Apple Store (search WiseH2O). Instructions for downloading the WiseH2O App can be found in the WiseH2O App User Guide, located on the MobileH2O website: www.mobileh2o.com/mh2oapp.
- Complete On-Line Training: Detailed on-line instructions for use of the WiseH2O App can be found in the WiseH2O App User Guide and the Video Tutorial for Using the WiseH2O App, both located on the MobileH2O website: www.mobileh2o.com/mh2oapp.
- Obtain Water Chemistry Test Kits: Depending on each participant's level of interest and desired extent of involvement with water chemistry monitoring, 3 types of test kits are available. These three test kits can be ordered directly from MobileH2O: www.mobileh2o.com/shop. A reliable thermometer for WiseH2O App temperature measurements can also be purchased at: www.mobileh2o.com/shop.

For more information on the Driftless Area project, please contact John Kaplan at Jmk8990@comcast.net.

Trout in the classroom

Four of our nine TIC programs still wish to participate this year despite COVID restrictions and threat of moving to on-line learning. They are: Amery Junior High, Amery Intermediate, Ellsworth Middle, and Rocky Branch Elementary (RF). Eggs will be delivered after the first of the year. Bugs in the Classroom and our ECO Day will not happen this year due to visitor restrictions at the schools. Whether we are allowed to participate in the trout releases at the end of the year is still up for decision.

Habitat Improvement

Randy reports that the work on Cady Creek is completed and remaining trees will be removed by WDNR. A total of eight work-days comprising approximately 500 hours was spent cutting down box elder, buckthorn, and honeysuckle. Work on the upper Kinni has started at the Lueck easement on Trout Brook Dr. and will continue upstream to the bridge on Interstate 94. This section is a working pasture with fencing to keep the cattle out of the stream. It has become overgrown with box elder and buckthorn. Since no bank restoration is planned for this section, trees and brush will be cut close to the ground and herbicide will be applied to the stumps. Work on the site is projected to last through the month of December and into the new year. Work is also being done at the South Fork of the Kinnickinnic on areas where sandbar willows are overtaking the banks of the stream. For now, work will be concentrated on areas where the willows are growing on the edge of the stream bank.

Kinnickinnic River Powell Dam Update

The City of River Falls has asked Kiap-TU-Wish to offer our recommendation on a post-drawdown management option for the Powell Falls Dam and the Lake Louise impoundment which was drawn down in early October 2020 after sustaining damage during the flood of June 29, 2020. Chapter members Kent Johnson, Scot Stewart, and Gary Horvath have been meeting with City officials and determined that the issue was beyond their expertise. The Board has authorized an expenditure of \$2,000 to contract with Inter-Fluve, a nationally known River Restoration consultant for advice on the best route forward for management of the dam. We are hopeful that the City will include our recommendation in their submittal to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) in their Powell Falls Dam inspection report and recommendations for future action, which they must provide before December 31, 2020. Additionally, the City of River Falls is holding a joint River Falls Utility Advisory Board/City Council workshop on the dam issue on January 19, 2021. We hope our input will also inform that discussion as well.

Restoring Cady Creek's Brook Trout Population: Managing the Eau Galle River Watershed

KASEY YALLALY

If you have been a long-time angler in the area, you have likely fished Cady Creek at some point in time. Cady is one of my personal favorites; it runs through a beautiful little valley, has a lot of public access, pristine water and a great trout population due in part to past trout habitat improvement projects. In recent years though, you may have noticed that things are not like they once were in this stream, especially in the lower reaches which encompass earlier trout habitat project areas.

Previously, Cady Creek was — and still is in some reaches — one of the most populated brook trout streams in the area that I cover and maybe even in the state. In surveys prior to 2006, brook trout numbers throughout the stream ranged from 2,000 to 6,000 trout per mile with no brown trout present.

Brown trout were first detected in a 2006 survey and their numbers began to steadily climb — in the Galoff and Feiler easement areas brook trout numbers simultaneously dropped. In 2016 and 2017, numbers of brown trout were on the verge of surpassing those of brook trout with brook trout numbers dropping from a high of 5,300 per mile in 2006 to 1,100 in 2014. Luckily, brook trout are still the dominant species in the upper reaches of Cady Creek, with very strong numbers, although a few brown trout were detected there this fall. Cady's upper reaches contain much smaller water, with higher gradients and may be less desirable for brown trout, but according to our surveys, browns are still working their way up to these areas and attempting to establish populations.

