

The Conservationist



PPTU.org

Potomac-Patuxent Chapter Trout Unlimited

February 2013 • Published monthly except June, July, August and December



Mike Heck February 20th

This month PPTU is excited to host Mike Heck on Wednesday, February 20th. Mike will be discussing fly-fishing on streams of the Cumberland Valley including the Letort, Yellow Breeches, and Big Springs. Since boyhood, Mike has been blessed to have been able to learn the art of fly fishing on some of the hardest and most famous spring creeks in the country. He has been doing so for over thirty years.

Mike Heck is the author of *“Spring Creek Strategies”* and also contributed to the book *“Tying Dry Flies”*. Mike has also had articles published in *Fly Fisherman*, *American Angler* and *Fish and Fly Magazine*. Mike has appeared in the TV show, *“Road Trip USA”*, a Discovery channel show that aired across Europe.

Mike operates an Orvis Endorsed professional guide service for the Falling Springs, Letort, Yellow Breeches and many other South Central PA trout streams. Mike is also an innovative fly tyer with several patterns credited to his name. These flies include his Simple Shrimp, Big Eye Rainbow, Mike’s Midges Pupa, the snowshoe emerger series of patterns and his well know baetis and sulphur nymphs.

You can find Mike Heck’s Trout Guides on the web at www.fallingsprings.com or contact Mike by e-mail at trout@mrisc.com and by calling (717) 816-7557

Big Raffle Drawing!!!

During our February meeting we will be drawing the names of the winners from our annual fundraiser. First prize is a three day, two night stay at the West Branch Angler for two. The second prize is a Float trip for two on the North Branch with Harold Harsh. The third prize is a guided trip for two with Mike Heck on some great south central PA limestone streams. Best of luck to all that purchased raffle tickets! Tickets will also be available for purchase prior to the drawing.

– Marc Hutzell

Monthly Chapter Meetings

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

Place: Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center, 1000 Forest Glen Road, Silver Spring, Maryland

DIRECTIONS TO THE SENIOR CENTER

From Capitol Beltway: North on Georgia Avenue (Rte. 97). First Right on Forest Glen Road, then go past Holy Cross Hospital and across Sligo Creek Parkway. The Center is on the right.

Visit our website: www.pptu.org

OFFICERS and DIRECTORS 2012 – 2013

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Vice-President: Jim Robinson 301-490-5358
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Northwest Branch: Jim Keil 301-588-8375
Middle Patuxent: Jim Robinson 301-490-5358
Patuxent: Jay Sheppard 301-725-5559

Mid Atlantic Council Delegates:

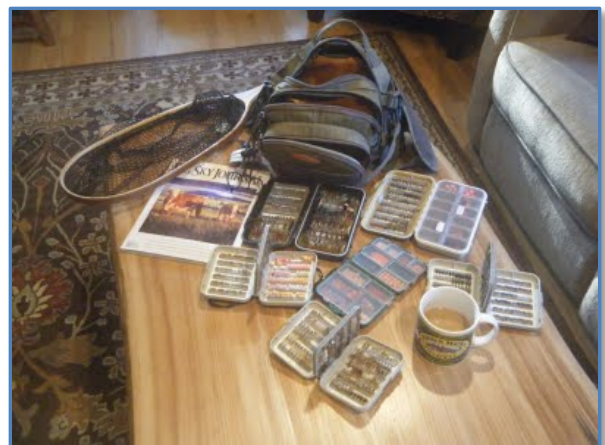
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Presidents' Column - Dennis Covert

For many of us February is a sorting and organizing month, even a dreary month some years depending on the weather. But, with the holidays well behind us we can now concentrate on the New Year. I'm a slow starter, I always fish a time or two in January, but it's usually February before I really get around to putting things back in order; I'll weed out all my old catalogues from my magazine stacks, replace last year's wall calendar (I'm still old fashion enough to use one) with a current year, and begin to take inventory of how many leaders, tippets, and fly lines I need to replace.

February is the perfect month for this kind of activity. Especially on cold winter nights when I can hear the wind howling outside I'll empty out my vest, open up my fly boxes, and with a hot cup of coffee in hand just stand back and take it all in. The empty or near empty compartments have me mentally calculating the material and hooks needed to tie replacements, and whether I have enough on hand or need to order more. The scarcity of some patterns always bring back memories of a great hatch, rising fish, a good one lost, or better yet a good one landed. And that's usually when the day dreaming starts and the work stops. Every year I resolve to have all my flies, at least for spring, tied and ready to go when the best fishing begins, and every year I find myself rushing to tie some last minute flies just before an outing. But that's ok, as long as I'm headed for a crick somewhere.



