

RIPRAP

Klap-TU-Wish Trout Unlimited February 2002

Normally in this space your President pontificates on some environmental matter or concern of the chapter, trying to get members to show up for stream improvement projects, or to show up for meetings regarding development or waste water on the Kinni. It seems that the same folks show up ... and everyone else is just too busy.

But I'm going to depart from that long honored tradition and instead update you on a great new computer program I found. It's called tvCD and can be found on the web at <http://www.eciusa.com/> This spiffy program allows you to save your digital pictures (pics that you've either taken on your digital camera or scanned into your computer) and creates a slide show that can be shown on either your computer or on a DVD player on your TV. It's reasonably priced at \$24.95 and the company will even allow you to download it and try it before you buy.

I have been busy all winter scanning old pictures and putting together slide shows of vacations, fishing trips and my early days on the Kinni. It's great to look back on the old pics and remember how it was. This may be especially important for my pics of the lower Kinni with Craig, Tom, Steve, Jon, Ken and Kent. It seems that the lower river - if not the entire river - may be doomed. You see, plans for massive development along the upper Kinni combined with a new proposal to dump thousands of gallons of phosphorus laden waste water from the Baldwin/Roberts area into the watershed make the Kinni look like a prime candidate to become a ditch to the St. Croix.

I suppose "someone" should do something about it... but with work, kids, church, fishing and all I'm not sure who is going to have the time.

Sure glad I got those old pictures!

Andy

Chapter Adds Summer Meeting

By Jon Jacobs

At its last board meeting, in response to membership request, the chapter established a summer meeting. The theory is that summer is when our members are out observing what's really happening on and to our favorite streams. This meeting will give members an opportunity to report in on possible environmental problems and to socialize a little, too. The meeting is tentatively scheduled for a Wednesday in July with River Falls Glen Park serving as the meeting place. Watch the pages of RipRap in coming issues for more specific information, or visit the chapter's web site, where the information will be posted as well.

Tropical Getaway!

By Jon Jacobs

Join us at Bob Smith's Sports Club in downtown Hudson on Wednesday, February 6 when chapter vice president Mark Waschek will regale us with tales of chasing bonefish in the deliciously warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Expect to see some slides that will ease the symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder, too, or perhaps have you dialing your travel agent. Bob Smith's is at 601 2nd Street. Dinner is available (and tasty and reasonably priced, by the way) at 6 PM and the meeting begins at 7 PM.

Chapter Brushing Project Continues

By Jon Jacobs with assistance from John Koch.

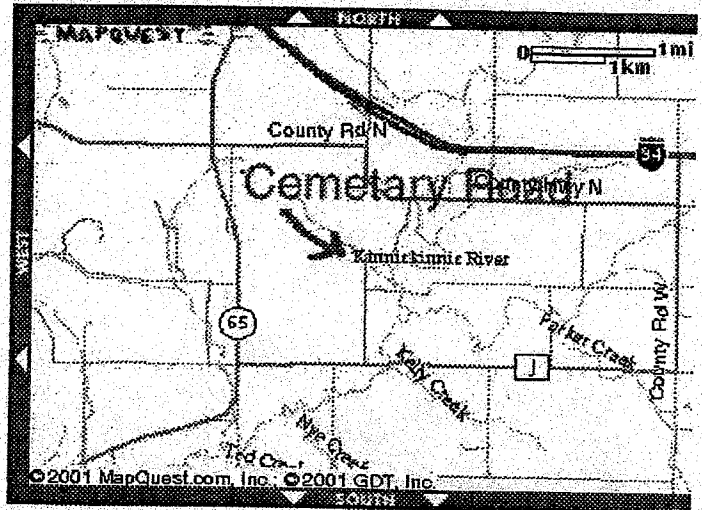
The chapter's tradition of winter brushing projects on the upper Kinnickinnic is back and rolling along. We are working under the direction of the WIDNR in the Cemetery Road stretch of river on the publicly owned property there. This is already a storied and classic reach of river that can be even better with some "meadow making." The river is icy cold here and can benefit from the addition of some sunlight on its surface to encourage photosynthesis in the water (Aquatic plants make terrific insect habitat). Additionally, meadow grasses, or "sturdy turf" in the parlance of fisheries workers, provide a far more stable bank than do alders and box elders. Holding the banks in place will eventually narrow and deepen the river and increase the overall current speed, which in turn helps flush out silt and expose gravel, which makes both spawning habitat for trout and a home for insects.

We will work on alternating weekends beginning Saturday, January 26, 2002. We'll alternate work days, too, so that the next work day following will be Sunday, February 10.

We'll be back at it on Saturday, February 23 and hope to finish up on Sunday, March 3.