So, what was the driver of this brown trout invasion of a stream that had never before had a brown trout detected in it? To answer this, the entire watershed must be taken into consideration to effectively come up with management tools. There could have

been a multitude of factors that played into this occurrence, but some variables lined up with this time period and may explain the invasion.

Brown trout have been stocked in the Eau Galle River (Cady is a tributary of the Eau Galle) for decades. The strain of brown trout stocked in the Eau Galle prior to 2002 was a domestic strain of browns. Beginning in 2002, however, and again in 2005 and on, the stocked strain of brown trout was changed from this domestic strain to the Timber Coulee or wild strain of brown trout. This strain of brown trout likely has a better chance of naturally reproducing and likely a higher tendency to move or migrate into adjacent watersheds, although this has not been officially evaluated. Also, during this time period, a large continuous trout habitat improvement project was completed.

While trout habitat projects definitely work to increase trout numbers, brown trout tend to outcompete brook trout for desirable habitat with habitat preferences for both species being very similar. Both of these dramatic changes, therefore, likely combined and led to the brown trout invasion of Cady Creek, although it's hard to pinpoint exact causes.

This is the situation that I came upon when I started in my position in 2018. A similar situation has also unfolded in Pine



photo by
Kasey Yallaly



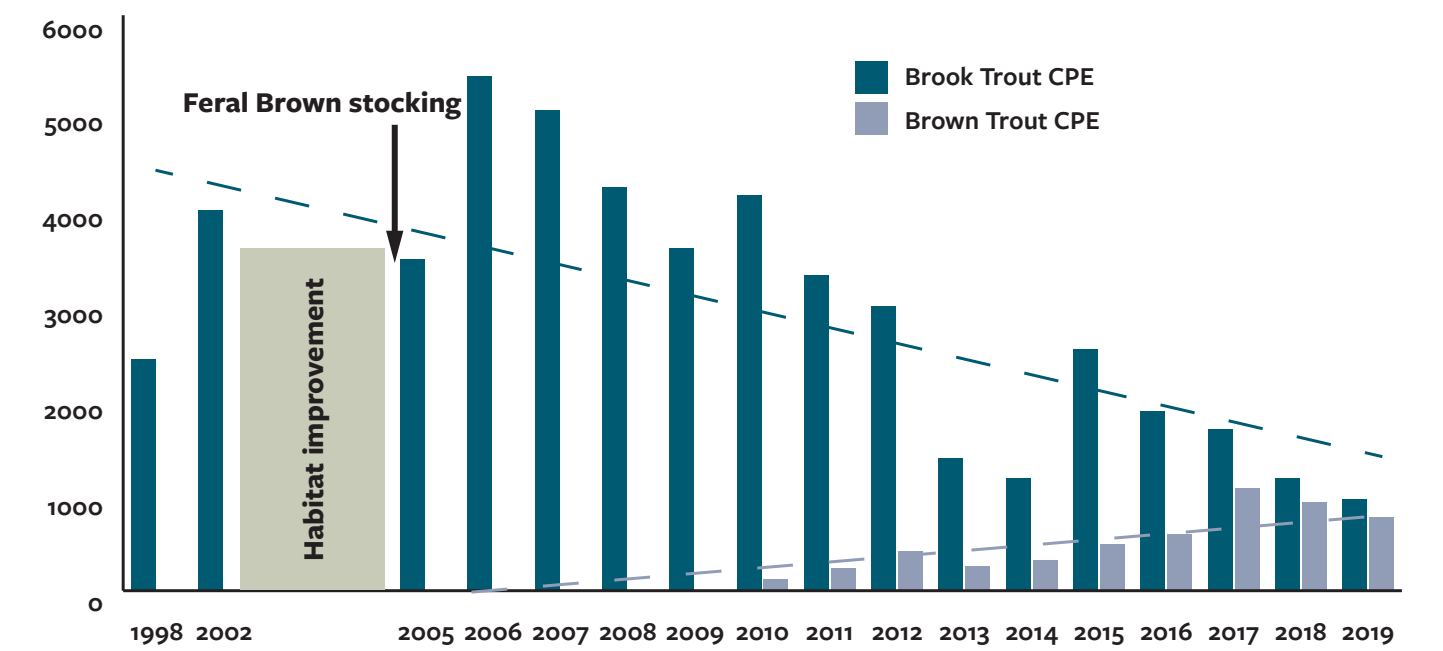
Creek but that is a different story for a different time. With Cady, I felt that it wasn't too late to intervene and try to salvage or save the brook trout population, especially because Cady's brookie's have a very pure Wisconsin wild strain genetic makeup, thus increasing their importance.

