

President's Lines

January and February are typically busy TU months for me and for our chapter. The winter brushing project is underway and the winter meetings at the state and local level are popping up. These events and meetings usually rejuvenate my cold water spirits as we all look forward to the upcoming fishing season when we enjoy and reap the benefits of our area's cold water systems.

Whether we have had anything to do with it or not, cold water resources in our area have taken off for the good over the last decade. Anglers participating on the sporting end of things are also increasing. However, volunteerism within our chapter seems to be waning as all of this is happening around us. And I'm not sure why. Perhaps it is the sign of the times as we race around from work to soccer and hockey practice and dance lessons, and try to keep our families in order. Perhaps folks new to the sport and resource just don't know how they can be useful. As we near our business meeting in March, I'd like to try to assess our functions as a chapter, and solicit some opinions on how we can foster more participation. To my mind it's critically important to build and rebuild a stronger network of volunteers so that we can build on the successes and good fortune that we've had out on the landscape in recent years.

*Tight lines,
Brent Sittlow, President*

Jeff Carlson

Jeff Carlson of rural Ashland, WI died early this year at age 39. Jeff worked hard on Wisconsin State Council Trout Unlimited issues and was particularly passionate about the protection and restoration of the remaining stocks of Lake Superior coaster brook trout.

Carlson was a carpenter by trade. In the Friday, January 12, 2001 edition of the Eau Claire Leader Telegram, columnist Joe Knight wrote that he decided to write a column about Jeff Carlson "not because he was well known, but because he was a regular guy who knew how to pound nails and cast a fly. He had no training in public speaking or letter writing, and he didn't like to draw attention to himself, but he became a leader on conservation issues."

I didn't know Jeff Carlson, but I saw him at several state council meetings. He was, in fact, an intensely shy man who had to work hard to overcome that shyness to speak publicly. Nonetheless, he cared enough about coldwater conservation issues to speak about them and to work tirelessly for the resource. He is gone too soon, but his efforts serve as a fine example to all of us.

Jon Jacobs

Hear Ye, Hear Ye!

In accordance with chapter by-laws, the Kiap-TU-Wish chapter announces that its annual business meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 7, 2001 at 8PM at the JR Ranch, Hwys. 12 and I-94, Hudson, WI. Two members will be elected to the chapter's Board of Directors, the treasurer will present a financial report and the president will offer a report on the chapter's activities over the past year. Old business and additional new business will be conducted in accordance with the by-laws. If you are interested in a candidacy for a board position, or have other issues to present, contact a current officer or board member. A slate of candidates and a more specific agenda will be published in the March issue of RipRap.

Eau Galle River Is Topic of February Meeting

Heath Benike of the Wisconsin DNR will speak to the chapter on issues involving the Eau Galle dam and a water temperature and water flow study conducted on that

river. Mr. Benike has been assigned to large river issues in western Wisconsin and is the focal point for the River Protection Grant program for this area. Mr. Benike and Marty Engel have been instrumental in working with the Army Corps of Engineers on the Eau Galle reservoir and river. Mr. Benike will provide our chapter with data from last summer's project involving flow adjustments from the impoundment above Spring Valley. Early indications are that some drastic changes for the better can be obtained from flow modifications. The Eau Galle is an intriguing river with many of the same attributes as other better known fisheries in the area. However, it doesn't seem to have reached its full potential as a trout stream. Mr. Benike will discuss a study now underway that may point the way to a healthier stream. It's not often that we have the opportunity see a river improve, or to have input into the processes involved in accomplishing that, so please come hear what our speaker has to say. The meeting is February 7 on, as always, the first Wednesday of the month. The place is the JR Ranch, I-94 and U.S. 12, Exit 4 east of Hudson. Join us for dinner at 6:30PM, please, and for the meeting at 8PM.

Trout Habitat Meeting

By Brent Sittlow and John Koch

On January 16th, the Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter, represented by Brent Sittlow, Ted Mackmiller, and John Koch, met with the Wisconsin DNR, the Ojibseau Chapter of TU, the Rush River Rod and Gun Club, the Trimbelle Rod and Gun Club and other sports groups in Eau Claire. The group discussed past and future trout project activities. The state trout stamp fund has spent down its surplus, so the upcoming biennium will have a drastically reduced budget from which to work. This will make it all the more critical for our Chapter and local clubs to help with cash and labor this season and next. Budget estimates say that only \$70,000 will be available for this area's projects. Since everybody is in this together, we must foster better communication and support for trout habitat work in the area. Quarterly meetings are proposed, and chapter member John Koch designed and set up a web site so that we can better communicate our ideas and projects among the cold water activists in Western Wisconsin. It is extremely important that we tackle everything on a cooperative basis so that our local projects are competitive with others around the state. There will be further discussion of this topic at our March business meeting. We hope to see you at that meeting with ideas on projects, raising money, habitat improvement and bettering morale and participation within our chapter.

