

A LOCAL CHAPTER OF
AMERICA'S LEADING NONPROFIT
COLDWATER FISHERIES
CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION

THE MERSHON MUDDLER

◆ *Newsletter of the Mershon-Neumann Heritage Chapter of Trout Unlimited* ◆

1989, 1996 & 1997 RECIPIENT OF THE MICHIGAN COUNCIL TU CHAPTER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Meanders

A few thoughts from
the president
Laurie Seibert



Laurie Seibert, chapter president

I'm going to let you in on a little secret—I am horrible at fly fishing. I understand the theory, but I am the one who wades through a prime fishing hole to retrieve a fly from a bush, mends a lucky cast right out of the seam, or aerial releases a trout because I didn't know I had caught a fish.

So, what would possess someone with my lack of fishing finesse to join Trout Unlimited? Very simple. I enjoy the people and philosophy of the group. I like being with people who come in from a day on the river with rusty cans and empty Gatorade bottles shoved in their vests. I enjoy sitting with people who believe we need to take care of our waters—not just in Michigan, but in far away places most of us will never go. And, I like saying things like “wooly bugger” in a conversation.

I have assumed my experience with the fly-fishing community was similar to most of the anglers I meet. In spite of being a woman, I have felt welcomed in fly shops, on the river, or in meetings. While I might get a few eye rolls while gloriously macrameing my tippet instead of effortlessly casting, I feel valued as an angler and conservationist. I am learning that is not true for everyone.

This summer, national events and stories drew attention to the fact there are marginalized populations who, at worst, live in fear or, at best, do not feel valued. Specific to Trout Unlimited, we have discovered some people feel threatened while fishing or do not have the resources to access the rivers and waterways TU is working to protect. Rosters show an overwhelming lean to white, affluent, males over the age of 50. Our chapter is no different. Yet, we recognize that diversity is important to have a healthy, growing organization.

New people with different backgrounds and ideas help us grow and continue the important work for conservation. So, why aren't a variety of people represented within our chapter? The members of the Mershon-Neumann Heritage Chapter are kind, hard working, intelligent people. Is there a reason more diverse populations don't choose to join us?

The simplest answer is that we are inadvertently excluding people by acts of omission. We may not be working as hard as we can to make sure anyone interested feels accepted and can enter the fly-fishing community. Only by letting everyone know they are valued and welcomed at our events and meetings will we grow in the variety of our members.

What about the kid down the road without a grown-up to take them out fishing? What about the woman recently divorced, looking for a new sport, but barely able to afford a Planet Fitness membership? What about those girl scouts at your grandchild's school? Couldn't you take a little time to teach them how to tie a fly or pass on your old rod? Could you spend an afternoon teaching some casting in

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Meanders, continued from page 1

your yard or, even better, on a pond or river? I'm not talking about telling everyone about your favorite fishing spot or including a bunch of rookies on your fishing weekend with your friends—I'm talking about remembering a time when you were uncertain and inexperienced. Who helped you feel confident and welcome?

Think about your best fishing memories. I think about the 90-year-old man, left on the river to wait for his nephew, who spent about an hour coaching me and reminiscing about his wife. I remember the woman who told me she always wanted to learn to fly fish. She was so excited when I handed her my rod to give it a try—especially when she landed a beautiful brown trout on the first cast. There was the boy at the campground who wanted to join his friends who were all fly fishing. He was delighted with the

“loot” I cleaned out of my vest. Every now and then I hear from his dad.

Sure, I like catching those monster trout, but those experiences are few and far between. I have much more success at creating a positive memory through the interactions I can enjoy on the river. We aren't going to fix everything for everyone overnight, but we can do the right thing right now and make sure everyone feels valued. Be someone's good memory. ♦

Inaugural new editor's column

by David Oeming, M-NHCTU editor

She called and insisted—I resisted. Her presentation was subtle and effective—I demurred, and said I needed time. She plied me with drink by the river—and, I heard myself say “yes, I'll do it!”

And, that's how I became the successor editor of our Mershon-Neumann Muddler.