In 2018, we began with a brown trout removal program and have continued it every year since then and will continue sampling our trend sites to determine the effects of these removals. The removed fish are donated to a local nursing home. I have also changed the fishing regulations in Cady Creek to allow for more liberal brown trout harvest, so please consider keeping the brown trout that you catch from Cady Creek. I am planning on transferring brook trout from the upper reaches of Cady Creek where numbers are still strong down into the Galoff and Feiler easement stretches in an attempt to boost the remaining brook trout populations and help them compete with the brown trout that we haven't removed yet. Transferring fish from the same watershed will not negatively influence the existing genetics within the stream.

Additionally, and most importantly, I have changed the entire stocking regimen of the Eau Galle River from brown trout stocking to feral strain brook trout stocking which should relieve the pressure of brown trout moving into Cady Creek from the Eau Galle.

We surveyed the Eau Galle comprehensively in 2019. This survey yielded cold water temperatures and brook trout in low abundance throughout the river despite decades of brown trout stocking. The habitat in the Eau Galle River, in my opinion is more suited for brook trout anyway. The river has quite a bit of groundwater input and springs and is composed of mainly sandy substrates unlike the Rush and other Pierce county streams where browns thrive in the limestone-based streams. Brown trout will probably always be present throughout the Eau Galle, hopefully and likely in low numbers; most of the population was previously reliant on stocking.

The Eau Galle River above Spring Valley Reservoir is now 100% brook trout due to the stocking of feral strain brook trout beginning in 2017 started by my supervisor, Heath Benike. This population is now naturally reproducing. The goal with the Eau Galle watershed is to produce a strong self-sustaining brook trout population with trophy potential because of the habitat and sizeable water. Managing the watersheds as a whole is key to the survival of the brook trout population in Cady Creek. This will be an ongoing project that has so far been successful and one that is worth continuing.



Getting Squirrely: A Perfect Material for Nymphs

SCOTT HANSON

My quiet little neighborhood in the often-frigid suburbia outside of Minneapolis is home to an amazing number of albino squirrels. There is also a giant population of normal, grey squirrels, and sometimes a black squirrel or two, but the albino squirrels are the ones that get everyone's attention. There are often posts about the snow-white rodents on our city's Facebook page. I have seen as many as eight albino squirrels in one trip through the neighborhood, and I doubt that it was the same one running from yard to yard at automobile speed. For some reason our neck of the woods has become a perfect breeding and living ground for albino squirrels. Maybe it has something to do with everyone's willingness to drive the streets at cautious speed, in an unspoken agreement to try not to turn the squirrels into roadkill. Or maybe it's our extreme lack of blood-thirsty squirrel predators

Whatever the case, being able to witness squirrel life up close has made me more appreciative of squirrel fur as a fly tying material. I believe it is just about the perfect dubbing material for nymph bodies. It is so spiky and buggy looking, and the variations of color within a given clump of fur are amazing, especially with fox squirrel fur. Let's look at some of the multitude of flies you can tie with squirrel fur, shall we?

As I mentioned, squirrel fur lends itself perfectly to nymphs. One of the most famous squirrel nymphs is Dave Whitlock's Red Fox Squirrel Nymph, which has been well-known for decades now. It uses two colors of fur from a red fox squirrel: the orangish belly fur of the squirrel for the abdomen, and the spiky gray fur from the back of the squirrel for the thorax. As Dave himself has written many times, the Red Fox Squirrel Nymph (RFSN) can be altered in size and shape to match many aquatic insects. I have even seen a drawing of his that depicted a RFSN that was imitating a crayfish. It is truly an all-around fly.