Winter Project Continues

Brent Sittlow and John Koch

As advertised, Kiap-TU-Wish has started another winter season of brushing on the upper Kinnickinnic. We've enjoyed two great days of work and have made a lot of progress. We can make more progress this winter with your help on the last three scheduled days: Feb 10th, 24th, and March 10th. Join us at the County JJ river crossing on these Saturdays for more cutting and burning. For most of us, 2-4 hours of habitat work pales in comparison to the many local and out of state fishing pleasure trips we make each year. And the smell of fresh cut box elder and wood smoke beats the mind-numbing trance a computer or TV can induce on a Saturday morning. New faces are always welcome, so please consider participating in trout habitat work this season. Remember to dress warmly and to bring a lunch. As always, the Kiap-TU-Wish "Rule of Minus Twenty" applies, that is, we don't work, if according to the WCCO-AM meteorologists, the actual air temperature or the windchill is -20 degrees Fahrenheit or colder at that station's 8AM weather report. You may contact John Koch or Brent Sittlow for further information, or better yet, come to the February meeting and get details there.

We extend our thanks to these Jan. 13 "Brushers":

Brent Sittlow
John Koch
Jon Olson
Pat Cashman
Mike Sittlow
Marty Dahlke
John Sours

Joshua Dranke
Chuck Goossen
Mary Cashman
Allan Hopeman
Mark Waschek
Marty Engel

And to these Jan. 27 "Brushers":

Brent Sittlow
Chuck Goossen
Mike Sittlow
Mike Hero

John Koch
Mark Waschek
Bob Bradham
John Sours

Thank you, donors!

The chapter and the Holiday Banquet Committee thanks the following donors for their generous contributions to the silent auction. Please remember to thank the individual contributors personally when you see them and to remember the business contributors with your patronage. The support of both helped produce another rewarding and enjoyable event.

Silent Auction Business Contributors:

Just For Me
Grooming Avenue
The Trading Post

Kelly Frame and Fine Art
Bob Mitchell's Fly Shop
McCormack's Furniture

Bentley's Outfitters
Maple Island Hunt Club
Traditions Therapeutic Massage Center
Bio-Dynamics Personal Fitness Training
Lutheran Brotherhood, Lake Elmo

Wal-Mart
The Golf Shoppe

Silent Auction Individual Contributors:

Jon Jacobs
Gene O'Keefe
Clarke Garry
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John Hunt
Hudson Nichols
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Craig Mason
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Gary Horvath
Mary Kroll
Bill Lovegren
Brett Edstrom
Steve Parry
Chuck Goossen
Tom Helgeson
Perry Palin
Kent Johnson
Ted Mackmiller
Chris Eastman
Don Ausemus
Brent Sittlow

The Early Season

Editorial by Jon Jacobs

We're almost there. In another month we'll have the opportunity to find out just how rusty our angling skills have become after a winter's hibernation. In this issue regular contributor **Mike Edgerly**, first time author **Mark Waschek** and biologist **Clarke Garry** offer their insights on what March and April rivers mean to them. I admit to a fondness for the opportunity to stretch my angling season and to get in touch with rivers early in the year. Perhaps you share that enthusiasm, but please remember that the establishment of the early season was not universally welcomed by the outdoor community. Go fishing as soon and as often as you can. But, as always, be a good guest on private property and try to understand that you're privileged indeed to be out there. By way of a hint, I'd like to tell you that this is an excellent time of the year to explore the upper Kinnickinnic River. Much of the riparian land has guaranteed public access, the alders and nettles that discourage summer exploration are yet dormant and the fishing can be surprisingly good in that sweet springwater.

Postcard from the Edgerly

Changes

By Mike Edgerly

When it comes to fly fishing for trout in Wisconsin and Minnesota in March and April, a logical question is "Why"? A journal entry from March a couple years ago sums up

atypical early season day on the Kinnickinnic River: "cold hands, cold feet, cold butt." Often the thick snow on the banks is hard like Kevlar® and the walking is treacherous and ice builds up in the rod guides and the fish are sluggish in deep water and the insect hatches, which will usher in dry fly fishing, are weeks away.