The eminent playwright (and Michigan man) Arthur Miller noted, “A good newspaper, I suppose, is a nation talking to itself.” In these Covided times, we cannot gather together for chapter activities or meetings, and we collect random information about our various organizations, clubs, and compatriots from hearsay verbal accounts and chance encounters. Our Muddler, at least for the foreseeable, is the best connection M-N chapter members

have to each other and the many chapter events and projects we have supported over the years. I will try to maintain, and improve, that connection.

I am not the publisher of The M-N Muddler; that would be the M-N Chapter of TU. Like the estimable Paul Morand, Editor Emeritus of the Muddler, I am only the curator of the Muddler's content. Our newsletter is not the vehicle for my opinion or view about species *salvo* and *salvelinus* and topics related to pursuit of fish. In my view, the Muddler will provide information, not direction. I trust that we can continue photo essays about fly construction, pseudonymous truth from Snarly Windknot and others, the President's message, and other regular features of the Muddler. If you, the readers, are so inclined, I will try to publish your Letters to the Editor in available Muddler space.

Over the years, I have submitted various articles with an air of truthiness about them to Editor Morand, which he has kindly included as editorial filler for the Muddler. I

probably will continue this, if the muse so strikes. I think it is important, however, for the Muddler to include articles and notes from as many members of the M-N chapter as can put together a complete sentence. I request—nay, more a beg—for those readers who can attach a document to an email to send me such of your recollections, proposals, complaints, ministrations, and even outright lies as you can muster. We must stay together as an organization; many clubs and groups have become one with the ether, and I think communication through the Muddler will help get us through to our next in-person event.

For the nonce, however, the board will meet via Zoom and such in-person gatherings as can be scheduled (the first Board meeting was at Haithco Park in Saginaw, with computers at the ready). Please consider joining our meetings, and let me know how I am doing as novice editor. Thank you for reading this far. ♦



Some favorite phlies

by Bob Kren, M-NHC advisor, and, occasionally, Mr. Flyfisherpersongy

If you saw the movie “Vice,” for which Christian Bale won an Oscar by portraying Vice President Dick Schnee, and you stuck around for the credits—which are on YouTube—you saw several flies tied to look like the movie’s plot points: an oil-derrick dry, and suchlike. I have to admit that I didn’t recognize some of the references, but most of the ties were hilarious and original. So, here’s a list of flies you all will recognize, even though none of us is Brad Pitt (semi-obscure reference to “that movie”).

The Raggedy-Ass. This is the one tied with materials you bought because you were convinced that the flies tied would be cool, and killer. But, they weren’t. The thread color is odd, the dubbing wiry and flashy, yet somehow soft and muted. It is often called “The Mess,” which is usually defined by “I don’t have x, but y will do nicely.” Sure it will.

The Bullett. Do NOT! buy Taylor Streit’s “Instinctive Fly Fishing.” On page 77, in reference to crowded waters, we find, “If you are ‘packin’, be sure to show him your heat.” On page 79, there’s “Taylor Streit note: ‘Packing a sidearm’ helps here.” Other gems include “surely if you are packin’ heavy, you will get a long hunk of the best water,” and “the size of your *pistola*.” One has to assume that his personal *pistola* is sadly lacking and requires considerable augmentation. The Bullett looks like a .50 caliber machine gun, with a size 12 hook for a sight. In fact, it IS a .50 caliber machine gun. Take that, Taylor!

The Conker. This fly is ridiculously heavy, looks like an anvil, casts like

an anvil, and may well be an anvil. You have to cast this one with an oval cast, because a straight overhead cast will kill either you or your rod. Deadly in shallow water, especially when your target fish doesn’t see it coming. Arnold Schwarzenegger casting a telephone pole, with a hawser for a 40-weight line, comes to mind.

The Rich Guy. A fly that is expensive, garish, easily recognized on-stream as belonging to somebody with more money than brains. If you don’t notice the fly, TRG will holler out to you, from a safe distance, what it is, who tied it, where and on what famous waters he uses it, where he bought it, and how much it cost. Then, he will tell his minions to remove you from his property. Unless you’re packin’ a Bullett (see above).

