

The Conservationist



PPTU.org

Potomac-Patuxent Chapter Trout Unlimited

Feb 2025 • Published monthly except June, July, August and December

“Fishing the Gunpowder River” Guest Speaker: Rich Dennison

February 19th, 2025

We are pleased to welcome local guide Rich Dennison as our February speaker. He will provide us tactics and tips for fishing the Gunpowder River.

Rich is a guide and instructor based in central Maryland - richdennisonflyfishing.com. At a young age, he learned the art of fly tying and how to cast a fly rod and began the timeless pursuit of wild trout on Maryland waterways. He turned his passion into a career in 2010 when he entered the fishing industry, managing the fly fishing department at Tochterman’s Fishing Tackle in Baltimore. During his time at Tochterman’s, he became an advocate for area fisheries and preserving the waterways he grew up fishing by serving as a Maryland Trout Unlimited board member and Coastal Conservation Association Baltimore Chapter President and CCA Maryland board member.

In 2018, he founded Fly Anglers Fishing Club with the goal of sharing his love of fly fishing with other like-minded individuals. His knowledge of the sport and its equipment, combined with his passion for teaching others, is something that drives him and makes him a successful guide and instructor.



– *Scott Cernich*

Feb 19th Chapter Meeting

Laurel Volunteer Fire Department

7588 Van Dusen Road, Laurel, MD 20707

Time and Day: 7:00 PM, Third Wednesday of the month except June, July, August and December

[Online Chapter Meeting Link](#)

Visit our website: PPTU.org

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Contact Us:

mail@pptu.org

Presidents' Column - Craig VanderKolk



It's mid-January as I write this column and I just finished shoveling out my drive and pushing cows into the barn because it's 18 degrees out. On the good side, I have a warm basement, thanks to a wood burning stove, and I'm dreaming of fishing. It's a good time and place for me to review last year's fishing and plans for the upcoming year. Instagram and YouTube are a nice distraction to see places to go, expand my put bucket list or pick up some new techniques.

Many people use this time to tie flies. We just finished our yearly Fly tying extravaganza and it was a great success. Our raffle brought in \$80 and we sold a bunch of materials to the 30+ attendees. Many thanks to all the tiers; Bob O'Donnell, Bob Kaiser, Pete Yarrington, Sean Beck, Mike Slepisky and Jay Sheppard, and the great variety of flies they demonstrated. For those of you who don't tie but want to learn, our PPTU beginning fly tying class begins February 18. This is a great class to learn the basics or refine some of your techniques under the watchful eye of a master tier, Bob Dietz.

Winter it also the time to check all your gear. I think of it as starting at the end of the line with flies and working my way back up to tippet, leader, fly line, rod & reel, boots and waders and foul weather gear. I organize my fly boxes and rethink the flies I lost (along with that big one that took it) and what I need. Tippet spools can be examined to make sure you have enough of each. Some people replace nylon every year but hopefully you use it all up in 2 years once it's been exposed to sun and stream. Fluorocarbon lasts much longer, both on your vest and in the environment. This is a good chance to make a plan of what to do with excess tippet or leader material. Several fly fishing companies make little “trash collectors” to attach to you vest or pack. A new leader is good way to start the year. Whatever you do, always check for knots and abrasions to keep from losing that big one. Fly lines should be examined and either replaced every few years or be cleaned and perhaps some treatment to help it float. Spring can be rainy and cold so make sure your waders don't leak (maybe run them in the shower with soap and water to clean them and make sure they're water tight. Rain gear can benefit from a spray of DWR (Durable Water Repellent) but look

for PFAS free products, which probably need to be applied more frequently.

While you're checking all your equipment, why not practice some casting (ideally before you clean your line). Its cold out there, but since I'm heading to south to fish saltwater, I'm out there every other day or so, getting re-acquainted with my 10 wt (it's very rewarding since my warm weather line shoots 15 feet further in the cold I'm training my muscles and getting my timing down. The Orvis Educational videos are also great help learning new a technique to improve your casting.