I like to walk along the streams and see the occasional rise. I like to see the snow recede and to watch for the first blooms on the earliest spring flowers.

The fishing will be slow to start; it always is for me. But one day, the conditions will be just right and my casting and drifting of the fly will be adequate and I will hook and land a trout.

Hunters know the value of searching the edges of fields for game. Successful anglers also work the edges: the edges of currents and of structure and water temperature. But I prefer the edges of seasons. There was a weekend in early March last year, when it was as if a switch were thrown. On several previous outings, I had caught fish on weighted nymphs. But on this Sunday, I found trout in shallow water, holding beneath a riffle on the Kinnickinnic a couple hundred yards downstream from the Powell Dam. These trout were gorging on midges. A small soft hackle wet fly mimicked the emerging midges and I hooked and landed a dozen ten to twelve inch trout in about a half-hour. The day was gray and overcast and winter felt present. But in the stream, the trout had moved the clock ahead and were in the same spot in which I had found them the previous August.

Observe wild trout as they emerge from their late winter haunts and move into spring and summer lies and you see the rotation of seasons in miniature.

I fish for trout in the early season because I truly love to fish the other five months of the season. The way I see it, if I only know trout when the air temperature is 70 and the fish are rising freely, then ultimately I don't learn much about them or their habitat. The more I learn the better angler I become.

Mike Edgerly, of St. Paul, MN is the managing editor of Minnesota Public Radio news.

An "Early" Beginning

By Mark Waschek

It's difficult for a relatively inexperienced fisherman like me to come up with something that qualifies as an "Early

Season Tale." However, the early season did yield an interesting result that has provided me with several exciting opportunities, but has plagued me ever since as well.

It was the spring of 1998, in my first few months as a fly tier and TU member. And, on this particular day, I was determined to become a fly fisherman. It was a typical March day in River Falls with overcast skies, a slight drizzle, a balmy forty five degree air temperature and the occasional tree-bending twenty to thirty miles per hour gusts of wind. Although conditions were slightly less than optimum, this was the day I had been waiting for since Christmas (That's when I got my gear).

As you can guess, a lack of experience combined with a 4 weight rod and gale force winds made for a frustrating experience. I remember thinking how every posting to the "Stream Reports" section of the chapter web site mentioned twenty trout outings. Surely I could catch just one! But the wind wasn't going to let that happen. The odds of the fly actually making contact with the water (as opposed to my hat, my vest, or a tree) were pretty slim.

But then something happened. Trout started rising in front of me. It was nothing short of a miracle - at least to someone who had never seen this before. At this point I was just downstream from the overpass bridge. All I had to do was sneak under the bridge and get to the fish. Unfortunately, not only was this my first flyfishing excursion, it was also my first time in hip boots. Stealth was not possible.

So there I was. My first prospective trout was less than thirty feet from me and I was stuck under a bridge. I tried several times to cast, but the snap of my line on cement stopped the cast short. But I didn't give up. The fish kept rising, and I kept adjusting my cast to the point that a side arm toss finally reached the risers and I hooked the most beautiful (and only) nine inch brown trout I had ever seen.

That under-bridge training has left me with a permanent side arm cast. This is a style that will perhaps hurt me if I need to cast any distance, but sure comes in handy on those June evenings when the sulphur spinners are falling under those arches of overhanging trees. While others may comment negatively on my cast, I don't think I'll ever complain about it. Many say that fly-casting is an art form. Given that, I guess everyone should have his or her own style, just as a painter or a sculptor does.

Mark Waschek lives in River Falls, WI. He is the Secretary of the Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter. This is his first contribution to RipRap.

The Winter Stonefly

by Clarke Garry

I found myself standing in the lower Kinnickinnic River on 1 January 2001 as a partially ceremonial kickoff to another year of macroinvertebrate sampling. After a few kick net samples, I was reminded of a familiar mid-winter benthic collection, a winter stonefly, and the rather remarkable story of its emergence.