The Too Small. A fly that even in a size 12 looks like a speck. This is a celebration of every fly you couldn’t manage to pull out of a flybox or tie onto a 13x tippet. You hear references to the “30-30” club, whose members have caught a 30” trout on a size 30 midge. I don’t believe it, either.

The Woody Booger. Not to be mistaken for its more famous brother, the Royal Coachman, the Woody Booger is the fly you don’t mind hanging up in a tree or a bush, it’s that ugly. The defining material that makes the WB the WB is a, um, naturally occurring substance, which comes in a variety of colors: green, yellow, sallow, sordid, and bloody. Some “purists” decry the use of such a super-natural substance in any fly, claiming that its scent is what attracts the prey. To them, I say “Hey! Why do you hate carp and chub?” This fly is to be tied while listening to recordings of the band “Rocket Urinals.”

The Engagement Ring. Gaudy, gaudy, gaudy. This is the fly you sincerely regret, that never seems able to get lost, even when you try! It’s full of promise but is bound to get you in deep trouble. The outcome of its use is

unpredictable—a mix of joy and sorrow, braininess and stupidity. It seems to make the quarry happy, but that’s just for a while. Who gets hooked most often? You.

The Commemorative. This is your favorite fly, the go-to one, the one that brings a (wo)manly tear and at least one memory of a day where the fish were taking just the one pattern, with abandon. Subsequently, abandon becomes a verb, defining your targets’ willingness to respond. This, being your most precious fly, has the greatest affinity for climbing into trees, or unravelling your tippet knot, disappearing under a huge snag, or otherwise getting lost.

The Chernobyl Muddler Raw Bat is everybody’s worst nightmares, tied into one. It has a refined ability to spread havoc among fish like a plague, infecting every one of them with cleverness, keener eyesight, extreme pickiness, and lockjaw. As often as you tie on a Commemorative, you’ll use a CMRB—the one works occasionally, but never as good as your memories would indicate, and the CMRB never works, turns off every fish in your stretch of river, and beyond. Its worst feature is that it can change form, and what worked yesterday is today’s CMRB.

The Illegal Alien is the fly that hides out in your flybox, and you can never find. You know it’s there, probably with its many children, but it has a way of blending in with all the other flies, rendering your picking it out a vain effort. Your wasting time looking for it takes work away from good American flies, that you overlook in your attempts to find it. Nobody’s home. Sorry.

And that’s it for my list. You gotta recognize some of these and have lots of your own “faves.” —Bob K



Cedar Planked Splake Recipe

This recipe calls for grilling a whole fish on a 1” or less untreated cedar plank. These specialized pieces of wood are expensive at the local grocery or fresh fish market. An alternative is to purchase a six-foot tongue-and-groove cedar board at the local lumber yard and saw appropriate lengths to fit your fish.

PLEASE NOTE: Splake are produced in a hatchery as a mostly sterile hybrid of brood Brook and Lake trout. A splake is not a natural member of the salmonid family. State managers have created a put-and-take fishery for splake (and other species) that relies exclusively on planting sublegal fish in the spring, and harvesting (barely) legal fish in the fall.

And, splake are delicious, particularly when paired with a Marlborough school Sauvignon Blanc or California Dry Rosé.

Ingredients

- 1 untreated cedar plank/board large enough to fit the fish
- Sufficient whole fish to feed the crowd (leftovers are wonderful in Splake Spread)
- Canola oil (olive oil can be used, but has a low flash point)
- coarse salt
- black pepper
- 1 lemon (sliced thinly)
- fresh dill (can use dried dill if garden product is not available)

Steps to Make It

1. Gather the ingredients.
2. Submerge the cedar plank in water for 1 hour. This helps produce steam that will keep the fish moist.

3. Preheat grill, about 400 degrees or enough heat to ignite the bottom of the plank and produce smoke.

4. Lightly coat inside and outside of each trout with canola oil. The point of this is not flavor; it is to provide a sticky surface for the other ingredients.

