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A MESSAGE FROM MIKE

MIKE MIHALAS, STATE COUNCIL CHAIR

The Conservation Angle

TU is, first and foremost, a conservation organization. Most people are drawn to TU not just by its conservation message but as a group where a shared love of fishing, interest in learning more, and a desire to be part of a supportive community for personal growth and involvement are part of the promise. Over time many grow to understand just how important our core message is to not only preserving — but to improving — what we cherish: “Take care of the fish, and the fishing will take care of itself.”

In this issue of “The Drift”, we pay homage to TU’s deep, abiding roots in the angling community. You’ll read stories about life experiences, techniques, places to fish, flies to tie and use, and more. You’ll read about a new generation of leaders emerging through TU’s youth programs, our shared service to our nation’s heroes, and our ongoing involvement in shaping legislation and agency plans to secure and protect our waters.

And while we do generally endorse catch-and-release fishing we also believe there’s a time and a place for harvesting and enjoying your catch; for some, I imagine a couple of these articles will come as quite a shock to the system where others may say “it’s about time.”

Wherever you are as an angler — if you like to fly fish, bait fish, spin fish, catch-and-keep, catch-and-release or a combination of all of those, there’s probably something in here for you, and maybe a couple of things to aggravate you too. Whichever the case, I hope what you read in this issue will provide plenty of food for thought.

Regardless of our other differences, we are all brothers and sisters of the angle, united by the common ground of time on the water in a common cause: our concern, care and stewardship of our state’s abundant rivers and streams and its magnificent and wondrously wild places.

Enjoy the Summer 2019 edition of “The Drift”.

Mike Mihalas
Pisgah Forest
Nine years ago I sat on the bank of a western North Carolina trout stream and watched my friend fishing with his tenkara rod. I’d never seen a tenkara rod before and he was a tenkara-only guide which, in 2010, put him way ahead of his time. In terms of catching fish, it also put him way ahead of me. He’d been out-fishing me about 3 to 1 all morning on basically the same water with basically the same flies. I decided it was well worth a break from my own fishing to see if I could figure out how he was doing it. It only took ten minutes of observation to reveal that the reason for my friend’s success was the tenkara method itself, its techniques and the attributes of the equipment employed to fish it. I accepted an offer to try one of his tenkara rods and it changed my approach to fly fishing forever.

The story of tenkara actually started long ago and far away, originating in Japan some 500-600 years ago. It was developed and used for subsistence and commercial fishing for Iwana (a Japanese char) and Yamame (a Japanese trout).
in the mountain streams of Japan. The technique was first documented to the western world in 1878 through the journals of Ernest Satow, a British diplomat and mountain climber living in Japan at the time. But it took well over a century for tenkara to reach America in a meaningful way. It wasn't until 2009 that tenkara really got significant exposure within the US fly fishing community. It has been gaining in popularity ever since. Today, there are dozens of companies selling tenkara rods, guides that specialize in it, and national and regional get-togethers. The sight of a tenkara angler on a stream here in western North Carolina hardly gets a second glance anymore.

What is Tenkara?

Tenkara is just one of a number of fixed-line fly fishing techniques found around the world that traditionally used for fly fishing here in the west but there are other important differences:

**Tenkara Rods**

Like western style fly rods, modern tenkara rods are built almost exclusively from graphite. They are extremely light and rather than separate into sections, tenkara rods telescope from full length down to an easily carried 12”-20” length. Full length for a tenkara rod would usually fall between about 9’ and 14’. In the tenkara world, 12’ is considered mid-length. I frequently have clients who come to me for instruction after buying their first tenkara rod. The most common mistake made on this purchase is to have bought too short a rod.

“The strength of tenkara is the length of tenkara,” I often say. Purchasing the longest rod suitable to your local waters and the lightness of the rod and the lightness of tenkara fishing can offer. In addition to coming in different lengths, tenkara rods can also vary in stiffness, bend profiles and ultimate strength for use in a variety of conditions. Repairing a tenkara rod usually just involves swapping out a broken section for a new one. Reputable manufacturers provide good warranties and a spare section, if not covered under warranty, usually costs under $50. Happily, tenkara rods are very affordable. Low-cost tenkara rods can be had for less than the price of a modern fly line and “high-end”, multi-position rods with excellent warranties and support cost no more than a lot of western entry-level rods.

**Tenkara Lines**

There are a number of different lines used by tenkara anglers and this remains an area where a lot of innovation is ongoing. The first line many tenkara anglers use is a braided style, constructed much like a furled leader from multiple strands. These lines cast easily which makes them a good choice for beginners. Level monofilament nylon lines are very lightweight, can be made at home in different lengths and are extremely stealthy to fish, but slightly more difficult to cast. My current favorite line is a tapered, monofilament nylon line that combines lightness and castability. These lines are essentially a hi-viz tapered, nylon leader with an attachment loop integrated at the rod end. While there is no “correct” length for a tenkara line, for any given rod, difficulty increases as line length increases.

**Tippet**

All you really need is a spool of 5X nylon. That said, if you prefer fluorocarbon for subsurface fishing that’s great and if you like to go to 6X for more delicate situations that’s fine too. What is important to remember is that the tippet needs to be the weakest link in your system. The principle way to protect your tenkara rod from breakage is good technique but ensuring your rod is stronger than the tippet you’re using is your last line of defense from needing a rod repair (see earlier paragraph!)

**Tenkara Flies**

There is a specific style of flies that accompany tenkara. Called “kebari”, they often incorporate a distinctive reverse hackle appearance and frequently include materials similar to our soft-buckle flies. They can be fished in a wet or semi-dry fashion utilizing angler induced motion or a drag-free style of presentation. They are versatile, different and can be highly effective. That said, all the flies that currently work for you will work for you on a tenkara rod, and probably better than they did on your old rod. As a matter of fact, I strongly recommend that new tenkara anglers use the flies they already have and believe in when they start. The difference in the productivity of these flies when properly presented with tenkara is an eye-opening experience.

**How do you fish tenkara?**

This part is easy. If you’re reading this article you are probably already a fly fisher. If you are, you will readily pick up tenkara because mechanically it’s really only a slight variation on the fly fishing you already know. Just eliminate anything that has to do with line management. You don’t hold line, you don’t strip line, you don’t shoot line, you don’t retrieve line, and most importantly, you don’t mend line. All of that energy and focus can be placed on delivering your fly to a fish-worthy location and presenting it in a natural and convincing fashion. The length of the rod and the lightness of the system make casting easy and intuitive. Conventional casting works great, as do variations to book a tenkara trip or learn more about a guided fishing experience, visit https://unreelflyfishing.com or send me an email: unreelflyfishing@gmail.com.

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**Owner & Guide, Unreel Fly Fishing LLC**

John Miko

A lifetime of angling and a career as a Coast Guard helicopter pilot somehow led me to beautiful Asheville and the wonderful trout streams of western North Carolina years ago. I am a fully licensed, insured guide in the state of North Carolina and proud to be a member of Tenkara USA’s Tenkara Guide Network.

Unreel Fly Fishing is one of a select group of outfitters that hold a permit to guide on the rivers within the Pisgah National Forest. I am a member of the American Fly Fishing Trade Association and maintain current Wilderness First Aid and CPR qualifications. I am also a certified Fly Fishing with Disabilities Instructor.

I love the fun and simplicity of tenkara-style fly fishing. There is nothing more than teaching someone new to fly fishing this beginner-friendly approach or seeing “old pros” slowly come around to a new, cheaper and highly effective way to enjoy our sport.

Through a leadership role with the North Carolina Council of Trout Unlimited, I am an active advocate for cold-water fisheries conservation. At Unreel Fly Fishing we practice catch-and-release-only fishing and endeavor to leave every stream a little better than we found it.

I also have the great privilege of a long association with Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, an organization that utilizes fly fishing and related activities as a therapeutic outlet for recovering wounded warriors and disabled veterans. Please check out the link on my home page to learn more about their tremendous work.

To book a tenkara trip or learn more about a guided fishing experience, visit https://unreelflyfishing.com or send me an email: unreelflyfishing@gmail.com.
like roll casting, tension casting, bow-and-arrow casting, etc. The long rod, combined with a high-stick technique, allows you to deliver and present your fly into parts of the stream that would have been previously impossible to fish. Good tenkara technique means intervening currents and obstructions are irrelevant. Small pockets, complex current seams and subtle features all become fishable. The ability to fish a stream in much more detail will teach you to view it in much more detail. You will catch the fish others don’t catch because you can fish the water that others can’t fish.

Who should (and shouldn’t) fish tenkara?

I teach tenkara, I don’t preach tenkara. I recognize that, like anything, tenkara fishing isn’t for everyone and that’s fine. After all, it’s just one way to go fishing.

It’s affordable, it’s simple, it’s portable, it’s intuitive and you can catch the heck out of fish with it. It’s a great way to introduce newcomers to the sport of fly fishing and it’s a great way to get a lot of unnecessary expense and technology out from between you and the fish you’re trying to catch. It lends itself very well to anglers with disabilities. It presents an exciting angling challenge for those targeting larger fish and it’s just plain fun. If those sound like appealing attributes, you might like it.

If you’re the type of person who just loves super-cool, hi-tech new fly fishing products, or you love preserving the traditions of American fly fishing, or you promised your significant other that you would never buy another fly rod, then maybe tenkara isn’t for you. I respect your reasons, whatever they are, and you won’t get any pressure from me!

Nobody asked me but…

Becoming a tenkara angler and eventually a tenkara guide and teacher has given me learning opportunities and pause for thought that I never could have anticipated. I’m not talking about angling here but broader philosophical thought as a member of the community of fly fishers, TU and simply as a person. At the risk of being controversial I’ll share a bit here:

I’ve fished all my life. Some of my earliest memories are of fishing. I’ve fished with a hand-line, bait, lures, spear-gun, cast-net, fly rod and most recently tenkara style. To me fishing is fishing, fishing is for fun, fishing is for everyone and there are many ways to do it. Coming from that place, I’ve been more than a little taken aback by the reception that tenkara, and the good people who fish tenkara have received within the broader world of fly fishing. It is not uncommon for me to engage fellow fly anglers in what I expect to be a cordial exchange only to find they feel completely comfortable making openly derogatory remarks about the way I choose to fly fish. I’ve heard more un-funny jokes and jibes about cane-poles, dapping and unsolicited opinions about what constitutes “real” fly fishing than I care to recount. It happens in private settings, public settings, with people I thought I knew and many whom I’ve never met. Regrettably, this sometimes happens streamside, in front of clients who I am introducing to the sport of fly fishing through tenkara. I’m concerned by what this phenomenon says about our sport and what kind of impression it makes on those considering joining our TU community.

Make no mistake, I don’t care what people think about how I fish but I can’t help but reflect on these encounters when I hear industry and TU leaders discussing the difficulty of attracting “non-traditional” participants to our sport and our organization. I’ve come to the conclusion that this mostly stems from the sad reality that at some level, and to a not insignificant degree, we don’t want non-traditional participants in our sport. We’ve created and perpetuated a self-image, based on the notion that fly fishing is a “more pure” form of fishing, and those who pursue it are somehow better, more celestial, than those who enjoy fishing through other methods (even if those methods are only a slight variation on “proper” fly fishing.)

This has led us to an odd value system where barriers to entry are admirable, simply because we have overcome them. It is a culture where expense, complexity and difficulty are seen as virtues while affordability, simplicity and intuitiveness are somehow worthy of ridicule. It leads to nonsensical outcomes. There are actually places in America (and elsewhere) where tenkara is banned from “fly fishing only” water. This means an angler with a tenkara rod, deftly presenting a dry fly on 7X tippet is excluded so they don’t contaminate the purity of experience for somebody chucking split shots and squirmry worms under a plastic indicator on a “real” fly rod. What are we really saying here and what does that say about us?