We work from 9 AM until 3 PM if both the windchill and actual temperature are above -20° F. Dress suitably, bring a lunch and whatever hand or power equipment you have.

See the map for location.



The Writing - and Editing - Life

Editorial by Jon Jacobs

RipRap's production staff creates the newsletter on a home-based personal computer. The staff has come to think of itself as quite clever, resizing or placing an image in this corner, importing a file here, cutting and pasting a little text there and then saving the resultant product in a cutely named file called "Trout Stuff" on the desktop. You might assume from the foregoing that the staff actually understands computers at least a little bit. Ha! In truth, the staff is Luddite in outlook and has only recently been seduced by electronic sirens into thinking itself secure with a system that reduces everything to a series of zeroes and ones. The staff, in its state of reduced guardedness, managed the other night, with a couple of quick clicks of the mouse, to reduce the contents of the PC to so much digital rubble. The resultant pile of perfidious semiconductor coprolite is now in the hands of the local Nerd Shop, where, the staff imagines, acne-afflicted thirteen year old gnomes whose entire reality exists solely on a cathode ray tube and who actually understand this black magic are giggling at the staff's stupidity while the profit meter spins at a dizzying rate. Thus, your editor was one

frustrated puppy going in to the production cycle of this month's newsletter.

My frustration began to ease, however, when this month's contributors were kind enough to deliver their contributions to an alternate location in electronic format, or in the case of the ever-sensible **Jim Humphrey**, on good, old-fashioned typewritten paper. It's not simply the re-creation of the documents that has made my life better, however. It's the honor of getting the opportunity to work with **Andy Lamberson's** acerbic editorial, **John Koch's** artful prose, **Mike Edgerly's** worldly tale of conspicuous consumption and the precise and exacting professionalism of Mr. Humphrey's piece on fishing the early season that's lightening my load. My spirits are further buoyed by the fact that I can claim each of these men as my friend, all of whom are far more true and steadfast to me than that infernal computer.

On a practical note I feel compelled to add that, for the time being, if any of you would like to join RipRap's august cadre of contributors, and I ardently hope that you would, please send your electronic contributions to turiprap@hotmail.com and your conventional text contributions to the chapter's post office box. These actions will at least help minimize and spread the risk of further stupidity on the part of the staff around a little. Also, please forgive the staff if this issue looks a little choppy and disjointed.

Strong Medicine

By John Koch

The first fish of the season seemed to be what my father would describe as "a dandy". My fly rod bent almost double, the heavy fish hit the reel and started taking line. A flash of gold from the deepest portion of the deep green pool indicated that the fish must be a large brown trout. As I stood thigh deep in the cold March river, a flush feeling of excitement ran through me, spider fingers of adrenaline warming my numb lower half, which was only moments before close to freezing. My reel began to sing as the fly line began to play out...

It was a cold, nasty day in late November. It was the kind of day when it would be best to sit at home, scratch the dog behind the ears (they like that) and tie some flies. Or read a book. Or take a nap. It was one of those days that it would be better to be doing just about *anything* other than go outside. The season's snowfall had thawed and refrozen into a hard film, entombing the surrounding countryside in an impregnable white crust. A howling wind was blowing out of Wisconsin's north, picking up whatever

loose snow there was and drifting it in wild, graceful S's across the hard pan.

I was regretfully reminded of all this as I laboriously walked across the open field, my faithful hound at my side. In truth, "trudged" would better describe our progress: the hard scab of ice resisted each step until exactly half my weight was applied, then it would give way to the knee deep powder underneath. My faithful companion, a yellow Labrador who came to the name of Jack, followed, carefully staying on the leeward side of me, out of the wind.

Our destination was a small rise of set-aside land. Surrounded by cornfields, it was an acre-sized haven for several flocks of pheasants, and had produced several nice roosters earlier that year. Evidence of the birds was normally evident: tracks and droppings were usually scattered about in the surrounding corn stubble. But today the land was as lifeless and cold as the surface of the moon.

Jack and I finally made it to a point downwind of the grass-covered hill, and were relieved to be out of the wind. Almost immediately, a hen pheasant flushed, then two more. The dog, moments before a wretched study in canine misery, suddenly decided he should walk in front. Jack flushed two more hens, and was starting to wonder when I was going to shoot at something when a rooster finally flushed. An easy shot, I bagged the beautiful bird away in my vest after a few brief moments of admiration. The miserable walk home was only slightly enlightened by the thought of that night's menu: creamed breast of pheasant served over homemade spatzle. I like to think that the dog was thinking similar thoughts about leftovers, but one could never be sure.

