

The Conservationist



PPTU.org

Potomac-Patuxent Chapter Trout Unlimited

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

“Fly Tying Extravaganza 2025” In Person Meeting

January 15th, 2025

Happy New Year! It’s time to get ready for PPTU’s annual Fly Tying Extravaganza! Ease into the New Year watching and learning about fly tying by some of our amazing members and friends who will be demonstrating great techniques and offering tips to the rest of us.

These tyers will demonstrate the flies they use themselves and which all have caught fish. Talk with the tyers one-on-one and feel free to take home a pattern recipe to try tying the patterns yourself. This is a great opportunity to pick the brains of your fellow members and maybe pick up some tying tips. Catching a fish on a fly that you tied is something special!

To kick off the New Year, our January Fly Tying meeting will be **In Person Only**. Come to our new meeting location, The Laurel Volunteer Fire Department, 7588 Van Dusen Road, Laurel, MD 20707 to meet and greet your fellow chapter members while viewing some great tying demonstrations.



– *Scott Cernich*

Jan 15th 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

Visit our website: PPTU.org

OFFICERS and DIRECTORS 2024 – 2025

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Directors: Ron Briggs
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Conservationist Editor: Bob O’Donnell
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Northwest Branch: Joe Robinson
Middle Patuxent: Bryan Sirotkin
Patuxent: Jay Sheppard

Mid Atlantic Council Delegates:

Alan Burrows
Ron Briggs
Scott Cernich
Bob Dietz
Randy Dwyer: Council Chair
Ron Kerrick
Bob O’Donnell
Nick Weber

Contact Us:

mail@pptu.org

Presidents’ Column - Craig VanderKolk



Since this is the first Conservationist for 2025, let me wish you and your family members a happy and healthy New Year. I hope it brings many enjoyable opportunities for you to fish, and help make our cold water streams and trout, healthier.

Thanks to our board, various committee chairs and active members, we’ve had a very good 2024 with great outings, superb speakers, TU conservation projects in Maryland, a swap meet and social events. Thanks to everyone who organized these activities and those that participated. Thanks to them, and you our members, the chapter is active and financially sound. You can continue PPTU’s work by participating in our ASC. I always have trouble remembering what the letters ASC represent but not what it is and does. The ASC is the Annual Supporting Contribution that helps continue our programs and helps us plan and participate in conservation projects. We’ve made it easy by creating a link on our website and you can even agree to have it automatically paid yearly with a credit card.

This past year we continued the new tradition of recognizing three members of PPTU for their contributions to fishing in Maryland and preserving our streams and trout. Thanks to the work of our Social Chair, Bob Bokulic, we had a great luncheon at the Olive Garden in Laurel on December 14. We had 25 people come out and pay tribute to Charlie Gelso, Nick Weber and Larry Coburn. Our 2023 honorees, Ken Bowyer, Bob Dietz and Jay Shepard introduced us to them and provided us with background and stories of their fishing adventures.

Charlie Gelso is a Psychologist who spent 30 plus years teaching at the University of Maryland and somehow found time to co-write “the” book on Maryland fly fishing “Guide to Maryland Trout Fishing”. He used this knowledge to guide on rivers around Maryland and was instrumental in teaching Ken Bowyer many of the finer points of fly fishing that Ken ultimately passed on to most of the PPTU membership through the mentor program for more than 20 years. His co-author, Larry Coburn was described by many as the best angler they have ever fished with. Routinely catching 20 fish in an outing to angling friends 4 or 5. “Usually you had to go the

opposite direction on the stream, because Larry would catch all the fish if you followed him”. Nick Weber has a love of gardening. He has raises roses (not the ones that plague us on the paths along rivers) but heritage roses with more than 400 varietals. When Larry Hogan proposed drilling and fracking in Western Maryland, Nick went on the record in the news opposing the move since habitat would be destroyed “which could kill fish”. Nick participated in placing signs on trees in on the Haviland Mill stretch of the Patuxent below Brighton Dam after PPTU successfully lobbied to get it designated “catch and release” and “fly fishing” only. Each of them were presented the “Order of the Patuxent Special” named for the fly created by Jay Sheppard. They received a beautiful plaque created by Bob O’Donnell with the Patuxent Special fly expertly tied by Pete Yarrington.