Like any true angler, I am an eternal optimist. What I take from all of this is a renewed awareness and appreciation that we all enjoy fly fishing in our own way and for our own reasons. Fishing is for pleasure and our pursuit of that enjoyment should be bounded only by our imagination, courtesy for others and the protection of the precious resources that make it all possible. Let’s all commit to making that our fly fishing culture. Then we can all look forward to the day when we don’t worry about attracting “non-traditional” participants to our sport because everyone is part of our tradition. In the meantime, I hope to see you on one of our beautiful trout streams in the not too distant future.

I’ll be the happy guy with the really long fly rod. 
Kids’ Fishing Day

AT LAKE POWHATAN

By Pat Gore, David Vigue and Curt Campbell

Kids fished for free at Lake Powhatan in Asheville on June 1, and many could be heard calling out, “I got one! I got one!” Several of the fisher-kids came up to us to see if we had bags and ice they could put their trophies in. We were more than happy to oblige!

Sponsored by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission and the United States Forest Service, this annual event is hosted on the first Saturday of June and is part of a series of fishing days held across the state. The Lake Powhatan event offers children ages 12 and younger the opportunity to experience the joy of fishing, many for the very first time, and they have the lake to themselves until noon.

The Land O’ Sky Chapter of Trout Unlimited (Asheville) provided, prepared and served a lunch of hotdogs, slaw, chips, beverages and cookies to all in attendance. Many thanks to volunteers Dave and Christine Vigue, Charles Dauphine, Scott Schlicher and Ron & Pat Gore who gave their Saturday to serve about 150 young anglers and their families – a total of about 300 meals altogether.

“This is a fun day,” said Land O’ Sky’s Pat Gore. “It’s great seeing kids learning to set-up a fishing pole and cast a line. Hopefully, they’ll want to get out and do some more fishing.”

The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission provided a new grill this year which made the grilling much more efficient. Dave served as Executive Grill Master while Christine, Chuck and Ron kept busy setting up the buns and trays to receive the grilled hot dogs.

The smell made its way around and pretty soon folks were lining up for lunch. Fortunately, Scott, Ron and Pat had everything all assembled in a production line to make sure the hungry anglers and their families were fed quickly. From picking up their hot dogs and dressing them up with a variety of toppings, picking up chips and a drink to selecting a cookie at the end, the entire team and system worked like a well-oiled machine.

We’re happy to report that no one went away hungry; in fact, even a few of the puppies strolling around with their owners got a treat. The weather was perfect and the kids were catching a lot of fish.

Special thanks to Lorie Stroup, Zone Fisheries Biologist of Pisgah National Forest, our partners at the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, members Curt and Karen Campbell for braving the madness of Sam’s to pick up supplies, and to the vendors and volunteers who contribute their time and energies to making this popular youth event a success every year.

Our volunteers, anglers and their families all had a grand time. In fact, the Land O’ Sky volunteers enjoyed it so much that they’ve already signed up for next year’s event! Because this is what it’s all about – engaging, encouraging and helping the next generation of anglers and conservationists.

By Pat Gore, David Vigue and Curt Campbell
I have been very fortunate in my life to literally travel and fish the world. In all of my travels there is one common denominator. Regardless of how prepared I am when I leave the house something will go astray and Murphy’s Law of Fly fishing will always come into play. Murphy’s Law of Fly fishing states that regardless of how many flies you leave home with the one that is working the best is the one that you have the fewest of. Over my years of travel I have devised several tricks for making flies closer to the ones that are working, or at least turn them into some Frankenstein mutant that they will eat. After all, necessity is the mother of invention. Here are some of my best and most commonly used fly or lure modifications.
When fish are eating cripples or flies that are riding low in the water column if all you have are traditional Catskill patterns, you can still make it work. To achieve the cripple effect take your nippers or scissors and clip the bottom half of the hackle off of the fly. Clipping the bottom hackle off of a Catskill style pattern can quickly turn it into a fly that looks crippled and rides similar to a parachute or comparadun in the water.

If you are having trouble seeing small dries on the water, a bright colored Sharpie (pink, fluorescent green etc.) can be used to color the wings, or parachute so that you can see it better. Beetles and foam flies that are hard to locate on the water can be made more visible by taking your scissors or nippers and clipping off a small piece of a Palsa adhesive indicator and then placing the small piece of indicator on the back of the fly.

Sometimes you will find the need to darken up a fly or part of a fly, especially flies with gold colored beads. I always carry a set of indelible marking pens (sharpies), so that I can quickly change the color of any fly in my box. The best colors to carry are black, brown, and umber. Often just that slight color change from bright gold to a more natural color is all you need to get those picky fish fired up and feeding.

Occasionally you will need to turn unweighted or lightly weighted streamers into heavier weighted flies. This can be accomplished by carrying a small assortment of cone heads or metallic beads, either in brass or tungsten, in your vest. Slide your tippet through the cone and then use a small toothpick or stick to peg the cone in place at the eye of the fly. Not fishing enough weight, or deep enough in the water column, is one of the most common mistakes anglers make. It often takes 2-3 times the amount of weight you think it should take to make a fly reach the depth that the fish are holding at.

Oftentimes, finicky fish can be persuaded to feed by the movement of rubber legs. To bring life attracting movement to a fly, I carry a small selection of rubber legs with me on the stream and a small sewing needle. You can poke the needle half way through the fly, insert a pair of legs, and pull them through the body of a fly to give it extra life in the water.

So next time you are out on the water and need to find that magic lure in your box, follow one of these Murphy Law hacks. Just go ahead, pick the fly that you only have one of in your box, use it, and catch as many fish as you can. Then when that nasty old rhododendron ends up taking your fly you can start hacking and mutilating your other flies to find the one they will eat. Remember trout like “buggy” and often your flies fish better when they have a little wear and tear on them.

Good Fishing,
Kevin
Wouldn’t it be amazing if all veterans and active duty servicemen and women could heal from the hidden wounds of war? We all see the videos of the happy homecomings and the joy in those moments.

Unfortunately, that is when the hard work begins: Learning how to reconnect with their families, (sometimes meeting their babies for the very first time) and to repair the damage done to their families caused by long term and multiple deployments.

Hickory TU partners with Eagle Rock Camp to serve our nation’s heroes and their families

By Lynn Marilla and Chick Woodward
Stressors and emotions are high. Struggles can include increased alcohol and drug addictions, family violence, unemployment, soaring divorce rates of up to 95%, and sadly — 22 suicides per day of our veterans.

There is help and HOPE for these precious families.

What if we could save families? What if we could save lives? Eagle Rock Camp does.

Eagle Rock Camp, through faith in action, brings military families together to heal, reconnect in their communities, restore their hope and emerge as an empowered, purpose driven unit.

Our week long retreats include the entire family and are hosted in serene locations that use the healing power of nature. Interactive workshops teach family team building, financial readiness, and self-care. Outdoor recreation connects them with nature teaches them new skills that help build a solid family team. And they learn how to have fun as a family again.

One of our goals is to introduce these military families to outdoor recreation that is sustainable when they return home. Trout Unlimited offers their first year’s membership at no cost to them. And connecting them to their local chapters upon return home, helps build your local chapters. It’s good to know that 85% of military families volunteer in their home communities vs. only 25% of the civilian population. Many of them love to be outdoors and are interested in conservation.

Results so far roll up into two main successes: our divorce rate is less than 2%, absolutely unheard of in any demographic group. And our suicide rate is ZERO.

Our partnership with the local Trout Unlimited Hickory Chapter has provided volunteers who teach fly fishing, fly tying and get them thinking about conservation. They meet and interact with our military families and even work with some of their children. Watching our families learn fly fishing is interesting and fun! Their look of intense concentration and focus, the big smiles when they catch a fish, and the kids — priceless. Many of these families have never fished before.

The spring retreat was held in May this year with a slightly smaller crowd, due to three no-shows. We planned the fly casting for Thursday afternoon. Gary Hogue led the group in giving the group the basics and then the volunteers spent a little time helping them polish their cast followed by a trip down to the lake to catch some fish. The weather was bright sun with temperatures running up to around 90, so many of the fish headed to deeper water, but we still had some success with a few bluegill and smaller bass and one huge bass.

There is a huge backlog of families waiting to attend so the camp is working on a permanent piece of property that will allow many more events each year. We’ll be needing more help when that happens, so watch our future newsletters for opportunities to help our veterans and their families.

Thanks to the volunteers that helped at this retreat: Gary Hogue, Jean McMullin, Holly Cole, Robbie Williams

We believe that our military families and our TU Volunteers are both richer for the experience.

If you would like to participate and volunteer at one of our retreats or have used fishing gear in good condition to donate to a veteran, contact Lynn Marilla, 704-650-5353. lmarilla@eaglerockcamp.org.

Most retreats are held in Western NC.
The TU Teen Summit is an annual leadership conference for TU Teens that want to make a difference. The Summit recruits young leaders from rising freshman to rising seniors in high school who have proven commitment to TU’s mission and have demonstrated leadership at a high level. The Summit is the capstone of the TU Headwaters Youth Program K-12 programs and is the final link in the Stream of Engagement to the college TU Costa 5 Rivers Program.

Each year, about 25 teens are selected through an essay-style application and interview process. The Summit is held in a different location every year and we explore the region with a conservation tour with regional TU staff; a service-learning project; leadership and team-building activities; and of course lots of time to fish.

Once they attend the Summit, this impressive group forms TU’s Youth Leadership Council or YLC. The YLC stay involved with each other, their local community, and with TU staff throughout the year working on projects and outreach with the goal to raise TU’s profile among their peers.

You can learn more about the teen summit here.

This year, two teens from North Carolina were selected from among the hundreds of applicants to the program. We’re proud of these two young leaders and pleased to introduce them to you here.

Alleigh Raymond, Asheville NC

My name is Alleigh Raymond. I’m 15 years old, I’ve grown up in the Blue Ridge Mountains and I currently live just outside of Asheville. I enjoy competitive fly fishing, fly tying, working within Trout Unlimited’s Youth Leadership Council, traveling to see and fish new places and spend time on the water with my friends whenever possible.

The Teen Summit has shown me just how much young people are the future of fly fishing and conservation. Having the opportunity to be surrounded by so many young individuals that you can visibly see the heart they have for the sport and the effort to make a difference in this world is inspiring. Despite this camp is only an annual event every time the Youth Leadership Councils gathers to plan and brainstorm ideas for future outreach efforts and conservation projects that motivation and inspiration that we all feel is strong enough to carry out throughout the year to achieve and execute growth and fulfillment within our areas and TU chapters.

The Summit has also given me an outlet to connect with other individuals who share the same passions as me. This year in Montana will be my third year going to the Summit. I’ve gone to Michigan, Virginia, and now Montana.

When I was about 12 years old I spent a lot of my time at the Pisgah Center for Wildlife Education working with and participating in the variety of fly fishing classes they offered, one of the education specialists told me about TU and the youth programs they host. Soon after I signed up for Rivercourse. I then fell in love with the mission of the organization and all they do within my area. I couldn’t get enough and wanted to attend another program. That’s when I found the Summits and Youth Leadership Council.

The most important thing TU can do to get young people involved in conservation and fly fishing today is start by disregarding the notion that fly fishing is reserved for the eldest member of their family and aim to show young people the benefits of them getting involved in fly fishing and conservation and how it can positively influence their life.

This upcoming Summit I will be one of the 3 chosen Summit Captains, a new leadership position that will assist and lead this year’s group in Montana. In my effort to become a member of the USA Youth Team this fall, I’ll be spending my summer training out west to hone my skills with accomplished anglers. I will also be completing an internship with Master Nymph, a premium competitive fly rod company.