Years later, on a snowy January's day, not unlike that one in November, I find myself winding feathers on a hook. Jack is gone, resting quietly now where all good hunting dogs go at the end of their wonderful lives. I'm tying a favorite pattern, the pheasant tail nymph. I like to tie this pattern for really no particular reason; I'm not good at fly tying, so it's good for my ego when I can tie a fly that actually catches fish. The pheasant tails that I use all come from the fields and swales surrounding my home - there is something good that I like about catching fish tied on flies that are tied with materials I've collected myself. I like to think that the spirit of the hunt is transferred into the flies tied with the materials: a circle of progression, so to speak. My friend the Screaming Chicken calls it "strong medicine"...

The fish continued to pull line off the reel, bulling its way downstream. Solidly hooked on a Bead Head Pheasant Tail nymph I had tied the winter before, the fish was

determined to stay at the bottom of the pool. I was past the initial adrenaline rush, and now carefully worked the fish back upstream. Its runs becoming shorter and shorter, I could feel the fish tiring, and I unclipped my landing net, ready for action. The fish finally rose to the surface, and I was mortified to see a large sucker in the place of the large brown I had caught. Worse, the sucker's tail was where the trout's mouth should have been. Breaking the surface, the fish slashed one final time, ripping my nymph out of it's tail, and disappeared into the depths.

Strong medicine, indeed.

John Koch of Spring Valley, WI is a Kiap-TU-Wish board member and a frequent contributor to RipRap.

Early Trout

By Jim Humphrey

It is that time of year when dedicated trout fishers, having become tired of their Christmas toys, ask themselves if they should brave the cold and ice shelves on the special regulations sections of Hay Creek, four sections of the Whitewater, East Beaver, and part of the South Branch of the Root River. These reaches opened January 1 to catch-and-release with barbless hooks.

The potential for a miserable experience gives one pause to think – but then, why not chance a day on the stream, even if the trout may be recalcitrant? Lest you have forgotten, your Minnesota license and trout stamp are valid through February 28, but the winter season runs from January 1 through March 31.

We have experienced respectable fishing for trout on Hay Creek as early as the second day of January. Hope for a bright day with air temperature in the high 20s. Go between 10 AM and 3 PM.

Winter fishers should leave their heavy tackle at home. Light lines and leaders and tiny flies are recommended. Leaders should taper to .005" (That's 6X to an ancient angler.) Begin with a #20 Griffith's Gnat; if that doesn't bring up a trout, experiment with a black ant. We know! – ants are sleeping, but an artificial ant may replicate the activities of early black stoneflies, or perhaps springtails (snowfleas). In March, perhaps even in February, Tiny Blue-winged Olives (one of the many species of *Baetis*) may bring a brown trout to hand. If the trout refuse surface food, go deep with a #20 Brassie or Gold-ribbed Hare's Ear. Our confidence lies with the small stuff, but we remember Jay Paulson doing well with a Bitch Creek Nymph and a Woolly Bugger. One March day I netted

backswimmers from a marginal pool on the Middle Branch of the Whitewater downstream of the Cliff Pool. They glittered like live Gold-ribbed Hare's Ears.

Wear insulated waders or boots with lug soles, not felts. Fingerless gloves are recommended. A neat trick is to cut the thumbs and forefingers from a pair of industrial rubber gloves, the kind you use when doing dishes.

If, or when, ice forms in the guides of the rod, swish it underwater to melt the ice.

Following much legal maneuvering and ad hoc skirmishing, Wisconsin has authorized an early season, almost state-wide, from the first Saturday in March and ending after April Sunday that precedes the regular opening on the first Saturday in May. (Read that sentence at least twice.) This early season raised the hackles of many concerned anglers or landowners. We have heard that "No Trespassing" signs are going up on the banks of several of our favorite streams, posted by landowners who resented the early season. Our advice is to tread carefully and ask for permission if confronted by a new sign on your favorite stretch.

We have had superb dry-fly fishing in southwestern Wisconsin during the early months in years past. Tiny Blue-winged Olives may be on the wing under bright March skies. Midges almost always take flight daily under these conditions.

Jim Humphrey, of Oak Park Heights, MN, is the co-author, with Bill Shogren, of Minnesota and Wisconsin Trout Streams.

Postcard from the Edge

Haute Cuisine

At this point in the 21st century, I am using these words as my personal guide: "The idea is to eat well and not die from it—for the simple reason that that would be the end of your eating." The words are Jim Harrison's, from his collection of food essays, **THE RAW AND THE COOKED, Adventures of a Roving Gourmand**.

Harrison, America's best one-eyed poet, divides his time between the Upper Peninsula and the Arizona mountains, and lives real well, the way I would live if I were a world-class novelist, poet, screenwriter, angler, hunter and gourmand.