The Chapter is still looking for some volunteers. We need someone to run the barrel raffle at membership meetings, an outings coordinator to take over starting this fall, and a youth coordinator to start immediately if possible. It takes a lot of volunteer work to keep the Chapter going. It's all for a good cause and you'll be working with some great folks.

We also still need some volunteers for the hotdog stand at Bass Pro March 2nd, or March 9th as a rain date. This is about a 7 to 8 hour event, roughly 9 am until around 5 pm. 🍄



PPTU Mentor Program Beginners & Beyond

Ken Bowyer 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. at nearby streams. Instruction will be tailored to individual needs. Members who have not made an **Annual Supporting Contribution** will be asked to contribute \$20.

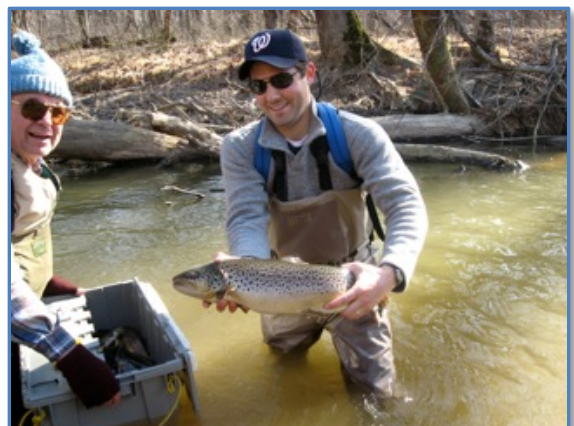
Contact Ken 301-627-7154 or E-mail:
kenbowyer@verizon.net 🍄

Patuxent Report - Jay Sheppard

In mid-December we finished the inspection of Brighton Dam to see what, if anything, could be done to improve the cold water releases from the dam each summer. I will not bore you with all the little details, but basically we discovered that the trash screens in front of the gates are clogged with material after some 60 years of neglect. Water from the depth we desired could not pass through the screens in sufficient quantity and water from higher/warmer depths had to come down to make up the difference. WSSC has promised us they will get the screens/grates cleaned off this spring before warmer weather arrives. This will provide us with cold water, although the water will have to be carefully rationed to last until Labor Day. Our plan is to try to maintain water that is no warmer than 70 degrees all summer. If we have a very dry summer, this may not be possible.

The Mid-Atlantic Council is also going to be helping us by working with DNR and WSSC to try to create an agreement on paper among the three entities to help manage Brighton Dam towards a year around trout fishery. We have had excellent working relations with WSSC to date, but all parties will feel more comfortable with an agreement.

Stocking of our local waters in the Patuxent watershed will start well before the end of February. If you are not on the volunteer list that I have, please send me an email if you would like to participate: jmsheppar@aol.com. You will need chest waders, as we walk right down the middle of the streams pulling our boxes loaded with trout from DNR. All float stockings take place during the week, usually Tuesday through Friday.



Tackle and Tactics - Jay Sheppard

Tippets are very important in fly fishing. They are the last link between your fly and you. If you hope to get your fly back when you hook a fish, it is a necessary part of the tackle you use. Tippet selection is a fine balancing act between a number of competing issues. Too light and the fly can be lost to almost any fish or snag. Too heavy and the fly acts like it is in a vise and cannot begin to move like a natural. Too short and the fly will be under the immediate control of the rest of the leader and fly line. Too long and the fly may drift aimlessly without any control from the rest of the leader and fly line.

Think of using some really heavy, stiff mono on a small fly! The fly has no chance to act like any natural prey in the water. Wind and currents mean nothing to its action. On our heavily fished catch-and-return streams, trout quickly learn the difference between unnatural drifting or acting flies and natural prey swimming or drifting in the stream. Although fly selection is always important, how it is presented to the quarry is far more important. Over the decades I have been with other fly fishers, and we are all using the same patterns to match the hatch. Some are catching fish and others are not. Presentation, presentation, presentation!

Shorter and stiffer tippets will turn over the fly; this may be desired when fishing streamers or some other flies. As soon as the fly lands and all slack is removed, the fly is under the direct control of the rod and fisher. The heavier or larger the fly, then the heavier and stronger the tippet material must be to turn it over. One cannot turn over a small Clouser streamer with even a short section of 6X or 7X tippet. Conversely, one would not usually want to use 0X tippet on the same fly, as then the Clouser would not dance and move with the currents and light rod and line action imparted to it by the angler.