Another well-known fly originated here in the Upper Midwest, but has since gained popularity wherever trout can be caught. That would be the ubiquitous Pink Squirrel, which was originated by John Bethke. The original pattern has an abdomen of spiky squirrel fur and a thorax of a wrap or two of small pink chenille. I am still not really sure what the fish might think that the Pink Squirrel imitates. Might they think it is a mayfly nymph eating a trout egg? Do they ignore the nymph part of the fly and concentrate solely on the pink egg-like part of the fly? I know that people say I have a tendency to think like a fish, but even I can't figure that one out. Yet. What I do know is that oftentimes the Pink Squirrel can catch fish when other flies can not. So I make sure to always carry some, just in case.

Other variations of the Pink Squirrel have started to pop up. One of my favorite local fly shops, Lund's in River Falls, Wisconsin, sells a Hot Pink Squirrel, with black dubbing in back and hot pink dubbing up front. The pink dubbing is easier to tie than pink chenille, in my opinion. Chenille can get pretty bulky at the head

of a fly pretty quickly, even if you are using the small stuff. Both the chenille and dubbed versions will catch fish!

Another squirrel-based nymph is a new one that I devised this year called the Squück. It's a bead-head nymph that is half squirrel and half duck, hence the name Squück. Make sure you don't forget the umlauts. I tie the Squück in the same way that I tie many nymphs, and that is with a collar hackle of CDC in front of the abdomen. It is a very simple fly to tie, and it has been my top producing trout fly of the year. If you tie up some Squücks, use the same techniques to tie up a few Hücks (half hare/half duck), too. Just don't tell anyone you learned about them in an article about squirrels.

Squirrel fur is an awesome material for scud imitations. Scuds have tons of little legs and other appendages sticking out from the bottoms of their bodies, and the spiky hairs from squirrels mimic those appendages very well. Plus, you can get squirrel fur

in all sorts of colors that work well for scud colors. Both the orangish belly fur and the gray back fur from a red fox squirrel would work great as a scud.

The lighter gray fur from a regular old gray squirrel would also make a great scud. And, don't forget that you can find squirrel fur in several dyed colors, too. A scud tied with olive dyed squirrel fur has driven the trout crazy on many occasions.

One of my favorite new flies is a caddis pupa I tie using glass beads for the abdomen, CDC hackle, and squirrel fur for the thorax/head area. I call it the Glass Bead Caddis (real original, huh?), and I tie it both in olive and tan/yellow with a brass bead in front.

I also tie a similar fly in the same colors, only I omit the CDC and brass bead, and instead add a short wing of elk hair to imitate a caddis fly that is emerging at the water's surface. Both patterns work well.

Squirrel fur doesn't only work on nymphs. Of course you can use it instead of rabbit fur on any fly that calls for it (I am thinking specifically of a partridge and orange or yellow wet fly). I also use it on one of my favorite searching dry flies, the P.S.P. (Pink Squirrel Parachute). It is tied almost exactly the same as the Pink Squirrel nymph, only there is no bead, and a parachute post and hackle is employed. I like to use bright pink yarn to make the post nice and visible, and I add some bright pink dubbing in the thorax to make a nice hot spot to drive the fish a little crazy. It took me a while to figure out what color hackle to use on this fly. Finally, I hit the jackpot when I combined some medium dun with grizzly dyed dark ginger. I think it goes great with the color of the squirrel fur.

Squirrel fur is fairly easily obtained, even if you don't have a large herd of them living in your neighborhood. It looks buggy and it comes in a wide array of colors. What more could you want in a fly tying material? My advice is that you get a little squirrely next time you are tying flies!

photo by Scott Hanson



Tactics & Techniques: Fishing dry flies & nymphs

BOB TREVIS



A MDNR study in the early 90s showed big brown trout (those over 15") preferred hanging out in pools with a variety of cover types: undercut banks, deep pools, large boulders and submerged trees. Pools with three types of cover were 47 times more likely to hold big trout than pools with only one type of cover. Here are some thoughts and suggestions that may increase your chances of hooking up with one of these wily denizens and perhaps even bringing a few to hand!

There are literally hundreds of books available on trout-fishing tactics and techniques. Topics discussed in the majority of them most often cover basic information, including how to read the water, getting in position before making a cast, and putting your fly where the trout are holding or feeding. Identifying trout feeding stations comes with experience, and just when you think you have it figured out, you will undoubtedly get skunked, or you may even have a feeding trout bump against your waders! When you cast your fly, be it a dry fly or nymph, your goal should always be to attain a natural drift or presentation without scaring the fish. Once you put a fly line over a fish's back, it's "adios". Native-born stream trout are conditioned from birth to watch for danger from above.