Sean Sullivan, Pittsboro NC

My name is Sean Sullivan and I am from Pittsboro, North Carolina. I am lucky enough to live right next to the Haw River which I often fly fish for bass and carp. I love to fish more than anything else but I also enjoy boating/kayaking and wildlife watching.

Being part of the Teen Summit has meant a lot to me because it means that I get to be deeply involved in Trout Unlimited and help make a difference in conservation. It also gives me a chance to help the next generation of fly fishers learn about the importance of conservation in our sport. This will be my second year at the Summit.

I went to one of the TU youth fly fishing camps in Tennessee when I was 12 and I loved it. It was my first experience with fly fishing and I caught a 23 inch trout. The next two years I attended the TU camps in North Carolina and Virginia and then decided I wanted to learn more and stay involved with TU so I applied to the Summit.

The most important thing TU can do to get young people involved in conservation and fly fishing today is show them the most interesting and exciting parts about conservation like the places it can take you and some of the great things that you see while you’re out there, not to mention the excitement of fighting a fish. Most people my age have the misconception that fishing is just sitting in one place for hours and hours holding a rod.

I’ll be a junior in high school next year and I’m hoping to do an internship elective with a river outfitter near my school, so I can learn about running a guide business, and intern as a fishing guide on the Haw River. I also started a fishing and conservation club last year and I want to continue to get more students at my school involved in those activities. When I graduate from high school I want to go to college and study fisheries biology or ichthyology and become a fisheries or wildlife biologist. <3
Over the last couple of years, aquatic nuisance species (ANS) have been featured prominently in headlines relative to North Carolina’s trout fisheries. Two species of parasitic copepods (known as gill lice) and the parasite responsible for whirling disease (Myxobolus cerebralis) have been documented in the State (I plan to discuss gill lice and Myxobolus in greater detail within future editions of The Drift). Although those organisms infect trout directly, another ANS associated with coldwater habitats has also been collected. In late 2015, a regional research project led by Dr. Justin Murdock, Tennessee Tech University, documented Didymosphenia geminata (Didymo) in Tuckasegee River. Didymo is a single-cell diatom (a type of algae) that can form thick blooms in streams and completely cover stream bottoms. The cells attach to rocks by long stalks, which can remain after algal cells have died, often littering stream banks and reducing recreation and aesthetic appeal. The magnitude of Didymo’s impact on stream health is not clear. Dense mats smothering the stream bottom can change the macroinvertebrate (bottom-dwelling insects) community by changing food availability. Since macroinvertebrates are a major food source for trout in Southern Appalachian Mountain streams, there is concern that Didymo could alter fish communities. However, if cells occur without producing...
stalls, it may go completely unnoticed by humans and fish.

Through intensive field studies in Tennessee and North Carolina, Didymo has almost exclusively been found below large, bottom-release dams. However, Didymo occurs in both regulated and unregulated rivers in the Northern Appalachians (e.g., New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland).

New research suggests that Didymo may be native in many areas, including the Southern Appalachians, and a change in environmental conditions may prompt increased stalk production. It is unclear at this point whether Didymo is native or invasive in Tennessee and North Carolina. A better understanding of the current distribution of Didymo in the region will help address this question, as well as identify water conditions that support cell survival and stalk/mat formation. This data will also allow managers better predict were mats may form in the future.

How Can Anglers Help?

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission is partnering with Trout Unlimited, the U.S. Forest Service and Tennessee Tech University to conduct a community-science program to look for Didymo across the region. Dr. Murdock’s lab at Tennessee Tech University has developed small kits that anglers can take on fishing trips to easily collect samples. Kits will contain all supplies needed to collect, preserve, and mail (prepaid postage) samples to Tennessee Tech University for processing. Directions will be included with each kit, but all anglers should have to do is go fishing, stop for a couple of minutes to pick up a few rocks and brush the biofilm or noticeable algae into a container (remember that Didymo cells are not visible to the naked eye but may be present). Anglers should not have to alter plans to take special trips or visit waters they would not fish normally. Although Didymo is most likely to be found in tailwaters of bottom release dams, samples from any and all North Carolina coldwater streams are needed. Plus, samples can be collected and submitted anytime. Didymo cells become less abundant in the late fall and winter, but cells should persist until spring when numbers increase again.

Starting in July, we will work with Jeff Wright, Trout Unlimited Southeast Volunteer Coordinator, to distribute kits to those interested. Jeff will work with State Council and individual Chapters to facilitate distribution and coordination of efforts. There will be more information forthcoming relative to kit distribution, but we wanted to make you aware that this effort will be underway soon. If you would be interested in getting your chapter involved, feel free to reach out to Jeff at jeff.wright@tu.org. In the meantime, please take a look at the following links to learn more about Didymo: Dr. Murdock’s research and U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Again, Didymo is just one of many potential ANS, so as anglers it is important for us to always take the most basic precautions to help reduce the risk of unwanted transfer: Clean, Drain, Dry, and Never Move.

Please visit the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission’s ANS webpage at www.ncwildlife.org/fishing/ANS, and as we discussed within the last edition of The Drift, always explore the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission’s Trout Page (www.ncwildlife.org/trout) to find out about all things trout.

PROTECT YOUR WATERS

You can help prevent the spread of aquatic nuisance species by doing these basic steps:

- **Clean** equipment of all aquatic plants, animals and mud
- **Drain** water from boats, live wells and all equipment
- **Dry** all equipment thoroughly
- **Never Move** fish, plants, or other organisms from one body of water to another

For more information visit NCWildlife.org
Each summer, swarms of kids gleefully descend on western North Carolina for a week at camp. They come from Boston, Atlanta, New York, and all up and down the east coast. They’ll learn to sing songs to earn their food in the mess hall, hike to the top of a waterfall with a walking stick they carved in the wood shop and learn a host of outdoor skills so that if they were to get lost on the way to the waterfall, they might be able to survive in the woods alone. At night, with the ghosts of the stories they tell around the campfire.

Camp is a transformative experience for young people from diverse backgrounds and the things kids learn at camp stay with them for the rest of their lives. That is why certain activities are an integral part of camp. Archery is a good example of one such activity. It builds confidence, improves focus, develops hand-eye coordination and is a lifetime sport.

Any of this sound familiar? If you have ever said the same about fly fishing, then you’d be right. Fly fishing is also a lifetime sport and it does all the things archery does, but maybe best of all it fosters a conservation ethic and connection to nature. Sounds perfect for camp, right?

What if TU could reach the millions of kids who go to a summer camp each year across the country through a fly fishing exposure program? In North Carolina alone, the camp industry brings in about 10,000 full-time camp staff positions each year and tens of thousands of campers from across the country.

In 2015, the Summer on the Fly program was started at Green River Preserve in Transylvania County. A handful of other camps have joined this TU-developed, turnkey fly fishing program for camps, but growth has been slow. Many camps point to the unavailability of staff with fly fishing experience or interest in teaching the sport.

To answer this challenge, TU Headwaters Youth Program staff Tara Granke and Franklin Tate—who work out of Asheville, NC—developed a training in partnership with the Pisgah Center for Wildlife Education. For three summers, Patrick Weaver, the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Conservation fly fishing guru, along with his staff and volunteers from the Pisgah TU chapter have helped college-age counselors and camp directors learn to teach campers the basic casts and knots. It’s a train-the-trainer and the trainer leaves with confidence—and a certificate of completion.

This year, Pisgah TU chapter volunteer Walter Wilson organized a core group of volunteers to help at the training and at a half-day hosted fishing day at Camp Carolina. This kind of partnership will ensure that counselors get the support they need. We foresee Pisgah TU and Camp Carolina working together throughout the summer season to get campers jazzed about fly fishing.

It’s true, we may not reach our wildest dreams of getting a fly rod into the hands of millions of campers each year. Shoot for the moon, am I right? However, the work that Pisgah TU and Headwaters staff are doing with partners is already causing a big ripple effect. The training has certified 30 counselors in its three years of existence. Those thirty counselors have gone on to reach around 300 campers making the reach of the training 10-fold.

Want to get involved? Asheville Parks and Recreation is looking for volunteers to help with their Summer on the Fly program. We will also recruit volunteers in spring 2020 for next year’s training in May. Or, reach out to Tara Granke to see if there’s opportunity to connect to a camp in WNC that is already running the program.

By Tara Granke
Travels With Dad

To Travel with your family can be fun. It’s a time to be together and enjoy some bonding time. Travel with your family can also be hilarious, intriguing, dangerous, trying. My Dad and I decided we wanted to take some fishing trips to far away destinations. On these trips, we’ve had many an adventure. We’ve had several bear encounters, flown in float planes, been stranded on a vast lake, seen whales, giant fish, been stranded in airports, met many interesting people, and seen many beautiful places.

But, you see, my Dad is not like many other Dads. He has an itch that he must scratch. He has to be talking. He has to be fishing. I’ve seen him walk into a bar, identify his victims, saunter over and start talking. Laughing ensues immediately followed by his victims buying him drinks. After about an hour of this, I’ll get him so we can eat. Once when he was flying first class, he boarded first. He then proceeded to request a beer, stood at the front of the plane and greeted each passenger in coach as they boarded. He knows no stranger.

On one of our trips we went to Fernie, British Colombia to fish for west slope cutthroats. Now, Dad is not a trout fisherman nor will he ever be. He’s a largemouth bass fisherman (more on this later). But I talked him into going as he ponied up for west slope cutthroats and have a 26” bull trout attack it. Yikes!

Our second to last day out was on the Saint Mary. It was back in the middle of nowhere. We had to slide the boats down a bank to get them in the water. The scenery was stunning: beautiful river, Rocky Mountains and lots of gorgeous cutthroats. We had an outstanding day fishing. Who cares if the shuttle hadn't been run when we took off at 9 P.M. Plus, we had our big bear sighting on the Saint Mary’s. Dad and my boat was running last as we were fishing this stretch of water. A big old black bear came out of the woods, sauntered down to the water and started swimming across the river just behind us. We got to watch him for a while. Too cool!

On one trip we split up, and I hiked back into the Rockies with a couple of other fellows. As we were hiking in the guides did a lot of talking about bears. One of them, Jeff, was real nervous. We kept a sharp eye out. Well, we got to this river and caught some cutties. Then Mike pulled out this 9-inch streamer and says “Let’s go fishing”. We then proceeded to find good pools holding big bull trout. We’d stand around looking at them while Jeff and Mike would discuss the best way to proceed. Always, the best way to proceed was to take the seven weight with that big honking streamer on it and try to put it in front of those fish. There was no false casting. You’d throw that streamer up on the bank behind you and let it rest. Then you’d have the whole mess into the river. It was so cool. The bulls were usually sitting in groups of 2 to 6. Every now and then you’d see one break out of the school and head for the streamer. I believe the largest one brought in that day was around 25 inches. It wasn’t me.

Dad and I have been on some epic adventures. When you travel you don’t always know what’s going to happen. And when you travel with Dad you never know what’s going to happen. Trips with your family are priceless. I’ll never forget all the adventures I’ve been on with mine. So, plan a trip with them. Get out there. Who knows maybe you’ll get lost together.

Our regular contributor and good friend Sam Cathey has published a book of his stories entitled “Did You Catch a 37” with illustrations by his grandson, Benjamin Cathey. Contact Sam at samcathey77@gmail.com for a copy of your own or pick one up the next time you’re at Headwaters Outfitters (Rosman) or Highland Books (Brevard).
If the question is “how do local TU chapters get volunteer work done?” The answer is TEAMWORK.