For entomologists and flyfishers alike the term "winter stonefly" implies any of a number of plecopterans of the four families Capniidae (slender winter stoneflies), Leuctridae (rolledwinged stoneflies), Nemouridae (nemourid broadbacks), and Taeniopterygidae (taeniopterygid broadbacks). So far, macroinvertebrate and biotic indexing collections have revealed small numbers of two species of nemourids in the Kinnickinnic system, and all of these in expected spring-proximal habitats (mainstem upstream from 140th Street and Kelly Creek). Far more common are members of the family Taeniopterygidae, particularly *Taeniopteryx nivalis*, the early brown or early black stonefly. To date no other winter stoneflies, notably capniids or leuctrids, have been found in the Kinnickinnic watershed.

These stoneflies are univoltine, i.e., having a single generation per year. Adults emerge in late winter and early spring; they mate and the females deposit their eggs in the water. Hilsenhoff (1995) fills in the details of the life cycle: "Larvae hatch from eggs almost immediately, feed briefly, and then burrow into the substrate where they spend the late spring and summer in diapause [a state of suspended growth and development typical of many insects, CG]. Mummy-like diapausing larvae resume a normal appearance in September and commence feeding..." Ongoing inventory work suggests that the earliest the larvae appear in the Kinnickinnic is late November, and regular collecting from that point on indicates growth toward maturity through the winter months. (The latest I have collected the larvae from the Kinni is the 20th of March.) Then a real treat is in store on just the right days [those with a combined optimal temperature and day length (Hynes 1976)] in February and March, when the small, dark adults emerge onto the surface of the snow! I know of no observer, including most aquatic entomologists, whose excitement is hidden when talking about these little winter emergers.

Taeniopteryx sp. larvae can be confirmed by locating a single finger-like gill at the base of each leg. *T. nivalis* is distinguished from other taeniopterygid species in its

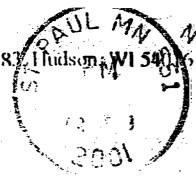
larval form (Fullington and Stewart 1980) by the presence of prominent light yellow margins on the sides of the pronotum and light rings around the eyes. Both of these color features show up well against the dark brown to black body coloration. The antennae, which are as long as the body, are dark brown at the base and transition to a tan-yellow; the two cerci ("tails") show a similar color pattern. The species is described in the literature as both possessing and lacking a light colored, mid-dorsal longitudinal stripe; those of the Kinni mostly lack this stripe. The larvae feed on detritus and diatoms. They are most commonly found in debris and submerged vegetation outside of the strongest current of the river. Stoneflies in general have low tolerance for organic pollution; *Taeniopteryx* species have a tolerance value of 2 (0=excellent, 10=very poor) (Hilsenhoff 1987) and therefore indicate high quality water. I've found *T. nivalis* in almost all of my standard collection locations; they occur from near the delta to north of I-94.

In years with an early spring, emergences of the early brown/black stonefly often end prior to the opening of trout season. In cooler years the hatches are delayed and can occur in-season (Borger 1980). We occasionally wonder on what trout prey in late winter and early spring. This winter stonefly is available in significant numbers during hatches of this period.

References:

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- Hilsenhoff, W. L. 1987. An improved biotic index of organic stream pollution. *Great Lakes Entomologist* 20:31-39.
- Hilsenhoff, W. L. 1995. *Aquatic insects of Wisconsin, keys to Wisconsin genera and notes on biology, habitat, distribution and species*. University of Wisconsin-Madison Natural History Museums Council Publication No. 3, G3648, 79 pp.

Dr. Clarke Garry is a professor of biology at UW-River Falls.



**KIAP-TU-WISH
TROUT UNLIMITED
P.O. BOX 483
HUDSON, WI 54016**

RipRap To Examine Fly Tying

We'll be taking a look at the ancient and honorable art of fly tying in our March issue. If you would like to crank out some prose on your favorite pattern, technique, equipment, materials or whatnot, we'd welcome it here. This will be a warmup for our April meeting's Annual Dick Frantes Memorial Flytyer Extravaganza, which has through the years featured some of the area's finest tyers. There are plenty of members whose fly boxes look like the editor's, and those people and the editor would love to benefit from you advice.

KIAP-TU-WISH OFFICERS:

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Jon Jacobs	715-386-7822
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MEETING AND PROGRAM SCHEDULE:

FEBRUARY 7: Heath Benike, DNR, on Eau Galle Dam flow and temperature data.

MARCH 7: Business Meeting

APRIL 4: Fly Tiers

MAY 2: Rush River Survey Results

DEADLINE FOR FEBRUARY RIPRAP: FEBRUARY 23

THEME: FLY TYING (SUBMIT YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE E-MAIL ADDRESS AT TOP OF THE PAGE OR CONTACT THE EDITOR)