Longer and lighter tippets will allow the fly to swirl with the wind and currents. Really long tippets will let the fly land with oodles of slack between it and the rest of the leader and line. Think of casting 20' of 5X tippet—not going to happen unless there are gale force winds behind you. Cast the same small fly with 10" of the same 5X tippet, and it will land 10" from the connection to the heavier leader—no slack whatsoever.

On our eastern trout waters I am constantly changing flies to find what is working and what is not. (Even when I find a fly that is working, I may change it to some other selection in case the first is not working the next time I return.) I may go from a #8 weighted streamer or woolly bugger to a #18 dry fly or a #22 midge pupae and then back to a #12 soft hackle or a small hopper. To do all this change in both fly sizes and presentations, I am constantly changing my tippet. I may make a tippet change several times in an hour. This is the major reason I advocate the loop-to-loop means of connecting the tippet to the main leader.



Another factor in tippet selection is the stiffness of the material. For the same diameter, one can find a wide range in the stiffness of leader materials. Generally, the softer materials are a little weaker in strength and the higher strength materials are the stiffer. I try to stick to the same brand of material for all my leader and tippet selection so that when I change diameter I know I am also changing the stiffness factor. Otherwise, if I go from brand "X" size 5X to brand "Y" that is one size smaller or larger, I may end up with the same amount of flexibility or the opposite—much stiffer material, and not know.

For general starters, I tend to use maybe 15–20" tippets for streamers and 30–36" tippets for small dry flies. For nymphs and soft hackles I tend to use an intermediate length of tippet. I have gone to extremes when I am fishing over very fussy trout sipping on the surface. I have used very light tippets up to 60" on some occasions to get as many "S"-curves into the tippet to prevent any drag—the

bane of all dry fly fishers! Unless I am actively fishing the fly (e.g., streamer, wet fly), I try to use the lightest tippet I think I can get away with to allow the fly to twist and turn with any micro current or gust of wind.



The 'Rule of 3' used to work many years ago: divide the hook size by 3 and get your tippet size. That may still work, but there are far better materials and even different weights of the hooks themselves to make that rule only a starting point in contemplating choice of tippet. Length and the desired presentation are really big factors. Since tippet sizes are measured as the difference from 0.11", I am still looking for an 11X tippet with at least 3-lb strength. If you find any, let me know! Enjoy! 🍷

Angler's Corner

January Outing To Big Spring & Yellow Breeches

It's less confusing if all navigators in a vehicle are navigating to the same place. After breakfast in Frederick, Lou Reichel and Bob O'Donnell both turned on their GPS apps, it must have been somewhere around York Springs I started getting suspicious after receiving instructions to go both straight and turn. It became apparent at that point Bob was giving direction to Boiling Springs, while Lou for Big Spring. What the heck, as long as we were headed for a spring creek somewhere.

The temperature held at 31 degrees all the way up to Big Spring, and as we drove past the ditch section to the parking lot the surface of the creek literally twinkled in the bright sunshine with thousands of hatching midges. Fish were rising as we suited up, and by noon temps had risen to the high 40's and we were all shedding clothes.

We had a good turnout at Big Spring and were met there by Steve Fletcher, Frank Bowles, Jim Crowell, and Bob Muehlenkamp. The water was crystal clear as expected and once my eyes adjusted I could see fish holding just above the green bottom, and under the mat off the far bank. I always start with a Cress Bug, and on my first drift missed a take, after that they would only give chase, lose interest, and settle back to their lie.

Steve caught two of the three fish at Big Spring, a 10 inch brookie and a small rainbow, Lou the other, a small brookie, all three on what Steve called a Utah Killer Bug that looked a lot like a Walt's Worm to me. Steve was fishing a Daiwa Kiyose rod with streamside leader 16' furled Tenkara line, Lou the traditional fly rod.



Two hours really isn't enough time to fish the place, and we were a little tardy in our departure and thus an hour late getting over to the Yellow Breeches, around 1 pm. There we met up with Ken Bowyer, Ray Miller & Marc Hutzell. Rather than go to a restaurant for lunch we had decided to cook brats in a pot right at streamside. Maybe food just tastes better on fishing trip, or maybe the warming sun was a factor, or even just plain old hunger, whatever the reason they were good!

Midges were hanging in swarms all afternoon from sizes #26-#28 up to about #20. Dark little flies and the fish were reacting to them. I think we all caught at least one fish, my one was fooled by a #24 Midge Pupae fished behind a BH Black Stonefly. Bob Muehlenkamp got into several under the bridge and I was ready with the camera as he fought a huge rainbow that he lost at the end of a good fight. Ken landed three, two browns and a brookie, all three on a Parasol Black Midge Emerger. Frank got two a little differently, fishing down into the main stem he worked his way back up to the end of the run and got them both on a Blue Winged Olive dry fly using a Tenkara USA 12' Iwana with a TUSA furlled line.