Over the past 3 years, the Land O’ Sky Chapter has had multiple volunteer activities including trout stockings, line container installations, trash cleanup days, split rail fence repair, brook trout surveys, and pier staining days. Some of these workdays support the NC Wildlife Commission, some support the National Park Service and others support the US Forest Service. Since all agencies face serious cutbacks in funding, they appreciate offers of volunteer support to accomplish these tasks.

We’ve enjoyed success in sharing these duties with volunteers from other chapters, notably Pisgah TU. Especially on several projects when weekday timing, short notice or inclement weather made it challenging to secure volunteers, these partnerships significantly augmented our turnout, enabling us to get the job done more quickly and with better results. In return, Land O’ Sky members supported Pisgah-sponsored workdays; due to our close proximity, we’re regular visitors at each other’s chapter meetings.

In 2017, Land O’ Sky and Pisgah TU teamed up with the Mills River Partnership, Mountain True, the Embrace-A-Stream “Cantrell Creek Project”. In addition to promising volunteer support, Land O’ Sky contributed significant seed funding to the project and played a critical role in the Embrace-A-Stream challenge; coordinating communications with our chapter members to support the project with online contributions and personal messaging. Again, it was a team effort.

Not only has this cooperative partnership been a strengthening exercise for the volunteers and leadership of both groups, sharing projects and energy has lightened our individual workloads while enhancing our project capabilities. Many intra-chapter friendships have been formed over buckets of fish, cans of stain and PVC line containers…and maybe a few beers.

If you’re in western North Carolina see an announcement of a workday on the Land O’ Sky or Pisgah TU websites or social media outlets, I invite you to get involved and contribute to keeping the good relationship going – get out there to support local TU conservation efforts.

And many of our TU chapters share concern and stewardship for our waters with other agencies: MountainTrue, Conserving Carolinas, Ivy River Partners, The Pisgah Conservancy, EQI Labs – and, of course, the National Park Service, Forest Service and Wildlife Resources Commission. You’ll find a whole range of opportunities that touch coldwater conservation, from macroinvertebrate sampling to water quality tests to live staking trees along the river.

Our most recent project together was a multipurpose workday on the Davidson River. Ten members of the Pisgah and Land O’ Sky Chapters met bright and early at Sycamore Flats and you couldn’t have ordered better weather! By 1:00 P.M. the team had stained a handicapped fishing pier and information kiosk, repaired riverside access steps that had been...
washed out during high water, installed five more “Don’t Move the Rocks” signs at various locations along the river, cleaned and emptied five line recycling containers and completed our quarterly three-mile roadside cleanup along Highway 876, between the hatchery road turnoff and the riding stables at Avery Creek. We still have some fence work to do and flagstone pavers to lay down but all in all it was a very productive day. Many thanks to our volunteers for their time: Carole Deddy, Clive Morris, Dave Bender, Kevin German, John Rich, Ken Kinard, Bill Miller, Jim Rumbough, Jim Tedesco, Tim Schubmehl and Jay Hawthorne.

And we couldn’t have succeeded without the help of the Forest Service providing their time and resources and two new River Rangers; another great example of our members, chapters and agency partners working together as a team to get things done.

Did you know that aside from being unsightly when tangled in the brush and trees along a river and a hazard to fish and other wildlife, monofilament takes an estimated 600 years to decompose? Line Recycling Collection Stations placed near prominent entry and exit points along a stream give anglers a place to deposit used fishing line to return for recycling. For about $70 each, your chapter can easily put together and install the collection points. Affordability isn’t the only great feature of this project; it benefits coldwater and warmwater streams alike, so if you’re looking for a chance to get volunteers involved and make a difference, this is a great place to start.

Line can be collected until a reasonable amount is available then sent in for recycling.

Ship to: Berkley Recycling
1000 18th Street
Spirit Lake, Iowa 51360

Budget of Material (each container)*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Number</th>
<th>Model Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>86806</td>
<td>PVC 04600 0800</td>
<td>6” diameter PVC pipe cut to 2 ft long</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$8.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>53037</td>
<td>PVC 0300 1600</td>
<td>90º Elbow 6” diameter PVC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$19.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53282</td>
<td>PVC 0300 2400</td>
<td>Clean out plug 6” diameter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$6.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44863</td>
<td>PVC 0310 1600</td>
<td>Female adapter 6” diameter PVC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$12.38</td>
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<tr>
<td>201566</td>
<td>TCA04074DN</td>
<td>4” x 4” x 8’ treated post</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$6.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>254643</td>
<td>310173</td>
<td>PVC Clear clean — 4 oz. case</td>
<td>2 sets</td>
<td>$8.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Lowes item number and pricing.

Suggested Tools:
- Saw or other means to cut tubes to length
- Electric or cordless drill
- 9/16” and wrenches and/or sockets
- 1/2” shop vac
- 90º drill bit
- Straight edge and pencil
- Center punch
- Sandpaper
- Rubbing alcohol to prep surface for labels

**WARNING NO GARBAGE**

Containers can be pre-assembled on a workbench and perhaps even be attached to the 4” x 4” post in advance. It would probably take more than a 12-15 man-hour to install on site. Only tools needed for installation should be a level, posthole digger and shovel, and some wrenches to attach containers to post on site. For added security the hole could be filled with Sakrete ready mix concrete.

Container Maintenance:
The Wildlife Federation website also addresses maintenance of containers which includes: general cleaning, maintaining labels, disposal of trash other than fishing line and the recycling of the line itself. Line is to be single-filament “non-braided”, clean and without hooks or other attachments. It can then be mailed to Pure Fishing America (Berkley) for recycling.

Volunteers:
Volunteers will be needed to periodically check containers and collect line. It is a matter of determining frequency and identifying members to check containers.

Suggested Items for volunteers to bring:
1. Grocery store bags (to collect line)
2. Nail clippers or small pair of scissors (to remove hooks, etc.)
3. Large pair of pliers or large wrench (to remove PVC plug in post)
4. Short stick with cup hook on the end (used to reach inside container and pull-down line)
5. Spray bottle with 10% bleach (for occasional rinsing of inside of container)
6. Trash bag (for dirt that will be found inside containers)
7. Leather gloves
Once upon a time the Brook Trout (Salvelinus fontinalis) was abundant and widely distributed within eastern North America. These fish thrived in the cold, clean streams where they reigned as the only native salmonid in Appalachia. These incredible fish were perfectly adapted for life in these waters... until the very waters they were built to survive in began to change.

As timber companies and settlers changed the land around them by logging and farming, the loose soil once held by roots was washed into the streams, and the cool waters once shaded by the trees became too warm without the dense canopy to protect them. In addition, logging companies and the National Park Service (NPS) stocked over 1.4 million non-native rainbow trout (Oncorhynchus mykiss) into park streams, which outcompeted and further displaced native Brook Trout populations. Since the 1900s, the Brook Trout, which were once abundant, declined by 75% in Great Smoky Mountain National Park (GRSM) due to logging practices performed before the creation of the park in 1934.

Even as the forests began to grow back, the sky above became polluted from the gas released from factories, cars, and power plants. The rain that once brought relief to the drying earth below, now brought an assault of acid that altered the chemistry of the soil and the streams making them inhospitable to Brook Trout.

The hardships that came with the changes to their habitat were only compounded by the introduction and expansion of non-native Rainbow Trout from the West. With their habitat altered by humans and new competitors dominating their territory, Brook Trout populations continued to decline through the mid-1900s.

The NPS sought to restore the Brook Trout not just because they are native to the local streams and rivers where they have dwelled for millennia, but because these fish are intertwined with southern Appalachian heritage.

These Brook Trout are the descendants of those who saw the first European settlers arrive in Tennessee, the same lineage as those who supported Native American settlements for centuries, and of the same blood as those who knew these waters when they were fed by the glaciers covering North America.
**ANTHONY CREEK**

**2016**

In 2016, the NPS began efforts to restore Anthony Creek by dividing the stream above a barrier mill dam into 34, 100-meter sections and removing non-native rainbow trout using the 3-Pass Depletion method and backpack electrofishing units. Backpack electrofishing units send 600-700 volts of electricity into the water, which stuns the fish, and allows backup netters to net and capture the non-native Rainbow Trout. Each section is worked through three times to ensure a high capture rate. Using this method, 2,284 Rainbow Trout, or 99.3 percent of the trout population, were removed in 2016.

**2017**

In 2017, the NPS conducted a second effort to remove Rainbow Trout from the area, which resulted in the capture of an additional 52 Rainbow Trout. Following the removal of all non-native Rainbow Trout, the NPS began the reintroduction of Brook Trout from local source streams. The first reintroduction collected 269 Brook Trout from Bunches Creek in hopes of establishing the Brook Trout population. Bunches Creek, located near Balsam Mountain, NC, was selected for the source stock as the stream lies within the same Little Tennessee River watershed as Anthony Creek and the Brook Trout were known to be genetically pure Little Tennessee drainage fish.

**2018**

In 2018, the NPS continued reintroduction efforts by capturing approximately 330 Brook Trout from Deep Creek and Sahlee Creek within the Deep Creek watershed (also a genetically pure Little Tennessee tributary). With the help of our friends from the NPS trails crew and their trusty mules, the fisheries crew were able to haul the trout safely up the mountain trail, and from there transport them to Anthony Creek. If all goes as planned, these new recruits will disperse, multiply, and reach carrying capacity within 3 years. For more about our adventure with the mules visit: https://friendsofthesmokies.org/blog/have-you-ever-been-fishing-with-a-mule/
If you’ve fished in western North Carolina much at all, you’ll know that the Pisgah and Nantahala National Forests are home to many miles of outstanding trout streams. Later this summer, the United States Forest Service (USFS) will release its draft management plan which will serve as a roadmap for the next fifteen to twenty years in the management of these forests and their resources.

The Nantahala National Forest and Pisgah National Forest encompass nearly 1.1 million acres of public lands in western North Carolina. The plan will provide a future framework and guidance for all the projects on both national forests, and is strategic, not project-specific, by intentional design. However, it will play a large role in determining priorities for years to come – including the coldwater stream restoration, rehabilitation and preservation projects in which Trout Unlimited is heavily involved.

Each United States national forest and grassland across the country is required to update individual management plans every 15-20 years to recognize and accommodate changing needs and priorities. The current management plan for Nantahala-Pisgah was released in 1987 and amended in 1994.

In 2012 the USFS issued a revised planning rule that requires an emphasis on science-based data and collaboration from various public stakeholders, and the new plan and process comply with that rule.

In 2013 a collaborative group, the Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Partnership (NPPF), was formed by a variety of forest stakeholders to foster civic engagement and positive guidance in creating the best possible management plan revision for Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests. That group is made up of more than 30 members and affiliates and represents a diverse cross-section of public lands interests, including recreation, forest products, cultural heritage, conservation, wildlife, hunting, angling, horseback riding, mountain hiking, hiking, and other public lands stakeholders.

In 2016 the USFS released an “Initial Set of Forestwide Objectives” for the plan revision process. There are three overarching objectives by theme. Of particular interest to anglers and all others interested in coldwater conservation is one of the three primary themes is “Providing Clean and Abundant Water.” From the USFS: “under this plan revision theme, plan components focus on how management will sustain surface water and ground water flow, maintain fish and wildlife habitat, control erosion, and stabilize streambanks.”

There are 12 specific objectives that range from developing action plans for ten priority watersheds to complete the assessment of aquatic organism passage needs (TU member “citizen scientists” already collecting data towards this objective) to expanding the occupied range of native brook trout to implement three to five stream channel improvement projects annually. The forest service will be partnering with Trout Unlimited and other conservation organizations to work together to achieve these goals.
Each group member and affiliate has worked diligently to represent their particular interest, but also listened and gained new understanding of all the other various interests and viewpoints represented. There have been and still are conflicting viewpoints; however, from these conversations and discussions the NPFP submitted a 43-page document in 2017, listing recommendations for the USFS planning team to consider.

