

## President's Lines

*When Jon Jacobs stepped forward to take over the RipRap editorship, I was confident that the voice of our chapter would be in fine hands. Many of you who know and have fished with Jon would attest to the same. I'm looking forward to working with him and you should, too. To make his job easier, he needs good copy. Come on, there are a lot of folks out there who have a fishing story to tell, a fly recipe to share, an opinion to voice, photos, poems, or some coverage on a crucial issue. So let's get behind him and our chapter to keep the finest Wisconsin TU Newsletter going strong.*

*Issues that continue to dominate our local landscape is urban development and CAFO's. Look for some fresh news on our chapter's efforts at making a difference on rapid development in our watersheds this year. On the CAFO issue, and as reported in the April RipRap by Harold Fismo, dairy expansions in the Kinn and Rush watersheds has surfaced. Our chapter has taken positions on previous proposals in the past, and will surely study and analyze the latest expansion proposals in Pleasant Valley and Rush River Townships.*

*Lastly, it is election time. Although TU chapters cannot specifically endorse candidates, we can urge our membership to take a hard look at the candidates and their positions on the environment, DNR, Public Intervenor, and water resource issues as they effect our cold water systems. Please take the time to study the field and make a difference for cold water.*

*Tight lines,*

*Brent Sittlow*

## October Meeting Set

**T**im Pople of the Kinnickinnic River Priority Watershed Project and Rick McMonagle of the Kinnickinnic River Land Trust, who represent two organizations with goals and objectives tightly interwoven with TU's, will join us to update us on their efforts. Please join us for dinner at 6:30PM on Wednesday, October 4 at the JR Ranch, I-94 and U.S. 12, Hudson. The meeting follows at 8PM.

## Jacobs Takes Editorial Reins

First, allow me to apologize for that overwrought headline. Attribute it to a case of first-timer's panic. Second, I must acknowledge the great debt the chapter owes **Skip James** for the fine work he did as editor over the last several years. In one frustrating session I've come to understand how much effort Skip put into this newsletter. I have learned what a challenge it is to manipulate text, I've yet to take on the challenge of graphics and I already feel very much overwhelmed. Please bear with me while I try to find my way. I can't possibly match Skip's effort, so I'm determined to go my own shabby and confusing direction. Actually, I do have a vision for the newsletter and if my PC (which does not have the one program I need most desperately, a Cogent Thought Synthesizer) doesn't drive me around the bend before we get there, this could be fun.

My vision includes rounding up several regular columnists (fortunately, Skip has agreed to continue his "**Loose Threads**"), establishing a letters to the editor column and soliciting single contributions from all the talented writers who have thus far flown under RipRap's radar. Check **Jim Humphrey's**, **Mike Edgerly's** and **Sarah Sanford's** excellent articles this month to see how it's done. Not only are your contributions welcome here, I consider them mandatory!

If you don't feel an article is within your scope, but would like to express an opinion in these pages, write a letter to the editor. I will make every effort to publish anything that isn't libelous, defamatory, obscene or slanderous. I will edit for length, but you are on your own in generating clear, sensible prose. The thoughts expressed will be yours alone and may or may not reflect the editorial stance of RipRap, the Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter Board of Directors or its Officers. The chapter's mail and E-mail addresses appear at the top of this page.

Again, I ask for your patience and indulgence.

## Holiday Banquet:

It is not too soon to begin thinking about the Kiap-TU-Wish Holiday Banquet. More details will follow in November, but it would be nice to have some fresh people and ideas on board to make it an even more fun-filled

gala. Please call Brent Sittlow if you are interested in volunteering.

## Cady Creek Project Update

The Wisconsin DNR Trout Crew and Cady Creek landowner Steve Galoff invited our chapter down to the Cady Creek Project area again this summer to finish off the habitat improvement area on the lower end of that creek. Seeding, raking, and mulching were the goals of the workday. Thank you to Brent Sittlow, Chuck Goossen, and Ted Mackmiller for your time and efforts to help make the trout crew a more efficient and productive partner on our cold waters. Look for more workdays this winter as we kick our brushing brigade into full swing on the upper Kinni.

## Rush River Surveyed

Our chapter, along with many other area volunteers, assisted the DNR with Rush River Stream Survey and data collection this summer. As I'm sure the volunteers would attest, the work was far from easy, but worth every minute. Thank you to John Koch, for taking chapter leadership with organizing our willing volunteers. This very important data collection will guide our DNR and local anglers with regulation and management decisions over the next few years. Solid data is the most important tool for protection and enhancement of our cold water resources.