Whatever you do in your gear review, make sure to visit a local fly shop. They are great source of knowledge and expertise and need our support to be there for the future. There's also fly fishing shows to attend. The Virginia Fly Fishing & Wine Festival and The Fly Fishing Show in Edison New Jersey were in January (mark your calendars for next year) but you can still plan to attend The Fly Fishing Show in Lancaster PA, March 15-16 or the The Maryland Fly Fishing Show, March 22. Both shows are a great place to find some deals on equipment and learn about new fishing destinations.

Finally, we have some outings to enjoy, check the website for upcoming announcements. Hopefully, spring will come early after all these cold and snowy days and with a little time and effort, we'll all be ready for our next adventure.

Craig VanderKolk
President, PPTU



PPTU Mentor Program Beginners & Beyond

PPTU provides one-on-one streamside fly fishing instruction to PPTU members. Participants must show commitment by having waders or hip boots, a rod and reel outfit, and leader. Discussions will include equipment, knots, casting, flies, dry fly and nymphing techniques, entomology, reading water, conservation, etc. all on nearby streams. Instruction will be tailored to individual needs. Members who have not made an **Annual Supporting Contribution (ASC)** will be asked to contribute \$20.

Contact us by e-mail: mentor@pptu.org



It's Fly Fishing Show Time!!! - Bob O'Donnell

[The Fly Fishing Show](#) is coming to our area soon!

Mark your calendar and gather up your friends. Spending time checking out new products, talking with the vendors, or watching one of the legends demonstrating on the casting pond is a great way to beat the winter blues.

March

15-16 Lancaster, PA

22 Townson, MD (Maryland Fly Fishing Show)



Renew Your TU Membership! - PPTU

As a reminder, to be a member of PPTU you need to be a current member with [Trout Unlimited](#). This is a good time of year to check on your membership and renew it if necessary. To renew, go to the TU website and select the [Renew Membership](#) button. Basic membership starts at \$35 per year. TU's staff is standing by to answer any questions you may have regarding your membership – you can call them at: 1-800-834-2419. Our chapter is #236!

For all you newbies, if you have ever wanted to join Trout Unlimited, let PPTU cover your first year's membership! FREE! No cost to you except for your time in sending PPTU an email membership.pptu@gmail.com. You will become an active TU member almost in the blink of an eye and additionally a member of PPTU. The only requirement is that you have never been a member of TU. Join now!

All Things Euro-Nymphing: Euro-Rods, Lines and Leaders - Fly Fish Food

These SKILL BUILDER videos will help you along your fly fishing journey! If you haven't seen them, Fly Fish Food chooses tips and post them every week.

In this Fly Fishing Skill Builder, Lance Egan gives a breakdown on the basic gear and setup needed for Euro nymphing! The best rods, lines, and leaders capable of efficiently casting and maintaining direct contact with your flies. Which in turn will help you detect strikes and catch more fish!

[Watch the video.](#)

"Poets talk about "spots of time", but it is really the fishermen who experience eternity compressed into a moment. No one can tell what a spot of time is until suddenly the whole world is a fish and the fish is gone."

~ Norman Mclean



If you spot poaching please call or text:

Maryland Wildlife Crime Stoppers
At
443-433-4112



Add this number to your cell phone contact list!



No Rules in Fly Fishing! - Bob O'Donnell/Venture Fly Co

“Are there fly fishing rules? And if these rules exist, will they help you catch more fish on a fly rod? For example, should you always try to get a drag-free drift when using dry flies, or keep your fly rod tip up high when landing big fish? There actually aren't any rules in fly fishing. There are just a couple guidelines to follow if you want to put fish in the net.”

Drag Free Drift - Start skating flies to trigger the fish to eat. This is a technique where you purposefully let your dry flies drag or you pull them just very slightly across the top of the water to make the flies look like they're skating on top of the water and that actually can imitate a very lifelike action like caddis flies exhibit as they actually move in real life.