The North Carolina Council of Trout Unlimited has been an active member of NPFP since the group’s creation in 2013. The partners have been meeting at least once a month, sometimes more frequently, for nearly six years. Beyond our council’s input and advocacy for coldwater conservation projects affected by the plan, we’ve been able to form meaningful collaborative relationships with other organizations which will provide benefits and extend our reach and improve our project capability many years into the future.

As of today, we are awaiting the release of the draft plan with four possible alternatives and the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) analysis of the plan and the alternatives. The documents are expected to be quite lengthy and comprehensive – with the proposed plan coming in at more than 250 pages and the associated EIS likely much longer. Following the release date there will be a 90-day comment period open to the public. It is expected the USFS will hold a series of public meetings during the comment period, and there will be opportunities for comment from individuals, organized groups and other collaborative groups such as the Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Partnership.

Keep an eye on upcoming editions of “The Drift” and “The Mend”, as we’ll make you aware of the next step in this important process and will share links to the documents, information about town hall meetings and other opportunities for thoughtful discussion and comment.
Convergence can be planned or random, a single instance or a continuous event or object. When fishing, convergence is commonly an overlap of the two. We plan to go fishing, but the exact day may be more influenced by a report due at work rather than moon phase and temperature. For my first striped bass in the surf on a fly, the convergence was the combination of random and planned.

It was not a large striped bass but my first striped bass was caught in the surf off Dewey Beach, DE on June 13. What I found notable was the near Zen-like experience of catching it by doing everything right along with the sun, the tide and the currents. At least as “right” as a surf and stripers rookie could accomplish. Everything just came together and bang! Striper on the line.

Step one, checking the tide and finding a time window when I could get away and sneak in a couple hours fishing. The occasion of being on
Dewey Beach was a get together with old college friends from Colorado State. Why CSU gathered on a Delaware beach is a separate story but this is where my convergence of opportunity and striper begins. So, I take off to the beach about an hour before the high tide apex.

Weather was warm, sunny but some running clouds from time to time and a breeze quartering off the beach, but not severe enough to turn a #2 salt water fly into an earring. I have surf fished before but usually with spinning gear and learned enough to know that predator fish come up close to the beach under the covering shelf of foam, breaking and retreating waves. Always important to me is finding variables in the surf like a small extension of beach running into an underwater point, a notch in the shore line, or a more vigorous drain coming off the beach. Anything creating structure.

Tied on a green streamer pattern and waded out far enough to cover my knees and began casting parallel to shore with the wind behind me keeping the fly in productive water as long as possible. Waves were breaking at variables so a little observation allowed me to time my cast so the fly would fall between waves for maximum time in good water and then strip the fly as fast as I could. And it worked … sort of. I had a couple of takes but no hook up when I remembered that in the salt, everything happens faster – like pro football vs. college ball. I was doing the half second pause we use in freshwater, so no fish. In the salt you set the hook immediately and you set it much harder than in fresh water.

Watching the shoreline’s high-water mark, I could see the tide was almost full and I could actually feel the flow change on my legs. All the beach signs carried warnings about the rip tide on Dewey for the swimmers but I saw this as a positive for me. Changing flies a couple of times, I kept putting on bigger flies and was using a four inch white streamer as it seemed the takes I experienced were on white or silver bait fish patterns.

The surf was in the same general pattern when I noticed where before the surf carried the line in, now the surf would carry the fly in and then back out again. My casting was consistent, but I could keep the fly in the water longer, stripping the fly using long pulls with the rod, and then allowing the outgoing tide to take the fly along. That is when I connected and remembered to set the hook fast and hard. Actually did the hook set twice just to be sure. The striper ran up beach then turned straight me! It was so close I could not reel fast enough to get line on the reel and had to work it hand over hand. This fish was no trophy and I had no idea what the regulations were for keeping any fish, slot limits or anything else. The plan was to land the fish and release it which I did. That produced some additional discoveries including; striped bass fins are very sharp, if you don’t get that kind of fish on the reel you will see some knots in fly line that would make a Boy Scout troop envious (I have never seen so much tangled fly line in my life! Looked like a tippet in a Wyoming wind), and the business of a salt water hook set. As mentioned I set the hook hard, twice. Or so I thought. Once I had the bass corralled and went to remove the hook it fell out of the fish’s mouth. Lesson Learned.

Again, Convergence: Luck? Random circumstance? Skill? Maybe it was just my time.

But this is why I fly fish, to find and create that moment of convergence which produces the fish of a life time. Or just a good fish on an average day. There is something about using a fly rod that requires us being more in tune with the world around us to be successful. We have to know our quarry’s feeding habits, the flow of the stream or the tides, and the winds helping us put the fly where we believe all the other elements of the convergence equation have come together.
As a resident of the Triangle area of North Carolina I am perfectly located to make fly fishing jaunts to the mountains or the coast. I don’t have that kind of time. Fortunately, I have a home water… the Eno River… which is essentially in my back yard.

The Eno River is a small to medium sized Piedmont stream. It is a relatively clean river with good water quality. From its headwaters in Orange County, the Eno flows across bedrock and tumbling down small waterfalls. As it flows into Durham County, the river slows and flattens out until it joins the Flat River just upstream of Falls Lake. The banks are lined with hardwood forest keeping the Eno cool, even during the hotter months. Wildflowers adorn the adjacent land especially in the spring, while fall foliage will fool you into thinking that you are a stone’s throw from the Blue Ridge Parkway. In places, the Eno even resembles a limestone stream. In fact, if it were located a little higher in elevation, it would make a fine trout fishery, but I’m not complaining.

In actuality, the Eno is a warmwater fishery. According to state fishery biologists, there are over 60 species of fish in the Eno. To date, I have caught twelve of these fish. The redbreast sunfish make up the bulk of fish caught in the Eno. These fish are the prettiest sunfish in the river. They also fight harder than the other sunfish found in the Eno. A typical Eno River redbreast will weigh around ½ pound (about hand size) with many weighing close to one pound. The typical largemouth caught in the Eno will be 12 to 16 inches long, although my buddies and I have landed some nice three to seven pounders. These are lean “river” bass and fight with the tenacity of their smallmouth cousins.

To a lot of folks, the most prized fish in the Eno is the Roanoke bass. This fish, a close relative to the rock bass, is endemic to the Roanoke, Nuese, Tar and Chowan River drainages of Virginia and North Carolina. The best way to describe them is sort of a cross between a smallmouth and a bluegill. The Roanoke bass takes flies readily and fights hard on light fly tackle. They are found over rocky bottoms near ledges and drop-offs. They can be caught on surface as well as subsurface fly patterns, but they can be a bit spooky in low water conditions. They average about ¾ to one pound in weight with a trophy weighing two pounds.

Unfortunately, North Carolina and Virginia consider the Roanoke bass a species of “special concern”. In portions of its range, numbers are dwindling primarily caused by displacement due to historical stockings of rock bass. Fortunately, the Eno has a viable population of Roanoke bass. To keep it that way I stress catch and release of these fish.

The Eno River also has a run of white bass in the spring. These fish move up from Falls Lake to spawn. It’s become a very popular fishery with all types of fisherman trying to fill their coolers. These white bass are great sport on a fly rod, but it can be difficult to find a stretch of water that’s not already occupied. This may be my fault as a fly fishing promoter of this river but I think the white bass run is so popular because it’s one of the first in the spring; I’ve caught these fish in the Eno as early as the third week in February.

However, in recent years I find myself fly fishing more and more on the lower end of the river for common carp. Carp or “golden bones” as they are often called, are the gentle giants of even accomplished fly fishers. They tend to feed on shallow flats and so are very spooky. Common carp have a keen sense of smell and taste. I’ve seen a carp suck my fly into its rubbery mouth only to spit it out in that split second before I could set the hook. I prefer fishing for these carp from my “micro” skiff polled along the flat in search of tailing fish. Often we are in less than 6 inches of water! It’s as exciting to me as stalking bonefish or redfish on the flats but cheaper and much closer to home. Carp water on the lower Eno River is rarely clear and the vegetation is often thicker than the hair on a dog’s back. This presents a lot of challenges, but it’s a whole lotta fun and there are some great rewards if you stick with it.

What’s nice about the Eno is its simplicity. A rod in the 5-7 weight range, floating line and a handful of flies is often all you need. For panfish and bass I typically use an 8 ½ foot 5-weight, which most trout fisherman already own. For carp, I prefer a 9 foot 7-weight, which is also the rod I like for redfish. Carp get big in the lower river and you need some backbone to get them out that vegetation.

Flies are easy too… most typical bass and panfish flies work well. My favorite topwater fly is a stealth bomber in white, black or chartreuse; while a black and olive wooly bomber is my go-to for subsurface.

For carp, small woolly buggers are a great starting point in either black or rust. Of course, I do have some “secret” flies that I only show to those folks that come fish with me. I love taking folks to the Eno. In fact, I donate at least one companion fishing trip on the Eno to our TU chapter, Triangle Fly Fishers, as part of our fund raising efforts. Another great thing about the Eno River is access. In Orange and Durham counties the river flows through about 2000 acres of start park land. There are trails along the river and most of it is wadeable (like any river use caution, though). The Eno is very “flushy” and susceptible to flash flooding from heavier rains. Fortunately, the river does subside relatively quickly once the rain subsides. Some folks canoe or kayak the river, especially the lower portion. The upper portion is often too shallow and there are always a lot of downed trees and logs.

The Eno fishes well from March through October. In the summer the water can become low and clear requiring a bit more stealth. During low flows, dead drifting poppers and sliders may be the best way to catch fish. When the water gets this low, carp become spookier requiring lightly weighted flies. For me this is the best time to fish because it is sight fishing at its finest. It definitely helps me hone my skills.

After describing this river, you probably think the Eno gets a lot of fishing pressure, but it really doesn’t. While there are plenty of hikers and picnickers using the parks along the river, you can often fish all day without seeing another fisherman, let alone another fly fisher. I guess most of them drive by on the way to the mountains or to the coast. I love those places too, but I love my home water just as much.
As I ran my fingers across her taut belly and firm flanks, hands trembling with anticipation and hesitation. I thought to myself... Should I do this? Is it really wrong? I’ve already allowed myself to go this far, right? I had already made up my mind before we met what would be the end result of our encounter, but there was still time to change my mind before going through with the final act. This act I was about to commit isn’t exactly taboo, but its damn close these days. At one time it was common place. Many a man have been just where I am now and never gave the thing a second thought. At one time it was as natural as breathing. I could stop myself at the last minute. It would confirm to me that I certainly could have, and I could still pat myself on the back for possessing the self control and restraint to resist my instinctual lust. I’m an older man now, no longer young and hungry. I don’t have anything left to prove, but god I miss that taste. The flavor, the knowledge of a creature pure and untouched. In a tender moment of violence the Id overcomes the Ego, and I grabbed the nearest river rock and swiftly brought it down across the back of her head.

Much has been written about the importance of catch and release, and I am in no way in any disagreement with the practice as a way to help sustain fisheries and leave some seed for the next year, or generation. I am bothered that catch and release angling (much like stocking programs) were originally encouraged to preserve what was left after unrestrained industry, development, and government indifference and/or collusion and corruption, had taken its toll on rivers, streams, the fish that swim in them, and the health and well being of those who received from them their physical, emotional, and spiritual sustenance. The idea of turning a fish back has, for me, always been about the guy or gal who will fish here tomorrow, and I’m sure that was also the original intent of the movement. As is the natural progression of such movements, our modern view of catch and release angling (at least in the fly fishing world) seems to be more a one of concern for the absolute preservation and protection of each and every individual piscatorial life we encounter. The idea of killing a fish, intentional or otherwise, wild or stocked, native or non-native, has become almost taboo. I know and have known more than one fly fisherman who have never caught, killed, cleaned, prepared and cooked with reverence the trout they pursue. It is not enough for me to constrain myself to love entirely at a distance. Brief and passionate encounters, before going our separate ways, are not to be completely dismissed. It’s my usual m.o., and great fun. However, I need more. There is a knowledge, an understanding, a relationship that cannot be experienced with out the occasional taste of flesh. There can be no true consummation without thoughtful consumption.