DRY-FLY FISHING

For beginners, dry-fly fishing need not be that hard. In a previous article I stressed the importance of learning how to cast accurately out to a distance of 30 feet or so, using a 9-foot tapered leader and a dry fly that matches the size and color of the hatching insect (may I suggest an Adams Parachute?).

The majority of mayfly and caddis insect species have a 365-day life-cycle, and spend 363 days under the surface, first as an egg, then as a nymph or a larva/pupae stage. When it's time for them to hatch, their emergence offers a short window of time, sometimes lasting only an hour or so — sometimes longer. When you time it right and "hit a hatch," count yourself lucky.

Since each of these species has multiple "broods" a particular hatch may last for several days or longer. Occasionally you may even have various insects hatching at the same time, making

your fly choice more difficult. If you know for sure caddis are hatching, try an Elk Hair Caddis in an appropriate size and color; for mayflies, the aforementioned Adams is an excellent choice.

Emerging insects will usually show you where the fish are feeding. It's as if the rising fish are waving signs that say, "Fish Here!" I suggest positioning yourself downstream of feeding trout, preferably at a quartering angle (30 to 45 degrees) and about 30 feet away. Pick out one close to you that is rising steadily and make your cast 3 or 4 feet above it. Don't worry if your leader lands with a few curves, it will lessen the likelihood of drag (more about drag later). Watch as your fly drifts with the current, and when it disappears into the trout's mouth, set the hook by pinching the line against the rod grip and smoothly lifting the rod. "Fish On!" It's quite a feeling.

If trout appear to be avoiding the adults on the surface, and instead are just "bulging" below the surface, this is an indication they are feeding on emerging nymphs or pupae. Time for a soft hackle or some type of emerger pattern. Even when you see trout leaping completely out of the water, don't be fooled. The larger trout tend to hang under the surface and chow down on emergers without showing themselves to predators above.

In the final stage of their lifecycle, mayflies and caddis flies return to the stream to lay their eggs and eventually die. During these times, it's important to pay attention and watch the water's surface to see if these "deceased" adult mayfly spinners and spent caddis are floating downstream and are being taken by the trout. If you experience unnatural "drag" of your fly following your cast, you will need to learn how to do a mend, or to use a reach cast in order to create a more natural drift. Drag results from current(s)

pulling your fly line below the fly and leader. At times you may need to occasionally cast across-and-down rather than upstream to avoid “micro-drag”. Another option would be to reposition yourself and try to lay your line over a conflicting current and eliminate drag by holding your rod tip high and extending it out in an effort to keep your fly line off the water. Only time on the water will help you cope with the peculiarities of multiple stream currents. And remember, don’t get discouraged, even experts get refusals more often than they will admit.

NYMPH FISHING

For a beginner, nymph fishing means imitating the bottom-dwelling insect forms of caddis, mayflies and stoneflies. It usually entails fishing within 6 inches of the bottom! The exception is pre-hatch (or even during the hatch) when nymphs or pupae are rising to the surface. Google the “Leisenring Lift” for an easy answer to this window of opportunity.

Much like dry-fly fishing, you should approach spots where the fish are holding from downstream. Make quartering upstream casts to these suspected holding spots; undercut banks, deeper riffles, bends, heads (and tails) of pools, etc. Be sure to cast far enough upstream to these targets so that your nymph has time to reach the level at which the fish are feeding. If you are not occasionally hooking or feeling bottom every seventh or eighth drift, you probably are not deep enough. Try getting deeper by casting further upstream or change to a heavier fly (weighted with a brass or tungsten bead, for example). You can also add weight (split shot) or position your strike indicator higher up on your leader. And remember the current at the stream bottom is usually slower than the surface current, so don’t let your indicator get downstream of where your nymph is. If you decide to add a split shot, consider placing it at least 6” to 8” above your fly. When adding more than one, space the shots slightly apart from each other. This will reduce the chance of hang-ups and allow the nymph to tick along the bottom more naturally. The key is to get your fly down!