Match the Hatch - Sometimes it pays to completely mismatch the hatch. Giving fish a different choice sometimes pays off. During a heavy hatch where you may not be able to follow your fly or your fly gets lost among all the naturals on the water, it can pay to toss something larger, or a different color or both out to the fish. If the fish are hungry, or have been stung once already by an imitation, you'll be surprised how often this technique works.

Keep Your Rod Tip High – Lowering your rod tip can help when playing larger fish. Keeping your

tip high is just a reminder of how important it is to keep tension on the fly line during the fight and keeping the tip up is the easiest way to do that but when you get into a bigger fish it actually pays to use some side pressure. Its okay to tilt the rod to the side which engages the butt section of the rod, which is the strongest part of the rod and it lets you pull on the fish a bit more and land them quicker. This is another refinement of the technique that you're taught with keeping your tip up you're still keeping the line tight but you don't have to keep the tip up.

Casting Technique – Should all of us cast the same? No! If you're casting and use more wrist in in your cast but someone else keeps their wrist locked and they use more of their forearm to move their fly rod back and forth it doesn't matter if the results are same. If you're casting your flies in front of fish and making them look natural, you're doing just fine. Your job as a fly angler is to make your fly look natural, so how you choose to achieve that natural presentation is completely entirely up to you.

Put flies in front of fish, try to make them look real. Don' be afraid to break the rules!

Annual Supporting Contribution (ASC) - Jay Sheppard

As the New Year begins, now is a good time to consider making an Annual Supporting Contribution (ASC) to PPTU. As a Chapter we are not allowed to require chapter dues or fees for membership, so along with other fund raising events, we therefore ask for a \$20 ASC each year to sustain the chapter's administration costs, educational programs, and other community service projects including:

- Trout in the Classroom program that teaches primary & middle schoolers the importance of cold water fisheries to our environment.
- Support to TU fly fishing & conservation camps in Virginia and Pennsylvania, sponsoring attendance by high school students.
- Support of the Project Healing Waters program at Ft. Meade and Walter Reed that provides recreational activities to wounded warriors.
- Support the Mayfly Project for foster kids by being taught to fish and use fly rods.
- Free copies of the Conservationist for local fly shops, State agencies and other conservation organizations.

- Conservation projects that restore trout habitats in rivers & streams across Maryland.

You can make your ASC donation in several ways:

- At the next chapter meeting (whenever that might be) by cash or check.
- Go to pptu.org and use our Donate portal: [Donate to PPTU](#)

Mail a check payable to PPTU and send it to our PO Box (see last page).



How to Detect Strikes Visually When Euro Nymphing - Devin Olsen

In this video, Devon Olson from [Tactical Fly Fisher](#), shows how to detect strikes visually when Euro Nymphing, a critical skill for any fly fisher looking to elevate their technique. Euro Nymphing requires precision and focus, and detecting subtle strikes can make all the difference between a successful day on the water and going home empty-handed. Whether you're a beginner or an experienced fly angler, learning how to spot these strikes visually will drastically improve your catch rate. I recommend that you use the highest resolution settings on YouTube and view the video full screen so that you'll be able to see these sighter takes clearly.

If you want to improve your Euro Nymphing skills, increase your success, and confidently detect strikes in real-time, this video is for you.

[Watch Here](#)

Climate Corner - James Irons



2024 Warmest Year on Record

Last month, NASA announced the earth's global average surface temperature in 2024 was the warmest on record. "The key thing to take away from all of this is that the long-term trends are pretty much relentlessly up," said Gavin Schmidt, director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS) in New York.