The run where she lay a few moments ago, unmolested and happily feeding on smaller creatures herself, was not anything that would have caused an angler to suspect the lair of a fine brown trout. It was a good hole, a slight turn in the river with the kind of depth and current speed that trout prefer. The cast that took her life landed just to the left of the swift water, and the dry fly drifted down the slower edge of the current seam. She rose with care and confidence, made a quiet slurp of the bushy high floating fly, then turned her head back toward the bottom of the river, just before feeling the sting of the hook. The fight was brief, and having no net I beached her on the cobble bank.
She was a fine brown, a hair over twelve inches, well above the minimum of seven, but not the largest trout hooked today. After the blow to the back of the head I flipped her over, placed the point of the knife into her vent, and brought it up toward the gills to open the belly and remove the innards.

Finally, I placed her in the water and ran my thumb nail along the inside of her spine to break the small amount of delicate mesentery, and remove the blood line.

I considered saving the roe for the fire, but had no salt, and so decided to share it with a lucky crawfish. After cleaning the cavity of the organs I removed the gills but left the head on.

Cleaned and prepared for the fire, I selected a thin stick that would serve as a makeshift stringer, until a proper place could be found to stretch her out over a bed of coals.

At a large bend in the river, just downstream from where she was caught, is a picture perfect campsite with an existing fire ring. Here, a small fire was built (just enough to cook a trout) and a more sturdy stick was found that would serve as a utensil for her preparation. I stripped the bark from one end of the stick, and sharpened it with the knife while she lay in repose on a nearby rock.

Placing the sharped stick through the mouth, through the open body cavity along the spine, and securing it into the meat at the base of the tail; I was able to cook my catch over the open fire. I had no seasoning with me, so while the fire was still young and the flesh still raw I held her in the stream of smoke to flavor the meat before cooking it closer to the coals.
When temperature and time had satisfied the ritual, when enough of the rich fat and oils had dripped down onto the coals to deliver their sweet and aromatic offering to the gods, the tender and flaky meat was left for the mortal.

And when the mortal had their fill of the flesh, the bones were left to the creatures of the shadows and depths. Creatures who had taken no small part, made no small effort, and given no small sacrifice for the strength, growth, and beauty of the life which once occupied the structure now drifting downward in the water column. This gift from above, a nutrient rich caloric boon in these infertile waters. A gift from what could only be lesser gods.

I spent the rest of the day watching others fish. I made a few casts and hooked a few more trout, though now I inflicted pain only for sport, and benevolently released my catch to rise another day. My hunger satisfied, my nostalgia quenched, I sought more simple and less guilty pleasures.

When temperature and time had satisfied the ritual, when enough of the rich fat and oils had dripped down onto the coals to deliver their sweet and aromatic offering to the gods, the tender and flaky meat was left for the mortal.

And when the mortal had their fill of the flesh, the bones were left to the creatures of the shadows and depths. Creatures who had taken no small part, made no small effort, and given no small sacrifice for the strength, growth, and beauty of the life which once occupied the structure now drifting downward in the water column. This gift from above, a nutrient rich caloric boon in these infertile waters. A gift from what could only be lesser gods.

The author would like to thank:

Lin Reed and Travis Rose
for their assistance with this article.

Pisgah Outdoors operates in the Pisgah Ranger District in the National Forests of North Carolina under USFS Permit PIS6842 and is an equal opportunity provider. The focus of Pisgah Outdoors is backcountry and wild trout fishing for experienced anglers, as well as detailed instruction for beginning anglers on less technical waters. Fishing trips are designed to meet an angler at their skill level, and then to provide a challenge and goal to work toward. Pisgah Outdoors offers full and half day wade trips, as well as overnight camping and fly fishing excursions into the Pisgah National Forest. The passion of Pisgah Outdoors is public lands, wild fish, and the restorative and rejuvenating effect they have on people.

https://www.pisgahoutdoors.com/book-now
TU Unveils “RIVERS” App

If you’ve always wanted to get more involved in your chapter’s conservation efforts but can’t find the time to attend organized outings and events, consider downloading and installing the free RIVERS (River Inventory by Volunteers for Efficient Restoration Strategies) app from Trout Unlimited.

RIVERS puts the power of a professional stream assessment tool in the palm of your hand in an easy-to-use design. As our organizations and partners develop a more science-informed approach to project planning and management, one of the best ways to get started in conservation efforts is to assess the overall health of the watershed you plan to work to restore. A comprehensive assessment can help guide planning, prioritization, and provide the knowledge you need to take the next steps to conserve, protect and restore our coldwater streams and watersheds.

Just download the app, walk through the guidance documents provided, and you can be on the water flagging and photographing areas of stream degradation in no time at all. The problems you notice and report all get prioritized, and the information gathered to identify potential water pollution source, all of your collected information becomes easily accessible and actionable by your chapter, partners and agencies.

The RIVERS app was created to help TU chapters send volunteers out onto the many publicly-accessible, local waters that have not been formally assessed and identify areas where work could be done to improve trout habitat and protections.

The best part is, you’ll be carrying this great tool with you in your vest or pack when out on the water fishing! No need to attend meetings or training or plan whole survey workdays. Download the app, spend a few minutes learning to use it and carry your phone with you when you hit the water.

It’s a great excuse to go out and explore new streams, track down hidden coldwater refuges, find trout, and use the information gathered to identify opportunities to help them thrive.

TU Community Science Program

Join our community! Our Community Science program, that is! The Community Science Program, hosted by NCTU and TU’s Southern Appalachian Stream Restoration Manager Andy Brown, is designed to engage outdoor enthusiasts in collecting meaningful data to help the places they love. And there’s a whole lot of helping happening in Western NC! The idea is that, through collaboration between the US Forest Service, TU, and our community, we can more efficiently and more effectively make a difference in restoring and protecting our coldwater streams.

The process starts with our Community Scientists. After attending the required training, our volunteer teams spend some quality time in either the Wilson Creek Watershed or Sky Island Area collecting data via the Survey123 app for your smartphone or tablet. These surveys were created in partnership with the Forest Service and produce location-specific data that can be seen using an online mapping tool. As the data flows in, our partner group can assess where the needs for remedial intervention are heaviest and work with the US Forest Service to see that those needs are met.

There are two major needs in our Community Science Program right now.

1. Aquatic Organism Passage Barrier Surveys – 2 required training days – Historically, aquatic organisms had the ability to freely move up and down most blue lines in the Southern Appalachians. As roads were built in the forests, a variety of structures were used to facilitate water passage beneath the road. While these structures effectively move water, they often have attributes that make it difficult for aquatic organisms to head upstream, cutting off portions of animal populations. AOP teams perform on-ground assessment of water passage structures, taking multiple measurements at each that are used to determine if they are serving as barriers. Data from this work will allow the USFS, TU, and partners to target specific structures for replacement to help keep our aquatic populations healthy and strong.

Two trainings are currently scheduled for the Sky Island area (Davidson River & Tuckasegee River watersheds). To sign up for a training or get more info on future opportunities here or in Wilson Creek, contact Jeff Wright, Southeast Volunteer Coordinator (jeff.wright@tu.org).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sky Island Area</th>
<th>Wilson Creek Watershed</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 8 &amp; 9</td>
<td>August 9 &amp; 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants will meet at Balsam Lake. Training will begin at 9 a.m. each day</td>
<td>Friday evening classroom session to be held in Asheville or Mills River. Saturday all-day session to begin at 8 a.m. on the South Fork Mills River</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Details for these trainings and more are always posted to the Trout Unlimited Southeast Facebook (@TUSoutheast). We hope to see you at a future training or out helping your local chapter make a difference for coldwater conservation in North Carolina.
2019 Southeast Regional Rendezvous Wrap-Up

In early May, the South Carolina and Georgia councils hosted the Trout Unlimited Southeast Regional Rendezvous at the Dillard House in Dillard, GA. North Carolina was well-represented with 11 leaders in attendance. Rusty Berrier (Blue Ridge), Charles and Suzanne Crollley (Land O’ Sky), Brian Esque (Rocky River), Ed Kay (Pisgah), John & Barbara Kies (Pisgah), Mike Mikulas (Pisgah), Sam Ogburn (Blue Ridge), John Rich (Pisgah) and Tim Schubmehl (Pisgah).

Among the TU staff attending were Lisa Beranek, Andy Brown, Franklin Graham, Tara Granke, Nick Halle, Beverly Smith, Chris Wood, Jeff Wright and Jeff Yates.

Quite a few attendees arrived early to take advantage of some of the fine fishing available, with outings organized and hosted by local TU members. The festivities officially kicked off Friday night with the picking of a particularly delicious pig and get-acquainted session over beer provided by Georgia’s Sweetwater Brewing Company.

Saturday morning started with presentations on the state of trout fishing in Georgia and South Carolina, led by fisheries biologists from those states. After a short break, TU’s CEO Chris Wood spoke for some time about the challenges and opportunities ahead for TU, the progress we’ve made together, some remarkable stories about Trout in the Classroom and highlighted his concerns about the proposed Pebble Mine project.

The afternoon featured breakout sessions in three tracks with topics ranging from tools available to new leaders to starting and growing a 5-Rivers college program. The evening featured a barbecue buffet with all of the trimmings, a silent auction and plenty of time for celebration and making new friends.

Sunday morning kicked off with presentations by Andy Brown and Jeff Wright on the exciting conservation projects and plans ahead for the southeast, plus a review of the last year’s many accomplishments, followed by another series of breakout sessions.

The Georgia and South Carolina councils were gracious hosts throughout. The rendezvous was well-organized and the food was, shall we say, plentiful! Huge breakfasts, fried chicken platters for lunch, enormous dinners. It’s safe to say nobody went home hungry and most vowed to bring a pair of stretchy pants to home! It’s the single best way to thoroughly enjoy.

Conservation Workshop Coming This Fall

Planning is underway for the first North Carolina Trout Unlimited Conservation Workshop, to be held on November 8-9 (date subject to change). Officials from the US Forest Service, NC Wildlife Resources Commission and North Carolina TU are meeting in July to finalize the location and dates and to firm up the agenda for the weekend.

Some ideas being considered are: starter project plans and strategies, Embrace A Stream tips, on-stream training, membership surveys for cooperative workdays and talent sharing, a grant writing work shop, a shared tool trailer for chapter projects, and many more.

The goals include each chapter in attendance walking away better-equipped to identify, propose, fund and complete a conservation project, ready to build more meaningful relationship with other TU chapters, NGO entities and state/federal agencies, and build a set of shovel-ready projects to take on in 2020.

Keep an eye on future editions “The Mend” and “The Drift” for updates as things come into focus.

TU Council Meeting Via Web July 24th

The next meeting of the North Carolina Council of Trout Unlimited will take place Wednesday, July 24 at 7:00 p.m. The meeting will be conducted using WebEx web conferencing.

You can join via the web and have the system call out to you or use your computer for audio. You should join the web portion first using this link: https://acecloud.webex.com/meet/mimihala

Or if you don’t have access to a computer you can join by phone by calling this number and entering the access code:

- Call-in toll-free number: 1-866-432-9903.
- Access code: 206 607 742

Each chapter should have two delegates present for the call, in addition to any council officers who may also be from the chapter. We have some important and interesting things to talk about, including North Carolina hosting the 2020 Southeast Regional Rendezvous and our plans for the first NCTU Conservation Workshop later in the year.