So, how do you know when your nymph imitation has been picked up by a trout? Some anglers look for the “white wink” of a trout’s mouth opening, or a slight movement of the leader where it enters the water. For a beginner using an “indicator”, which may or may not look like a small bobber, provides an easy way to detect a strike. As a simple rule, indicators should usually be attached to the leader at 1 ½ to 2 times the water’s depth above the nymph. Indicators come in many varieties. You can choose yarn, self-adhesive Palsa tabs, those made of cork or styrofoam, the infamous Thingamabobber, or a simple Lindy Rig type float with a piece of toothpick. No indicator is perfect, try to use the smallest indicator you can.

The key to nymphing success is watching the indicator as it drifts back to you and setting the hook anytime the indicator moves, should it be upstream, downstream, or sideways, or even if it just pauses. The indicator won’t necessarily go under the surface like a bait bobber does, but a hook set should be made every time the indicator misbehaves. Yes, you will hook your share of rocks,

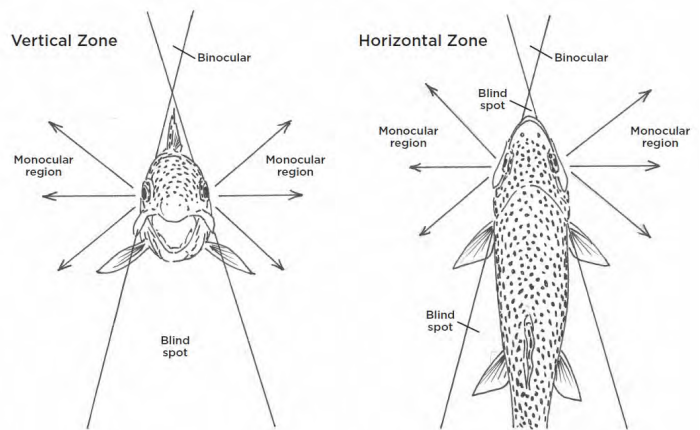
twigs, and bottom debris, but you will also hook some nice trout before they can eject your nymph as something bogus.

Some popular searching nymphs that often elicit takes include the Pheasant Tail Nymph, a bead-headed Gold Ribbed Hare’s Ear Nymph, a Prince Nymph, Gary LaFontaine’s Deep Sparkle Pupa, and others that are the same size and color as the insects you see crawling on the bottoms of rocks you overturned on the stream bottom. There is no sense fishing a size 12 when all the nymphs and larva are sizes 16 and 18.

At the same time, attractor nymphs can draw a strike. I have one friend who swears by the Gussied-Up Lightning Bug in Red. Others like the Perdignon series, or Frenchies can be effective. Check at your local fly shop for attractor patterns that are working.

FINAL THOUGHTS

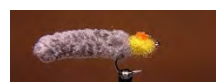
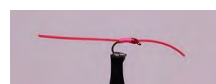
There will be days when nothing you do seems to buy a hit. Increasing your chances for a take may mean approaching a stream with stealth, even casting from behind rocks or vegetation; sometimes even from your knees. And remember, trout can “hear” you through their lateral line, so tromping heavily on the



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Devin Olsen, www.Tacticalflyfisher.com

bank may send them fleeing for cover. If you are wading, wade carefully. Make like a blue heron – slow and easy with no “wake” ahead of you. Careless wading, and knocking rocks against each other, will send pressure waves ahead warning the trout of your presence. Also, be aware of the trout’s “cone of vision.” Try to stay as low as possible when approaching the stream.

If frustrated with your day or your casting, take a break. Find a place to sit streamside – or on a log – for just a bit. Put your fly-rod down and look around, appreciate your surroundings. We are fortunate to live in the beautiful Driftless Area, and our trout streams, at the very least, can help clear our minds and temporarily take us away from our jobs, politics, and the other cares of the world.



AUTHOR’S TIP: One non-nymph that can work, especially after a rain storm, is an earth-colored San Juan Nymph. Tie it 12” to 18” behind a heavy fly. It may seem like heresy, but some anglers like Squirmy Wormies or Mop Flies. As you cast-and-replace nymphs, you will develop your own stable of old-reliables.

photos: www.tightlinevideo.com

Casting a flyrod: Tips to help make you a better caster

LINDA RADIMECKY

This seemingly simple forward and backward motion has brought many to the point of frustration—some even walk away from the sport of fly fishing. So why is something that seems so simple so hard to get just right? Let's look.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING.