Thanks to our members of the Order of the Patuxent Special for all they’ve done over the years and to each of the members who made the luncheon such a success and all of the members who attended.

Happy New Year!

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

This year, the local fly show season kicks off on January 10th. By going to [The Fly Fishing Show](#) website you can find the show closest to you.

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.

January

10-11 Virginia Fly Fishing & Wine Festival—
Doswell, VA [View Promotional Video](#)

24-26 The Fly-Fishing Show—Edison, NJ



Time to 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!



Gunpowder River Trout Survey - Maryland DNR

On a brisk September morning (2024), fisheries biologists with the help of an [electrofishing](#) pontoon barge and a 12-person net crew waded central Maryland's most popular self-sustaining brown trout fishery searching for what lies beneath the surface.

Between the Prettyboy Reservoir and the Loch Raven Reservoir is a 17-mile stretch of fertile trout habitat, where wild brown trout have flourished since the late 1980s due to one of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources' greatest success stories.

Prior to 1986, the gates of the Prettyboy Dam would open and close as seen fit by the City of Baltimore. The reservoir's drainage leads into the Gunpowder Falls, which moves toward the Loch Raven Reservoir, funnels into the Big Gunpowder Falls, widens into the Gunpowder River, and empties into the Upper Chesapeake Bay. When the gates of the Prettyboy Dam were closed, the upper span of the river effectively dried up.

In 1986, DNR officials along with the Maryland chapter of Trout Unlimited worked with dam officials to negotiate a minimum flow, keeping gates open at all times to provide constant cold water release. The cold water comes from the depths of the Prettyboy Reservoir, typically under 55 degrees year-round, and ideal for wild trout populations. When the agreement was made for the dam to release water year-round, department officials tested the area's capability to sustain a brown trout fishery.

Today, the area is renowned as one of the nation's best trout streams and for its proximity to the populous Baltimore area.

The geographical features of Harford and northern Baltimore counties contribute to the success of the Gunpowder's trout population. Its proximity to metropolitan areas is key for public access and has several natural features working in its favor. Grassy and shallow areas on the edges of the stream are important habitats for the younger, smaller trout, where staying away from larger fish may be the difference between life and death. Brown trout are an extremely predatory species which are known to eat small fish—including their own young—in addition to the standard diet of aquatic insects. In the Gunpowder those insects typically range from mayflies to caddis to stoneflies.

Scientists use the electrofisher to briefly “zap” the fish with a high-voltage, low amperage current, then the netting crew retrieves the trout, and groups them in live-wells before the fish are analyzed, measured, and safely released. This year's survey collected 277 wild brown trout in addition to several other species who call the Gunpowder home. Blue Ridge sculpin, northern hog suckers, white suckers, pumpkinseed sunfish, and American eel were found in the quarter-mile stretch of the stream that was surveyed.

Prior year surveys have identified citation-sized brown trout, holdover rainbow trout, native Maryland brook trout, and the ultra-rare brook/brown hybrid “tiger” trout.

"The time spent wading a cool stream with a fly rod in hand is never wasted, even if no fish are caught."

~ Gladys Taber

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!



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).



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Signs 10-year Agreement with Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever **- Tina Shaw**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced a 10-year partnership with Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever to accomplish shared goals in managing grassland and upland habitats and promoting workforce development, education and outreach that support mutual conservation goals.



Under the Memorandum of Understanding, the organizations will collectively develop a work plan through 2034. The agreement focuses on habitat improvements that may be implemented on lands managed by the National Wildlife Refuge System, as well as on private lands under the Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and other conservation programs that are affiliated with the Farm Bill. During this long-term partnership, the organizations also will collaborate to recruit, educate, train and retain wildlife professionals who are imperative to successful conservation work across the country.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Steelhead Trip 2025

- Bob O'Donnell

The steelhead trip for 2024 got cancelled due to the massive snow drop in Erie, PA. Too much snow and bad driving conditions made us play it safe. It would have been tough going for anyone and not a place for the new members headed out.

A few folks decided to head away from Erie and hit the Salmon River over in NY. We may turn that into a future outing.

So, keep an eye out on the forum and your email for updates. If the weather looks good we may try venturing up there again. If possible, we'll try to make advance plans to go. Otherwise it may be a last minute decision to do a quick run to upstate PA. The water and fishing should be pretty good.