For nearly 45 years, a team of scientists at NASA's GISS has been tracking these rising temperatures and producing records and analyses of the global

temperature of Earth. Each month, scientists release a dataset. NASA is one of several institutions that measures and tracks global temperature, along with Europe's Copernicus Climate Change Center, the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Berkeley Earth, and the UK's Met Office. The various organizations use different methods to calculate global temperature and address uncertainties. Still, the resulting estimates are in close agreement. To learn more about NASA's rigorous analysis of temperature data visit their site:

[Global Temperature](#)



Electrify Howard County

On March 6, 2023, the Howard County Council passed the Clean New Buildings Climate Act (CB-5) to put the county on the pathway to all-electric new buildings. The Act requires the County Executive to report to the Council on the changes needed to building codes to require electrification of new buildings, as well as major renovations and additions. The County will likely take up legislation to consider those changes in first quarter of 2025. The organization HoCo Climate action is collecting signatures for a petition to the Howard County Council supporting these changes. You can sign the petition at: [HoCo Petition](#). HoCo Climate Change has also posted an infographic on "Why Electrify" – [view it here](#).

Trout Stocking 2025

- MD DNR

The Department of Natural Resources will begin the 2025 trout fishing season with early stockings this week, if conditions allow.

Initially, trout will average around a half pound each, and larger fish will be released during the regular season. Most waters remain locked in ice and snow, limiting the areas that can be stocked. Staff are prioritizing the stocking locations conducive to ice fishing and general winter fishing. Additional waters

will be stocked through February as conditions allow.

Email alerts will be sent after stockings are complete. Anglers are encouraged to use popular resources such as the [Trout Stocking Activities Map](#) and the [Trout Stocking](#) webpage for updates. Winter trout fishing is a great way to get outdoors and kick off the fishing season.

Winter Trout Fishing - Ronald Kerrick

Handling Winter Fish - You already know that you should handle fish with wet hands to avoid pulling off their slime coating. This issue is way worse with wool gloves than with dry hands. If you must handle fish, remove your gloves or use a non-abrasive glove. Another thing to consider is that fish are cold-blooded and very cold air temperatures can harm the fish's gills if they are exposed for too long. Consider how quickly your guides ice up when it's 20 degrees out. That same thing is happening to fish that are held out of the water for more than a few seconds. Damage to their gills can occur quickly. Consider skipping the fish pictures and using your net to keep fish submerged as much as you can, while removing the hook with a hemostat or needle nosed pliers. For that special fish that you must have a picture of, do it responsibly by keeping the fish close to the surface of the water and limiting the air exposure to no longer than it takes to get a quick picture.



Avoid Redds – Redds are constructed sometime between November and January, depending on the water temperature. We need to be aware of stepping on redds that are no longer fresh and obvious. The fish are off redds in the winter. Though eggs are laid during the fall, the fry can hatch anywhere from 30 to 120 days depending on the water temperature. The colder the water the longer it takes for the fry to hatch. It is assumed that most eggs hatch in February, so be careful where you are stepping while wading. [View a Redd](#)