An agenda will be available soon; contact a chapter officer or your chapter president to request a copy.

TU Expands Commitment to Conservation in the Southeast

Please join us in welcoming Jacob Hansen to the TU family. Jake is a master’s student at East Tennessee State University, studying hydrology and geospatial analysis, his passion for nature him me to practice conservation by leading and volunteering for area clean-ups, ecological remediation, and trail maintenance.

He feels strongly that if you love a place or idea, you should become involved. As TU’s new Conservation Program Assistant, he will be training and coordinating community members who have decided to do just that.

Dedicated community volunteers will gather erosion and sedimentation data on their smartphone with the Survey123 app, which will lead directly to on-the-ground land management and conservation decisions to help protect our coldwater resources.

There are several more Sedimentation Survey training events this summer; to learn more, contact Jacob at (jake.hansen@tu.org).
In the last few years I’ve read several articles on-line about the Catawba River “trophy” waters below the Lake James Bridgewater Dam. The articles were positive and talked about a nice brown trout fishery. The water at the dam is released from the bottom of the lake which keeps it relatively cool throughout the summer. The NCWRC felt that the water had the potential for a good brown trout fishery and began releasing about 10,000 brown trout per year with hopes that many would summer over and grow to reach trophy size.

To aid in the growth of larger fish, the water was listed as Special Regulation waters with a limit of two fish over 14”.

The idea of drifting and catching some nice fish this close to home has intrigued me. I discovered that John Zimmerman out of Morganton guided these waters, so I spoke with him and he agreed to speak to the Hickory Chapter about it at our February meeting this year. I liked what he had to say and asked him to set up a trip for my son and me. John has become very involved in Casting For Hope so was unable to accommodate us. Instead he set us up with guide Brandon.
Harrison and we scheduled a trip the first weekend of May. As a bit of an aside, the section of the river below the dam down to Muddy Creek is managed as Hatchery Supported water. There you are allowed to keep seven fish with no size restriction, but if you catch and keep any fish there, you cannot legally continue with them into the Special Regulation waters.

The other thing you need to know about fishing the Catawba River is that it is depends on flow from the dam. The flow can vary from almost nothing to very high and strong enough to sweep you away and can change in seconds.

The release schedule can be found here. To give you an idea of the change in water levels, look at the gauge height for the river below the dam.

The gauge histories shows the river rising two feet (almost instantaneously) when one unit comes on-line. And another two feet when the second unit comes on-line. The hydro station will blow a warning alarm before beginning the release, but if you aren’t paying attention or are too far down stream to hear it, it can be a disaster.

If you are wading the stream, the wave of water can easily knock you off your feet and if you happen to be fishing from the island below the dam you may not be able to wade across to shore. Our guide, Brandon, told us that the drift through the trophy water depends heavily on the flow rate. If no units are operating, the lack of current will make the row gruesome. Our unit running is ideal, but two units make the fishing difficult.

The schedule for the day was an ideal 1-unit flow. We planned our arrival for between 7 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. but arrived a bit late. There is currently road work and a detour barricade on the road down to the launch. We followed the detour around and discovered a second barricade at the other end. We drove all the way back around and through the lower barricade to the launch site. As we arrived the warning siren was going off to begin the 1-unit release.

Even one unit online creates a fairly strong flow rate, creating some wading conditions ranging from difficult-to-impossible.

The launch ramp is in the Hatchery Supported section of the river as we started our drift. The cold water combining with the humid air left a light layer of fog still sitting above the river and presented a beautiful view. The river for the whole trip was beautiful and we passed very few homes along the way.

Brandon set us up with streamers to start the trip. Due to the fast and relatively deep water we used sinking lines on a 7 wt. rod. This was my first time using a sinking line and it took a while to get used to casting that weight. Even my son Michael, who is a much better caster than I had issues getting used to the line, but eventually we both adapted and did well for the rest of the day. Starting in the Hatchery Supported section we each caught some nice rainbows but threw them back as we were heading into the Special Regulation section.

As we reached the end of the Hatchery Supported waters, Muddy Creek appeared on the right and was living up to its name. The benefit of the release flow that carries you through your drift is the higher flow also reduces the depth, reducing the Muddy Creek has on the Catawba River. The rise in the Catawba from the higher flow pushes up into Muddy Creek and reduces the rise also holds the muddy flow right to the bank for a long stretch. The clear mud line is one of the first good places to fish. The fish hang out right along the mud line waiting to ambush food coming out of Muddy Creek.

The Catawba holds stocked brook, brown and rainbow trout, as well as wild brown trout that reproduce annually. You’ll also find that smallmouth, largemouth, striped, perch, walleye and carp can be caught on the tailrace section.

On this day we only caught browns after we left the Hatchery Supported section and most were in the 9–12” size. Of the 10,000 planted in the fall, many do carry over. You can identify them by the red spots that appear on them, and several of those we caught did have the spots. The trophy fishery does exist with reports of 28” browns being caught, but this day we caught mostly the current year plants. We each about 15 fish and lost several more due to our inexperience with barbless hooks and weighted line.

Further down the river we did switch to drifting some nymphs below an indicator and had good luck on the rig. Brandon passed this nugget along if you are planning your own trip down the tail race: the Catawba has several kinds of mayflies as well as a few different caddis hatches, midges, crain flies, dragon and damsel flies, and of course stoneflies.

Even if you have your own boat or kayak for fishing this river, I highly recommend that you take at least one guided trip. Much of the fishing we did, and fish caught, happened in areas I never would have thought to fish. One of the best spots was in a large rapid that had a channel that you would likely never find without an experienced guide.

Brandon guides for Appalachian Fly Guides, which has been running trips on the Catawba tail race for over ten years. They have three guides and four boats to handle most any group of anglers.

The forecast for our day included widespread afternoon thunderstorms and in many places there is cell service which let us know the storms were on schedule to hit us around 3 p.m. On the last stretch Brandon put his arms into the oars and we arrived at the pull out on Watermill Glen Alpine Road just ahead of the storms. We got everything loaded and tied down and headed back up to the dam to pick up my truck. By the time we arrived it was pouring rain.

It really was a beautiful day on a very beautiful section of the Catawba River. The price is reasonable and it’s only 45 minutes away from Hickory, NC (provided you don’t take the detour like we did). Brandon said the temperatures do get a little warm in the summer so they give the fish a rest for a time. You may have to wait until fall for a trip, but the good news is brown trout average growth of ¾” per month and those 9–12” fish we caught may average ¾” by then.

And as a final point, you may want to do a little weight lifting before you head out on the trip. At the end of the day my arms were a bit sore from tossing that heavy line all day. Probably was a good prep for the trip to Belize that my sonand I have planned for June.
I woke up in the morning feeling that life was ealing away on my head with a 2x4. My company went from almost no work over the summer to mandatory 60 hour weeks seemingly overnight. Great for the bottom line, as the management team was stressing over how to keep everyone we had on the payroll. Unfortunately that created high stress levels amongst my employees in my department.

Add to that a bad legal situation with a family member and my best friend announcing that his wife just found out she had breast cancer, I needed to find a release.

My wife was away that weekend, and I knew I had to get into a river. I hadn’t wet a line in a month or so since a successful trip to the South Holston. But my goal this day was not to catch fish, and I knew exactly where I needed to go to make it happen. The Davidson River beckoned me. I knew that my “A” game wasn’t going to happen, and I would need it there to catch fish. I wanted to go to have the water wash my cares away and not for catching fish. This was a trip for healing.

The water was low. I wanted to tie on a #4 Matuka and scare the fish away. I didn’t want to catch any that would interfere with the river washing away my troubles. But I didn’t feel like picking it out of the rocks all day either. Besides, a #4 Matuka isn’t the best choice for a 3 wt. So I tied on a double nymph rig and figured, well, since I’m here I might as well make an effort to practice some high sticking.

I splashed through the river, again catching fish was not my purpose this trip. The action of moving through the water was working. I felt the caress of the water on my calves. I watched the leaves spinning in the water column. I saw my nymphs drifting through the seam, and damn, a fish! “Why did you take the nymph?” I said out loud. This was not part of the plan. I released the little brookie, none the worse from our chance meeting. And something inside my head clicked.

I couldn’t control the fish hitting my fly. All I could control was selecting a fly and presenting it as best I could. The choice was theirs, and theirs alone. And things just fell into perspective.

I suddenly realized that I couldn’t demand that work flow into the company on a set schedule for my convenience. All I could do was to have my department be prepared to turn out the work in a timely manner. That the legal system is set up as a safeguard for society and that actions have consequences and there is a price to pay for those actions. And though I can’t cure my best friend’s wife cancer, I can be the kind of friend to them that they would be to me.

The river had done its magic. My perspective for work, family, and friends was realigned. My life was back in order. Life would continue with a renewed vigor. And all of that sudden recognition to the ways of the world came from a little trout that I never wanted to catch in the first place.

“They say you forget your troubles on a trout stream, but that’s not quite it. What happens is that you begin to see where your troubles fit into the grand scheme of things, and suddenly they’re just not such a big deal anymore.”

— John Gierach
I’ve recently returned from a fly fishing trip to the State College region of central Pennsylvania. The trip was timed to coincide, hopefully, with the “Green Drake” hatch on Penns Creek. For those that may not know, the Green Drake hatch on Penns Creek is monumental. Penns Creek is Pennsylvania’s longest and largest limestone stream and produces some of the most prolific hatches in the East. The Green Drake hatch generally starts around dusk with both duns and spinners (Coffin Flies), filling the air. These are very large mayflies in the size 12 and larger range. When I say “fill the air”, I mean they are in your ears, in your face and everywhere. It’s a sight to behold!

Well, as luck would have it, the weather conditions did not cooperate. The water was muddy, levels were way up and conditions overall were miserable. So, I cut my trip short and returned to North Carolina earlier than planned. Bummer ah?

Much of my time in Pennsylvania was spent exchanging fishing stories with locals and watching several experienced fly tiers do their thing, tying flies. In preparation for this trip, and doing my research, I had previously watched several Penns Creek YouTube videos on fishing the GD hatch. Several of these YouTube videos showed fishing nymphs utilizing “Lively Legs”. I hadn’t had the opportunity to tie with them or actually seen flies utilizing these synthetic rubber legs. I must say, flies tied with these legs look very “fishy” and, I’m told, catch trout with outstanding regularity. So, on my way back to North Carolina, I stopped off at a local State College fly shop and made a purchase so I could try my hand at tying a few nymphs utilizing “Lively Legs”.

This isn’t an overly difficult tie, but it does require a lot of steps.

What you see here is my rendition of a BH Pheasant Tail nymph tied utilizing “Lively Legs”.

It seems that the same weather pattern I experienced in Pennsylvania followed me back to North Carolina. We need the rain, so no complaints. Anyway, I’ve tied up several nymphs in anticipation of getting on the stream and, I must say, my expectations are high.