All Things Vises

- Randy Dwyer

The American Museum of Fly Fishing talks all things vises in their "[Tackle Talk](#)" episode #1. Happy New Year to everyone!

Join Jonathan Larrabee, principal owner of [HMH](#) vises, and HMH pro-staff member/AMFF Ambassador Scott Biron as they discuss the history of the fly tying vise from the late 19th century to modern times with AMFF curator Jim Schottenham. Several early HMH prototypes, as well as improved contemporary models, are highlighted in this educational look at an important tool in the fly tiers arsenal.



Winter Trout Fishing

- PPTU

Besides the Gunpowder and the blue line streams in the state, you'll soon be able to fish the Put-and-Take stocked streams for trout.



Typically, the state begins "preseason" trout stocking in December or January, stocking rainbow, golden and brown trout and aggressively stocks for spring trout season, in February, March and April. Check DNR's trout page or the Maryland Guide to Trout Fishing book before you head out for information and restrictions such as delayed harvest on a particular fishery.

When fishing rivers or streams, casting a bead head nymph with a dropper fly can be productive. The dropper can be a smaller nymph or egg pattern. You can use natural nymph colors in greens and browns. The egg can be a more colorful attractor pattern. Stocked fish are fed pellet type food at the hatchery so they will eat anything looking like a pellet. As the days pass, they will start to eat more bugs and small fish to survive, so you will have to adjust your fly presentation to match. Look for surface action and fish coming out of the water to eat. Cast in the general direction and hold on. Put-and-take trout are a fun way to introduce new anglers to the sport of fishing and a great way to spend the day with old friends catching trout for fun or for a quick meal as allowed.

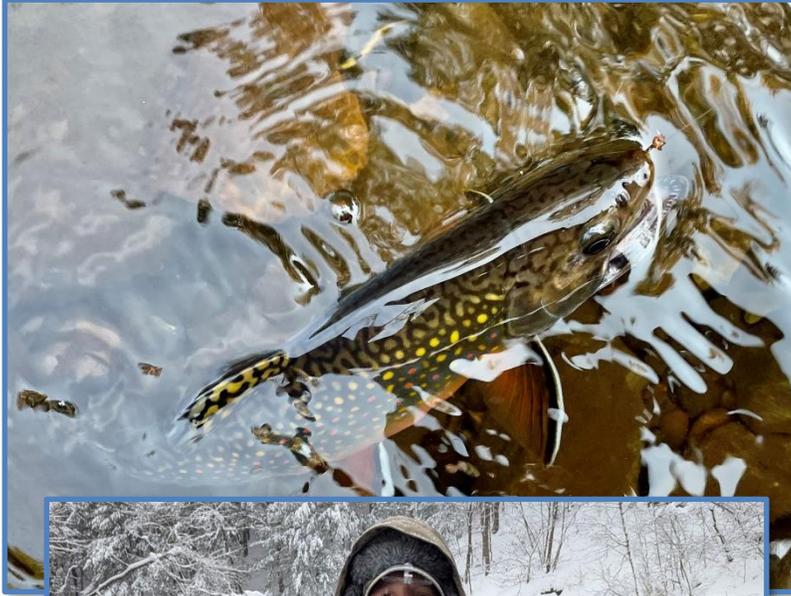


Members Catch - Bob O'Donnell

Happy New Year! It's a new year, full of new adventures and hopefully new photos! Don't forget to take a minute to capture your adventures this year and share them with the group. Post on the PPTU forum or send them directly to me.

Order of the Patuxent Special awardees:

Top & Bottom - Charlie Gelso and Nick Weber,
Larry Coburn (not in attendance)



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

Phone: 410-733-0638

Email: TroutWrangler@Yahoo.com



Top 5 Winter Fly Patterns

In this fly [fishing tips video](#) Curtis from [Fly Fish Food](#) shares his top 5 winter fly patterns!

These are tried-and-true patterns that many experienced anglers swear by during the winter months. From tiny dry flies to innovative streamers, each fly has its own story and purpose. Have fun watching!

[No See Um](#)

[Mother Shucker](#)

[Bling Midge](#)

[Foamerger](#)

[Egan's Poacher](#)



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