We say this about many things in life, a promotion, a new job, or a great deal — but it can also be said about a great cast. I have many great mentors that have taught and are still teaching me to cast. One suggested that I try closing my eyes and cast. Despite what I was thinking I trusted him and closed my eyes, the result, a perfect cast. Now, this technique is certainly not going to get me a fish but it did allow me to feel the action of the rod on my backcast, sense exactly when to start my forward cast, and when to stop my forward cast. The forward cast begins when you don't feel the pull of the line on the rod. If you watch the line unfurl behind you it will be straight out and not in an overhead loop when it is time to initiate the forward cast.

STRENGTH/POWER/FINESSE

I lied. Timing isn't everything, but it is very important. When casting we also need to apply enough muscle to move the long rod (which is really just an extension of our arm). How much is enough? Depends. (I hated hearing this when I started casting) The least amount of effort applied through your arm muscles to make the rod bend. It is easy to overpower a rod and you can tell if you have if your rod tip bounces after the end of a cast. Guess what your line will look like if it bounces and why work harder than you have to? A heavier rod or heavier line will require more strength or power applied to moving the rod. Whatever the amount of power is on the backcast should be the same applying the forward cast. Don't tire yourself out, this is supposed to be fun! Too much power applied makes one tired. Apply just enough power to the rod to move it and let the long rod do the rest of the work.

STOP IT! (CONSERVATION OF ENERGY)

Now that we have just enough force applied to moving the rod, we have to stop that motion at just the right time (timing is everything). I think of it like throwing something at the television when the Packers lose to the Vikings. If you stop your throwing motion too

early the object will fly right over the TV, if you stop your throwing motion too late you will hit the floor instead of the TV. Somewhere between straight above your head and straight out in front of you should work — some call this 10 o'clock on the front cast and 2 o'clock on the back cast. Is this important? Critical. If you stop your back cast too late and your rod tip falls down to nearly horizontal (or parallel with the ground) all of the energy you put into moving the rod with your arm has just flown off the end of your fly rod at whatever is behind you and now you have to use more energy to get the rod and line forward again. If you don't stop your forward motion soon enough your fly and line will slam the water and startle all of the fish for a while.

GRIP: DON'T SQUEEZE TOO TIGHT

As golfer Sam Snead once said, you don't want to choke the club to death. You should be holding the golf club with the same pressure you would hold a small bird: tight enough so it doesn't fly away, but soft enough so you don't crush it. While you don't want your hands to shift, you still want a little 'give' when it comes to your grip. The same holds true when casting, Too tight a grip is tiring, too loose a grip and you might not see your fly rod again. Hold the rod firmly yet relaxed. Thumb forward, thumb around — I say whatever is comfortable but some have their reasons for a preference. However you hold your rod, it is important that you keep your casting wrist rigid. Bending your wrist makes your arm work harder since the fly rod will not flex and rebound (this is what throws the fly, not our arm motion) We could talk about physics here, but most people would find it boring and their eyes would gloss over. Instead let's review.

INSTEAD LET'S REVIEW

- "Let the rod do the work." The rod makes your arm three times as long and that is a great lever.
- Apply just enough power to move the rod.
- Stop your back cast motion and wait for the rod to flex and the line to straighten before starting your forward cast. "Feel the rod". The rod follows the line down to the water.
- Relax your grip and keep your wrist semi-rigid.
- Cast to a target — even if it is as small as a four leafed clover.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Linda is a Kiap-TU-Wish board member and has served Fly Fishing Women of Minnesota teaching women to fly fish. She has worked for the MNDNR since 1991 as a state park naturalist where she introduces people to fly fishing and other outdoor experiences. Linda's pursuit to become a certified casting instructor has been temporarily halted by the Covid 19 Pandemic, but she hopes to achieve certification as soon as classes are re-started.

All the Life We Cannot See (Apologies to Anthony Doerr)

MIKE ALWIN

The word “midge” connotes something small. The order, Diptera, is made up of six families all of which are distinguished by having only two wings (di=two, ptera=wing). This order includes mosquitoes, black flies, crane flies, true flies, plus others which you either won’t believe or never heard of. Most midges are indeed small, as the name implies and what Dry Fly Dick Frantes referred to as dandruff. However, some are quite large, including deer flies and horse flies, and some crane flies are as large as 60mm.