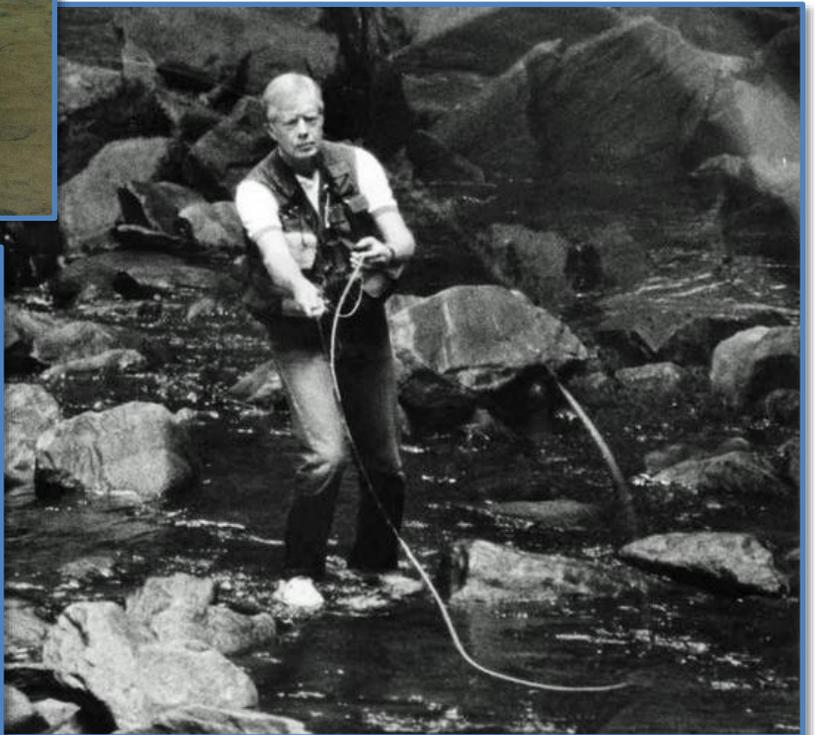
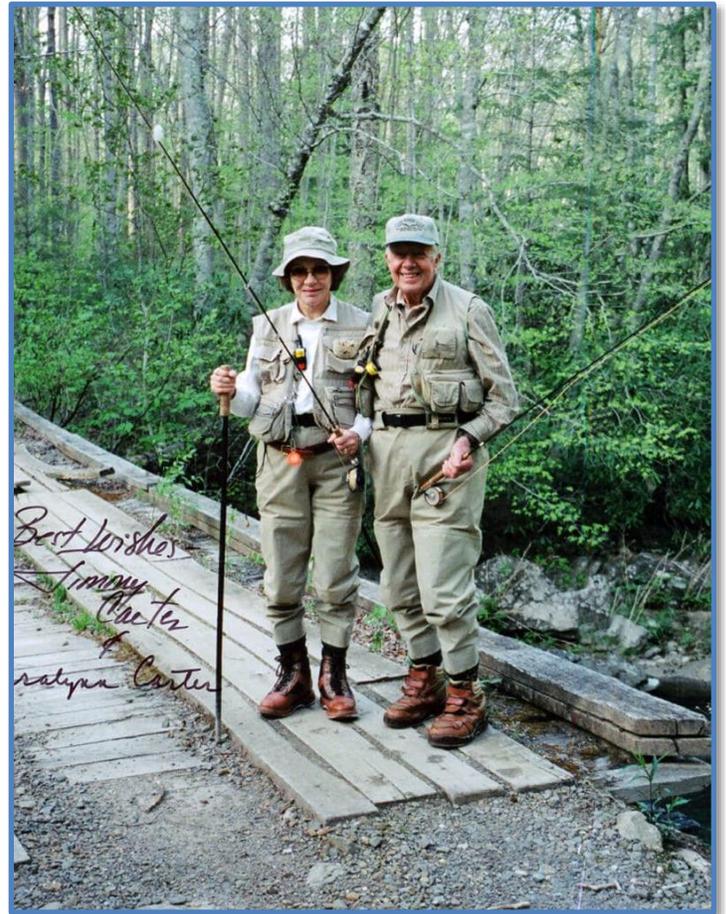
Members Catch - Bob O'Donnell

Not many postings for January. Thought I would leave you with images of Jimmy Carter, fellow conservationist and avid fly fisherman. Enjoy these images and videos.

[Carter 1](#)

[Carter 2](#)

[Carter 3](#)



Jimmy Carter fishing Big Hunting Creek

"Suddenly, there was an explosive rise not ten feet away, and an eight-inch trout came up out of the water to take one of the airborne mayflies. In all my life, it was the most memorable rise of a wild fish."

— Jimmy Carter

Contributions & Questions Welcome!

Send your contributions, article suggestions or fly fishing questions to the Editor in an email or as an MS Word.doc attachment. The deadline for submissions is typically the twelfth (12th) day of the month prior to the month of publication.

Editor: Bob O'Donnell

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Fluff Top Mayfly

The Fluff Top Mayfly is a pattern with a great profile in the water. The CDC Parachute technique is a fun way to utilize a thread splitter, resulting in a high floating quick tie.

Make sure to have a few in your box come May. Pro tip: Use Parapost Yarn in Fl. Pink for a Hi Viz version.

[Fluff Top Mayfly](#)



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