Tight lines,
Dave

**Materials**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hook</th>
<th>Size 12, 1 Xing, Nymph Hook</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thread</td>
<td>6/0 Black or Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bead</td>
<td>Gold Tungsten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rib</td>
<td>Small Gold Wire</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tail</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wing Case</td>
<td>Thin Skin</td>
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<td>Throat</td>
<td>Pheasant Tail Feather Fibers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legs</td>
<td>Lively Legz</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1. Start by mashing barb, placing hook on hook and starting thread behind the hook eye.
2. Lay down a thread base stopping thread at bend just above barb.
3. Select 7 or 8 fibers from a pheasant tail feather. Make sure tips are aligned. Secure fibers with 3 or 4 thread wraps at head of hook above barb. Do not clip excess fibers; these will be used to form the abdomen.
4. Advance thread forward approximately 2/3 on the hook shank. Secure gold wire rib at this point and wind the thread back to tail-in point. Advance thread forward again approximately 1/3 the hook shank.
5. Pick up the pheasant tail fibers with your hackle pliers. While twisting the pliers slightly, advance the fibers forward forming the abdomen. Secure fibers and trim excess.
6. Counter-wind the rib forward in 5 or 6 even spirals and secure. Clip excess.
7. Tie in your wing case material, in this case Thin Skin.
8. Select two or three pheasant fibers and tie-in at base of wing case. Wind the pheasant fibers forward forming a base to set the Lively Leg. Clip excess. Your thread should be hanging just behind the head.
9. Select a set of Lively legs. Take note that the front legs point forward towards the eye and you’ll see a “tie-in tab” located between the front pointing legs. Secure the legs behind hook eye using this tab.
10. Bring the thread back and make a few turns between the front and rear sets of legs.
11. Bring the thread back and make a few turns between the rear set of legs and the rear set of legs. Once the legs are secure on top of hook, clip the rear legs. We are only using two pairs of legs. At this point your thread will be hanging between the rear set of legs and wing case tie-in point.
12. Clip 3 or 4 fibers from a pheasant tail feather and secure at this point. Bring your tying thread forward to just behind the hook-eye. Now build the thorax using the 3 or 4 pheasant tail fibers and securing behind hook eye. Allow space so the eye does not get cramped.
13. Bring your wing case material over the thorax and legs and secure behind hook eye.
14. Secure wing case material with 4 half hitches or 8 tiny wraps. Apply a drop of head cement.
I started out life as a confirmed worm-dunker. My favorite memories are of hot, lazy summer days spent with my dad on the banks of farm ponds and creeks somewhere in south-central Missouri, the occasional cow coming up to see what’s what, setting up the minnow trap just right and baiting it with crackers, turning over rocks looking for crawdads.

Summers of short pants, chiggers, sunburned legs and high blue Ozark skies. Recently, as I made a drive down Wilson Road near Pisgah Forest, the sweet smell of honeysuckle growing along the French Broad brought those memories flooding back. I was jerked abruptly into the present when I rounded the last corner — where the Brevard city sewage plant is likewise in the full and fragrant bloom that comes along with the heat.

I guess these days some kids get their start on a fly rod from an adult friend or relative who loves to fly fish. Growing up in the 60’s, I wasn’t one of those kids. I started out with a cane pole. A few years later, I graduated to a matched Zebco 202 beginner outfit. I remember how excited I was to be upgraded from that lowly 202 to the professional Zebco 33 setup in shiny chrome silver with adjustable drag just like the old man used.

Each spring we’d open up the tackle box to let it air out before restocking it with Eagle Claw snelled hooks, sinkers, bobbers and other stuff you buy to fill a beat-up Plano. Throw in maybe a few treble hooks, sinkers the size of your thumb and a jar of stink bait for some channel cats and we were ready for business. As I recall there were some spoons, spinners and Rapalas in there, but they were holdovers from many years ago and were allowed to naturally disintegrate in the trays where they’d been stored, probably since sometime early in the Eisenhower administration.

As I look at the assortment of Sage, Orvis and Winston rods on the wall of my fly tying workshop/gear storage room — the lone tenkara rod forming something of a bridge between the old and new — our old Zebcos and such all seem laughably low-tech now. But compared to sticking your bare hands under rocks and into the banks of creeks hoping to grab something that won’t bite you, those 33 rigs and Plano box were quite an upgrade. Usually late April brought that glorious day when he’d ask “so — do you want to go fishing?”

Sometimes we dug worms out of our own garden, between the rows of fat tomatoes and green beans. Or we bought the big nightcrawlers at Dishman’s DX gas station, where they also maintained a couple of aerator tanks of minnows — large, medium and small. He’d get a couple dozen and we’d head to the country. We’d sit together, sometimes apart, content to watch our red-and-white bobbers and hoping for some activity on the water.
Back in the 60’s it seemed less wasteful than suffocating them by throwing them into the field or the stream opposite their natural habitat.

Every Saturday and holiday afterward I’d pester the old man to do it all again until fall came around, the gear was put away and we started thinking about the opening of quail season. In the bitter months after quail season we contented ourselves with watching “The American Sportsman” (with Curt Gowdy), “Wide World of Sports” and “Fishing with Virgil Ward” on Sunday afternoons, wondering why the heck anybody in their right minds would catch fish that big and just throw 'em back.

Some folks are lucky and never “outgrow” the love of fishing; even temporarily. I stopped for over a dozen years when I lost my dad. It just wasn’t fun anymore. Plus, I never really developed a taste for game fish like bass and bluegill, and the whole killing and gutting thing just isn’t for me. I’m not squeamish so much as I’m lazy and would rather end my fishing trips on the tailgate of a truck with a cold beer than standing over a trash can scooping out entrails.

And generally, those fish tasted awful, a mixture of grassiness and mud, plus you never knew for sure what you were getting into when you opened one up. I lived on a private lake for a while in Missouri, and a friend brought over a big zip-lock bag full of bass he’d caught. He cautioned me that if I found some worms just to cut them out. Suppressing my horror, I waited until after he left before I visited a little section of woods and checked the filets in there for the raccoons and possums to enjoy, worms and all.

Eventually I missed the water and being outside, so I thought I’d try my hand at fly fishing. I picked up a starter set of gear (designed to last just long enough to get you hooked, which is a little like getting a discount on your first week’s supply of meth) and gave it a whirl. I enjoyed it. Next stop: Trout Unlimited membership where I could learn more about where and how to do more with this buggy-whip thing than create impressive bird’s nest snarls.

And quite a bit has managed to seep into my thick skull. For about 10 years, I attended meetings sparsely and kept to myself. It was intimidating. Particularly, the “PR” person they leave out front or get too warm in the summer, so in some cases harvest is desirable and necessary.

It stands to reason, then, that I was amused by Caleb Abramson’s retelling of the park service’s “removal” (i.e., killing) of brown and rainbow trout in some streams in GSMNP into which they are transplanting native park brookies. Particularly, the “PR” person they leave out front to give curious tourists a cuddly version of what’s going on in the river, why it may be a funny color, or what all those people are doing out there looking like they’re trying to find a lost wedding ring with enormous metal detector looking things.

I conjure to mind a family of four, moms and dads helping the kids appreciate the glories of nature and the value of all life when they come across some native North Carolinian leaning on a fence. “So, what are you all up to?”, they ask, and get an answer they didn’t quite expect.

“Oh, we’s just out here a-killin’ some feesh.”

People are shocked by that, but they shouldn’t be.
Yeah, the dude doesn’t have much of a future in PR. But brook trout are OUR fish. They’ve been here for a jillion years, give or take a million or two, maybe since creation, but our records don’t stretch back quite that far.

Indeed, though browns and ‘bows exist in the wild they came with us from other places. In truth they’re the strangers in a strange land, having been here a “relatively short” time — by most accounts since the very late 1800’s. So if we exist ‘bows and browns in favor of brookies in some streams here in Appalachia, maybe we’re doing our own small part to restore the order of things as established by nature, and as creation intended.

I get that completely.

But the reality is that the beautiful places brookies live are inaccessible to many anglers. And if the argument is that TU is all about restoring “what was there before” — we should kill off every trout that isn’t an Appalachian brookie in every Appalachian stream. Wild, whatever — doesn’t matter. They don’t belong. If the natives are meant to be there, they’ll show up.

So the purist, native-only argument hits a dead-end with me. Instead, I think we need to find balance by embracing our wild browns and ‘bows and welcoming them as naturalized citizens, many generations removed. Because if they rooted TU members out of the country because we’re not genetically native many of us would be living in Africa, Europe or Asia.

And then we come to the “problem” of stocked trout.

I’ve been all over the map with our state’s stocking program. For a short time I managed a crew of volunteers to stock the Little River in DuPont State Forest. I helped TU members stock the Green River in Polk County.

Still, over time, I became convinced that TU shouldn’t be involved in stocking fish. I’ve come to see how wrong I was — again. Some of the best friendships, greatest laughs and most wonderful times I’ve known in TU have been forged or enjoyed around stocking trucks and five gallon buckets. Provided we’re not stocking in waters that contain — or could contain — a self-sustaining population of native/wild fish, I think it’s a great way for us to engage with our communities, agency partners and each other.

I wonder how many fathers and mothers and sons and daughters — and casual acquaintances — have forged lifelong bonds over a few stocker fish, how many avid angler-conservationists can trace their roots there, and how many more are yet to come.

And sure, a day in the high country pursuing wild natives is something that can’t be beat; but it’s also something that can’t be experienced in four hours on Wednesday morning, when you have a whole pile of work to get done so you can keep your ass out of debtor’s prison. It’s also something you can’t do with a family in tow, or if you have physical limitations that hinder your mobility and reduce your options — purism he damned.

Part of this came home to me as I visited with a man working in the meat department at our local Igoe’s market. I overheard him telling a lady he and his son had been out fishing that morning but hadn’t had any success. Me, nosy cuss that I am, asked where they’d gone.

“Oh, the hatchery water”, he said, “but it was pretty well fished out.” I told him about the schedules on the WRC site. He knew about them. It really didn’t matter that much, he said, the important thing was that they got to spend time together on the water.

And here he was at work a few hours later making sure I could take home just the right cut of steak. He and his son and countless like them are our tribe, our mission, and our future. I ran into him again just a few days ago, and he was happy to show me the fine 22” rainbow stocker he’d caught in Hatchery Supported water between dropping his son off at school in the morning and coming to work that afternoon.

And the man I ran across in the parking lot at Wal-Mart, wearing his waders and fishing hat. He walked with a pronounced limp and was making slow progress. Not exactly a candidate for a wild time in the high country. “How’d you do today?”, I asked. Nosy cuss, again. “Nothin’ — pretty well fished out, I reckon, but it sure was nice to be out” was his response.

And sure, I’m concerned about introducing more non-native fish into our streams. I want more of our high country streams to reflect true Appalachian fishing — although he truly authentic perhaps we should insist on catching fish with nets or our hands only, instead of despicable $5 flies fished on $1,000 graphite rods.

But I try hard not to sit in judgment of people who enjoy taking our fish legally, or who insist on releasing every fish, or who fish under a strike indicator, or who prefer wet-to-dry flies, or the many other things that drive little wedges between us as an organization. To each, their own.

I hope we fear from more wild-eyed “native/wild only” anglers. They belong.

I hope we see more TU presentations by bait fishers and spin casters. They belong. I hope we get to hear from more daughters and sons whose loved ones took them fishing and instilled a love for nature — even if came from catching “unnatural” fish on “unnatural” things.

Whether those fish were kept legally or released to fight another day, wild or stocked, and whether they were taken on flies tied on hooks made in Japan, lures manufactured in Tennessee or worms purchased at a gas station along the way.

I hope we continue to make allowances — smart compromises — like the Delayed Harvest program and the Hatchery Supported waters where it makes sense to do so.

Enjoy your time on the water this summer.
“The Drift” is the quarterly publication of the North Carolina Council of Trout Unlimited and is edited and managed by council secretary Charles Crolley. The stories and articles remain the property of their individual authors and are used with permission. Where no author name is indicated, the article is generally attributable to the editor.

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If you have comments, concerns, questions or suggestions, they are most welcome at news@northcarolinatu.org. We ask again that you be courteous and bear in mind that the magazine is meant to reflect a variety of opinions and interests — some of which you may not share.

(Pro tip: if you object to a column, most of the time the answer will be to consider submitting a column from your point of view.)