All Diptera are complete metamorphisers, meaning they pupate. Most go from egg to adult in under a year but a few are able to emerge in only a few weeks. This is an astonishingly diverse order with over 3,500 species in North America and possibly 20,000 or more world-wide. They inhabit all water forms: ponds, lakes, streams, rivers, whether polluted or clean. In some habitats they make up 50% of all macroinvertebrates. While the larval stage of many species cling to the substrate, many more are good enough swimmers to be found in the water column in significant numbers. For the angler, the two most important families are Chironomidae (midges) and Tipulidae (crane flies).

Most dipteran larva resemble maggots (a thoroughly charming vision I’m sure you’ll agree) and measure anywhere from 1-100mm. Legs are either absent or appear as prolegs, basically non-functional lumps. Pupation can take a couple of hours or many more depending on the species. Some pupae are enclosed in a semi-hard shell called a puparium, others form a cocoon and several are free-ranging. During pupation certain terrestrial accoutrements develop (legs, wings, antennae, respiratory apparatus) and during the pharate stage the insect can be found in the drift, rising and falling as it slides downstream prior to emergence. Depending on the species the adult can live a few hours or several weeks, and mating can occur on the water, in the air or while rolling around on the ground. Egg laying is equally variable, with some females ovipositing on the substrate, some on the water’s surface and still others in the vegetation above the water.

Kelly Galloup once wrote that in all the years he spent as a guide and taxidermist he never found a single leech in a trout he autopsied. And while there are dozens of leech patterns available to the angler, how can we be certain that the trout took it for a leech? It might be the same for midges. There are dozens of midge larva imitations, dozens of pupal imitations and even a few dozen imitations of the adult. I’ve examined the stomach contents of dozens of trout and found them to frequently have a preponderance of midge larva. Yet, in well over 40 years of trout fishing, I’ve caught exactly one trout on a midge. Admittedly, that might say something obvious about my lack of skill as an angler, but it might also say something about a fish with an IQ in single digits and what it thinks it’s eating when it grabs your fly.



Midge Larva
www.troutnut.com



Midge Adult
www.troutnut.com

Midge Emerger Special

Hook: Dry fly hook size 20-22

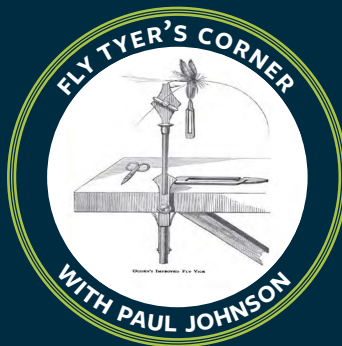
Thread: 14/0 Black

Shuck: Mayfly brown Zelon

Abdomen: Tying thread

Wing: CDC feathers (Dun)

Collar: Dun or grizzly rooster hackle



- Insert the hook in the vise. Start your tying thread at the 3/4 point and wrap a thread base down the bend of the hook. Here I have used a Dai-Riki #125 size 20.
- Tie in a small clump of brown zelon at the bend of the hook. Take care to keep the zelon on top of the hook shank.
- Clip the zelon to about a hook shank in length.
- Form a smooth body with your tying thread to the 3/4 point.
- Take 2 CDC feathers, match the tips together. Make one thread wrap around both feathers at the 3/4 point.
- Carefully pull the butt ends of the feather towards the back of the hook until the feathers are about 1 to 1 1/2 times the hook shank in length. Clip the butt ends leaving a small clump.
- Advance your tying thread to the front of the wing and make several thread wraps to form a dam in front of the wing to get the wing to stand upright. Return your thread to where you tied in the CDC wing.
- Prepare a rooster hackle feather by clipping some of the barbs off the base of the stem. Tie in the feather behind the CDC wing. Advance your tying thread to in front of the wing.
- Palmer the rooster hackle with one full turn behind and in front of the CDC wing. Secure with your tying thread and clip the excess. Whip finish and go fish!

I will always have a box with various midge patterns stowed away in my sling pack. The Midge Emerger Special is my favorite fly when I happen upon some rising fish during the winter months. There is nothing more fun than tying a size 20 dry fly onto a 6x tippet and catching fish in cold weather. You should have midges with you all the time. Trout eat midges year-round.

KIAP-TU-WISH

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Paul Johnson



Habitat work crew
Upper Kinnickinnic River



Upper Kinnickinnic River
Photo by Mark Ritzinger