Ya just never know what might work. Bob O' threw a Crystal Meth pattern to some fish under the bridge that had ignored my midge patterns for 30 minutes, and on the second cast wham! He didn't quite get it hooked, but his heart leaped around a little. This fish looked heavy, maybe 20 inches.

The run was stocked a couple weeks ago, and one of the locals just hanging out at the run just to watch told me the fish had thinned out, but there were obviously still a fair number to be had. They are draining Children's lake above the run which has the flows heavier than usual and is still fishing pretty well. 🐝

- **Dennis Covert**
Outings Coordinator



Yellow Breeches
"Mustard Midge"
- Hot new fly!



Brats and Bragging At the Run



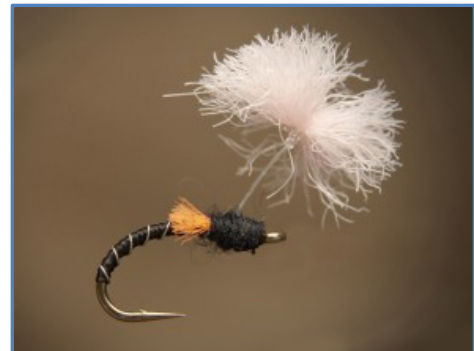
- Utah Killer Bug



- Zebra Midge



- Orange Crystal Meth



- Parasol Emerger Midge

Reminder

If you spot poaching please place a call to the

Catch a Poacher Hotline

At

1-800-635-6124



Knots

- Trout Wrangler

This last page needed some filler so what better subject could I think of to “tie” this issue up than a note on knots.

For the first knot of the month I’ll start off with what has become one of my favorite versatile knots, the Duncan “Uni” Knot. The Uni knot forms a loop that slips closed when a fish strikes.

The Duncan Knot was originally named after its inventor Norman Duncan. It was also published later under the name Uni Knot by the outdoor writer Vic Dunaway as being a versatile knot that can have many applications. It is also known as a Grinner Knot and has the same appearance as a Hangman's Noose although it is different internally.

I first learned how to tie this knot after soaking up all the features of the “Orvis Fly Fishing” phone app I purchased. I found myself sitting at home with a heavy piece of mono, practicing along with the narrated video and accompanying animation. After a several attempts I felt comfortable enough to try it out on stream.

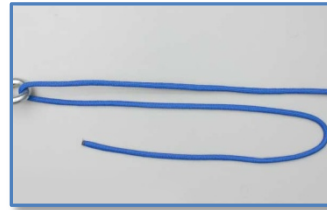
Used properly, the Uni knot provides two unique features. The loop allows your fly to ride freely in the current, giving it more life. When a fish strikes, the sliding portion of the knot provides a bit of natural “shock absorption” helping to keep your tippet from snapping.

I’m convinced the knot works well because I’ve tested it out on stream. I found a fly fished with the

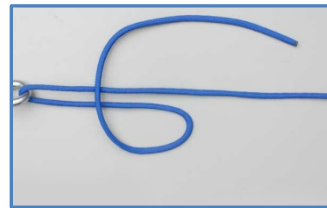
proper open loop received lots of hits while the same fly fished with the knot slid tight received few hits if any attention at all. Catch me at the next meeting and I’ll give you a demo.

Give it a try! 🌻

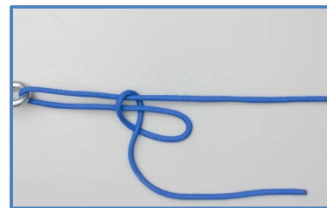
Tying the Uni Knot



Pass the tag end of the tippet through the eye of the fly.



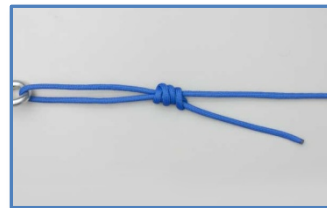
Form a complete loop alongside the lower side of the standing line.



Working inside the loop, wrap the end around both lines five times.



Lubricate, then tighten by pulling on the fly, tag end, and standing part of the line at the same time.



Pull on the tag end and on the standing line to slide the knot within a half inch of the hook.



Trim the end.

Contributions should be sent to the Editor as plain text in an email or as an MS Word .doc attachment. The deadline for submissions is the twelfth (12th) day of the month prior to the month of publication.

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**Yellow Breeches
17" Brown Trout**
- Charlie Gelso



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