"Smallish portions are for smallish and inactive people." That's from his essay Eat or Die.

THE RAW AND THE COOKED arrived courtesy of my wife on the occasion of my 48th birthday, just hours before a birthday meal of a dozen and a half raw oysters from the east and west coasts, a shrimp cocktail, an entire sea bass baked under a knoll of sea salt, scalloped potatoes, two bottles of cabernet, and for dessert a baked Alaska, a sweet flaming calorie tower.

If I hadn't started reading Harrison before we drove to the restaurant, I'm sure the meal would've been smaller. I would have left off the scalloped potatoes, for instance.

The birthday dinner aside, some of my all time favorite dinners have come outside, in the woods along a lake or stream. The featured guest: trout or char caught by me, or companions, and cleaned and cooked within an hour or two of coming to hand.

Way back in the last century, about 20 years ago, I caught my first brook trout and tucked into a couple of Top 10, all-time, world-class, can't happen in a restaurant meals.

Our group of six had hauled canoes and gear over a long portage from the Tim River to a small lake in Algonquin Provincial Park in Ontario. We were in the early part of a week-long canoe trip and the portage over three hills was hard work. But it put us into prime brook trout water.

Our camp was on a point of Precambrian rock among a mixed forest of pines and hardwoods and a view to the west of water and trees in varying shades of spring green. In the evening moose would come to the far shore and nibble on the green growth in the shallows. Loons were all around us, in the early stages of breeding, calling out to each other and bringing up fish with each long dive.

In some ways, not much as changed in twenty years. I still struggle to catch trout in lakes on a fly rod. We were in the park just weeks after ice-out. The brookies had absolutely no interest in McGinty bees or Adams or any of the other standard patterns recommended for these waters. These were big, hungry trout and they wanted real food. I abandoned the fly rod for spin gear and Mepps lures.

The camp afforded a broad shield of rock where several of us could cast without tangling lines. The trout were slow to take. But when they struck, they slammed the lure and bent the rods and pushed the four-pound mono and threatened our knots. We caught two and killed them. A third came clear from the lake as it chased a lure as it was lifted from the lake. The fish missed and slammed into the rock with a loud slap. Now that's hungry.

We who had killed removed the entrails and left them on the rock for the gulls and washed the cleaned trout in the

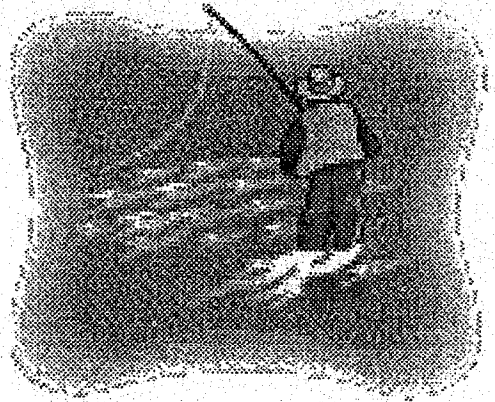
cool lake water from whence they'd come. The Food Chairman wrapped the two trout in foil, added a wee bit of oil and spices and placed the covered fish on a bed of hardwood coals. Minutes later, the pink flesh of the brook trout flaked off the bones and into our mouths with a side of freeze-dried veggies and red wine from a box. It was a Mountain Cabernet, whatever that is. The two ample fish fed the six of us on a clear night beneath the stars.

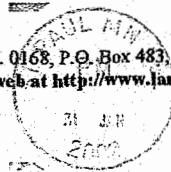
The fishing improved the next day in a steady rain. The angling rule that day was, the bigger the lure, the bigger the trout. We dined on three brook trout that night, again with freeze-dried veggies and box wine and huddled together near the cook fire in our rain gear.

The Food General (he was promoted after his Algonquin work) repeated his performance over the hot coals a few years ago during a 100 mile float down a salmon river in southwest Alaska. The main course prepared and served on a gravel bar in the almost dark of 11p.m. was fly rod caught arctic char stuffed with chopped veggies and almonds. The four of us dove in to eating as if one of the neighborhood grizzlies might try to elbow in to the table.

I think Jim Harrison would have approved.

Mike Egerly of St. Paul, MN is the News Director of Minnesota Public Radio. He has a formidable appetite.





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MEETING AND PROGRAM SCHEDULE:

FEBRUARY 6: Bonefishing in Cozumel
MARCH 6: Annual Business Meeting
APRIL 3: Dick Frantes Memorial Fly Tying Extravaganza
MAY 1: WIDNR on local conservation issues
JULY: DATE, PLACE AND TIME TBA

DEADLINE FOR MARCH RIPRAP: FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22.