## Website and E-mail Library:

Thank you all contributors to the Kiap-TU-Wish website ([www.lambcom.net/kiaptuwish](http://www.lambcom.net/kiaptuwish)). Your reports and opinions make for interesting discussion within the local trout angling community. Thank you to Andy Lamberson for his monitoring, mending and leadership on this important chapter project. If you haven't already, please add your name to the Kiap-TU-Wish e-mail Library. Issues or workdays come up with greater frequency than our monthly newsletter publication, so it is important to have as many members "reachable" as possible to make our chapter stronger when crucial items pop up. Please email our chapter at [kiaptuwish@hotmail.com](mailto:kiaptuwish@hotmail.com) to add your name to our list.

## *Skip's Loose Threads:*

by Layton James

# A Short History of Hackle, Part One

Chickens will revile me for saying this, but there are even more uses for neck feathers than ever before in fly tying. But I would imagine that the number who give their lives for tiers like me are the merest speck of a percent of those who died so that KFC could prosper. Although there are some undocumented reports of Macedonians under Alexander the Great using bits of feather on bronze hooks to catch fish, the earliest English language reference is from Dame Juliana Berners, who, in the 16th century, published a pamphlet with instructions for tying flies with "the hackyll of a red cockerell."

The art of fly tying in England and the continent started with wet flies, and the equality of hackle was judged by its ability to move with the slightest currents, by the diversity of its colors (solid, colored hackle was considered inferior to game bird hackle, which was spotted, striped, shaded, speckled, etc.), and by the suppleness of the hackle stem, which contributed to ease of tying. Of course, these attributes are still important in construction of effective wet flies, but after examining the offerings at fly shops, it's pretty obvious that hardly anyone is tying or fishing wet flies these days except me. (Ed. Note: Not necessarily. See Mike Edgerly's article, e.g.)

The North Country tiers of the 17th and 18th centuries, the Scots, the Irish and the English from the Lake Counties quickly found an effective, simple wet fly pattern that not only dominated trout fly construction for two hundred years, but also led to the creation of the regal salmon fly. It amounted to a short-shank, heavy wire, snelled, eyeless hook, wound with silk floss, with a few turns of bird hackle at the head. In fishing, the fly was cast across and down, fished on a tight line as it pulsed in the current. The fly sank quickly because of its relatively thick wire and because the floss and hackle had little buoyancy. The direction of anglers moving along a bank was downstream. Famous patterns included the Partridge and Green and Snipe and Orange, both descriptive of their materials. I was surprised to see an article in the recent *Fly Rod & Reel* about tying wet flies in this way, but with reflective, synthetic substitutions for the original floss. Not surprisingly, the article was by a transplanted Englishman.

The 18th century references to East Coast fly fishing in America support the fact that the same style of fishing took place here.

Tackle used to fish wet flies was designed to compliment the method. Long limber rods allowed easy, lopping casts across the current, while providing a cushion against hard strikes on a tight line. Undressed silk lines helped the flies sink, and relatively heavy gut leaders held more than one fly. No one worried about drag, since the flies were supposed to be active in the current. American tiers of the 19th century soon began experimenting with gaudy patterns of wet flies, unlike the somber continental patterns, and discovered that the predominant brook trout loved the colors. This led to the use and unbridled exploitation of birds with exotic plumage, and in England, the beginnings of the Featherwing salmon Fly. Of course, ladies fashions also featured the feathers of toucan, Ibis, Ostrich and Swan. Perhaps this was an inevitable paralleled to the growth of world exploration and trade as both Britain and America became naval powers. Clipper ships delivered the exotic birds, and fancy feathers became the central feature of the salmon fly collections of the landed gentry. Most of the commoners still fished with dull patterns and caught trout aplenty. It is interesting that I can find no references to fancy feathers being used in English fly tying before they are mentioned in America. That craze was led by the Colonies.

Through at least three hundred years, however, hackle, whether domestic or exotic, was tied on the hook at the same place in the same way, and expected to be supple enough to bend easily under the pressure of water currents. Development of the dry fly in the middle 19th century led to new uses for hackle, and demands for different qualities. As we will see in next month's issue, these new concepts led to experiments in fly design which continue to this day, including among others: Skaters, Palmers and Bivisibles, Thorax ties, Hackle Wings, Clipped Hackle patterns, Parachutes, No-hackles and Hair Hackles. I think it's ironic that the greatest number of dry flies are still tied with a right-angle-wound hackle at the head of the fly, a carryover from the ancient wet fly, whose hackle had an almost opposite function than that in the modern standard dry fly.

*Layton James of St. Mary's Point, MN is the former editor of RipRap, an afficianado of fine tackle, an innovative fly tyer and a keyboardist with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra.*

## Postcard from the Edgerly

by Mike Edgerly

I'm on dangerous ground here. I am not an expert angler and regard most so-called angling authorities as dreary windbags. But I do like to cast for trout with a fly rod.

One of the most effective ways I've found to catch trout is a method long out of favor with modern anglers: casting a soft-hackle wet fly downstream.

Like a burglar ignoring an open window, the angler who only fishes upstream dry flies and nymphs misses an opportunity.

Early on an August morning in 1995 on the lower Kinnickinnic River, I watched a cloud of Trico mayflies swarm above a big riffle. Spinners drifted to the fast water and were carried downstream to prime lies that I knew held fish. No fish rose to the naturals, and none rose to the various trico patterns I cast.

Utterly frustrated, I stood at the top of the run near the riffle and tied on a soft hackle imitation of a Cahill in size 16. I cast the fly down and across stream. A trout struck hard and snapped the tippet. I installed heavier tippet and tied on a fresh fly and again cast downstream. From a small piece of water, I rose five fish, landing two of them. All were hooked on soft hackle flies which looked absolutely nothing like the natural mayflies floating downstream.

The following June during an intense mayfly emergence on the South Branch of the Root River, I fished a soft-hackle, wet-fly version of the venerable Adams to feeding fish which had ignored a variety of dry flies and nymphs. The soft hackle produced fish all day.

I was hooked on wet flies.

This past season, for the first time ever, I regularly caught trout feeding on midges. The productive fly was a size 20 Syl's Midge, which is nothing more than wrapped peacock herl with a turn or two of partridge behind the eye of a nymph hook. Syl's Midge, developed by angling author Sylvester Nemes, also successfully mimics a tiny Blue Winged Olive of the type we regularly see in the early season on the Kinni. In June, wet flies produced numerous fish during the sulfur emergence. This fall on the Rush River big, picky brown trout were feeding early

mornings on emerging Tricos. A size 20 dark soft hackle did the trick.

What's going on here? Simple. The wet fly perfectly duplicates an emerging mayfly or an adult caddis.

In his book TROUT published in 1938, Ray Bergman wrote that trout "take wet flies for nymphs, drowned surface flies, minnows or small crustaceans". In Bergman's day soft hackles were fundamental to fly fishing. Not so today. Few anglers noticed 57 years later when Dave Hughes published WET FLIES, an interesting and useful guide to tying and fishing the partridge and yellow, the soft hackle trico, the sulfur hen hackle wet and dozens of others.

These flies work when dry flies and nymphs fail.

Trust me on this. I'm not an expert.

*Mike Edgerly, of St. Paul, MN is an active proselytizer in the resurgent wet fly movement. He is the managing editor of Minnesota Public Radio news.*

### Ed. Note:

I've ignored soft hackle flies for far too long. This summer, about the time of some spectacular Sulfur hatches, I decided to give them a go. Typical of my obtuse and contrary ways, I discovered that I had my best luck fishing these flies upstream as floating emergers. Of course, it's possible to turn around and fish the fly on the swing, too, which doubles the utility of the fly. Here's a pattern recipe:

Hook: Standard or light wire dry fly, size 16.

Tail: Two or three pheasant tail fibers.

Abdomen: Pale olive rabbit nymph dubbing.

Rib: single strand of yellow Krystal Flash.

Wing: CDC puff, natural color.

Thorax: Haretron natural rabbit/antron blend.

Hackle: Two turns grouse, etc. sized approximately at 1 1/2 times hook gape.

Note that the wing is placed between thorax and abdomen and slants back. The abdomen serves to help stand the hackle at approximate right angles to the hook shank. This pattern can be shrunk to about a size 20 to imitate BWO emergers. It floats, but needs occasional drying. Don't use floatant, however; it ruins the CDC wing.

## The Streams and Lakes of Fall

by James Humphrey

At the end of the stream trout season, many fly-fishers break out their heavy rods and search the wider rivers for smallmouth bass or steelhead. Others sigh, stow their light tackle and dream of January 1 or March 1. Some of us will enjoy halcyon days on the Namekagon, the Wolf or the Peshtigo. The Wolf and the Peshtigo are open in defined segments through November 15. That remarkable wading river, the Namekagon, is open to fishing for trout below Lake Hayward from October 1 to May 6, 2001. Huge brown trout are taken downstream as part of a mixed bag; and I have caught and released rainbows down from the Hayward dam. And at night, I dine sumptuously at the Turk's Inn north of Hayward. Because the 'Nam down from Hayward is big water, you could hunt from a canoe.

The mighty Peshtigo River, which flows for 65 miles through Forest and Marinette counties in Wisconsin, is open downstream from U.S. 8 to County Road C at the head of Caldron Falls Flowage. That long section includes the spectacular scenery at Goodman Park and McClintock Falls Park. The Wolf River is open through Langlade County, including the 6 mile section downstream from Hollister, but we do not recommend fishing up from the junction with the Hunting River at Pearson. Catch and release with artificials is required on all three streams.

The lakes of Fall are another story. Minnesota boasts of Square Lake and a few others in the Metro area which traditionally have been open through October 30 for stocked rainbow trout, although some years our friends at the DNR have not stocked trout prior to November. Wisconsin has dozens of lakes open to fall fishing, including Perch Lake and Glen Lake in St. Croix County, Little Granite and Silver lakes in Barron County, and Tozer and Sawmill lakes in Washburn County. Sawmill is my favorite. In the fall, this small, deep pothole is ringed with color. Dick Frantes and I would assemble our tackle on the picnic tables of delightful county park and fish our theoretical limits from a tiny bay whose bottom was thick with leaf litter and dragon fly nymphs. An olive Woolly Bugger, or less often a Backswimmer, would bring the trout to hand. They averaged 14 inches, but Dick once caught a 24 1/2 inch trout that took him into his second

backing. On my last trip, I thought I had the west access all to myself; but Lo! who came out of the woods but Ted Mackmiller. Generously, I told Ted in detail about my little bay in the park; and Ted was respectfully non-committal. Later, Ted admitted to having released several trout, while I got ice. So much for voluntary advice. Good skill to you, as we prefer to say, on the rivers and lakes of Fall!

*James Humphrey, of Oak Park Heights, MN is the co-author with Bill Shogren of the widely acclaimed book Wisconsin & Minnesota Trout Streams.*

## An Explanation

by Sarah Sanford

"Isn't it - a jerk on one end of the line waiting for a jerk on the other?" Actually, I was at the head of the line, waiting to pay for gas and a Snickers. The mechanic ringing me up had noticed the TU sticker on the back of the wagon and asked about my fishing. And it was the lady next to me in line who supplied the old chestnut. I'd paused just a bit too long in explaining why I would bother with flies when canned corn was pullin' 'em just fine.

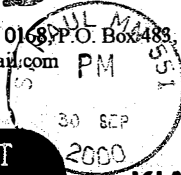
Catching 'em is a good thing. I like it. I smiled, thanked them both, finished the transaction and left. "Good luck!" trailed me out the door.

It may well be that one end of the line is connected to the blood supply on the other. My heart beats faster. My sanity supply is replenished. There are explanations for gas stations, and of course, those that come to you miles away and hours later.

Nonetheless, trout lay on the bottom of the river one day last March, with their fins over their eyes. Except for one lithe, bright brook trout, their ostrich game worked. They couldn't see me; I couldn't catch them. Neither nymph nor fly could tempt them. They were safe from Death from above for one more day.

If the only pull in the sport lay in the catching, I'd have a lifetime supply by now. I could pay up the insurance, set some money aside for a rainy day and then, to be truly alive, go fishing.

Still, I did go fishing that day last March. Unaccustomed as we are to charmed days in early March, I could not believe my good fortune. And before Mother Nature could snatch back this unasked for gift, I rose and suited up for trout. All of the snow had melted. Ice -out on some lakes was more than a month early. Forest springs whispered and chuckled. *(continued next page)*

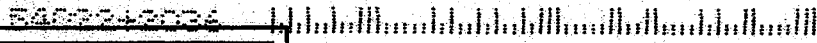


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I wanted to know what they were saying and I thought maybe the fish could translate. Near as I can tell, they whisper something about thankfulness and stewardship, luck and grace, possibly redemption. I don't doubt that humility is in there, too. The message is delivered in one trout days, "wind knots" (rotten casting knots, more like), and flies stuck in trees. But on that day in March surely stolen from winter, I was giggling along with the stream. The tiny brookie, leaping and running for more than its eight inches were worth pulled the laughter out of me.

Even if they were to witness the whole scene, I wouldn't count on the gas station lady or the mechanic to understand. I offer this as a partial explanation.

*Sarah Sanford is a Twin Cities Trout Unlimited member and a frequent and faithful contributor of stream reports to the Kiap-TU-Wish web page.*



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