5. Season inside with salt and pepper and stuff with lemon slices and dill. Add several stems of dill to the exterior of the splake.

6. Place soaked cedar plank on grill over direct medium heat.

7. When cedar plank starts to smoke, place stuffed and covered fish on the plank.

8. Grill for about 15 minutes or until the fish is done (reaching an internal temperature of 145 F). The flesh should

be opaque and flake easily. Note: the fish is baking, not broiling, and does not need to be flipped or turned.

9. The chef can insert a thin blade (as in steak knife) into the “shoulder” of the fish to check if there is any remaining pink or translucent flesh.

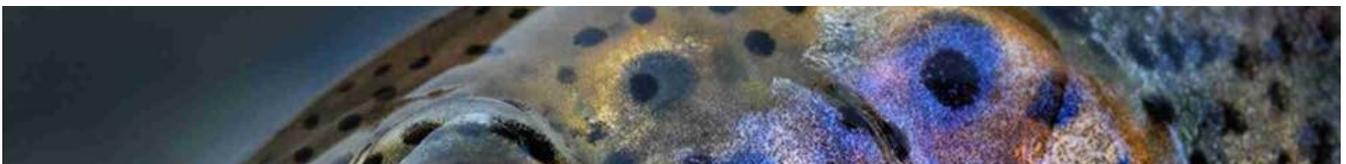
10. Once cooked, remove from grill and serve.

TIP FOR SERVING: To debone a whole fish after it is cooked, make a slit under the tail and carefully lift it up, pulling towards the head, while using a spatula to hold down the body of the fish. The skeleton should stay intact and easily lift out of the trout. Once the head is reached, detach the bone structure—head intact—from the body. Don’t forget to secure the trout cheeks. ♦

A small suggestion suggesting a tiny but sensible yet realistic change to our method of referring to fishes that migrate from larger bodies of water into streams that feed those larger water bodies, which behavior supports the purpose of fishy l’amour and survival of the species, without the aforementioned fishes having to resort to such artificial things as salmon/trout in the classroom, or stocking

by Bob Kren, M-NHC chapter advisor, and occasionally Mr. Flyfisherpersonguy

Let’s face it, people—“anadromous” doesn’t describe what’s going on, no way! They’re there to fan the gravel, to make babies, to pass on the old dna—in short, they’re “amorous,” not “anadromous.” So, let’s tell it like it is, and call them “amorous” fishes. Male, and female, alike. Simple. Glad to help. ♦



The Best of Intensions

by Larry Brown, chapter director

Oppressive heat and high water are perfect conditions for using a kayak to explore new stretches of rivers. I had been eyeing a particular stretch of river on a good trout stream for a number of years. The locals seemed very tight-lipped about it, but this was in keeping with their strong code of silence. I had fished upstream and downstream of this stretch, but never the entire length of it. The few who had walked the entire stretch were heard to say, "That's a long truck for an impressive creel." I decided to do some preliminary research.

The length of the water route could be measured by conforming a thread to the chosen course of the river shown on the map. Then, compare the length of thread required to the scale on the map. The river gradient could be estimated by using a topographic map to count contour lines crossed by the river route. Eventually, you get a ratio of drop over distance, better known as slope. I took the distance measurement but omitted to calculate current speed. This omission would come back to haunt us. For my trout habitat I look for minimum pool depth of two-and-half feet. The shallow riffles can measure as little as a few inches. Riffles can be composed of gravel, cobbles, rocks, and boulders. The pool-to-riffle ratio should be about equal. Clay shelves are also a good feature. Overhead cover from floating logs, sweepers, and undercut banks completes the picture of good trout habitat. Where we were going, cold water was assumed present. An overnight

thunderstorm had added an inch of rain to the watershed. The river was rising fast. It was time to make plans.

With all this in mind, it was time to recruit some fellow travelers. My cousins from Kansas arrived at the Camp in July, bringing their two kayaks. I had also brought along my two kayaks. After a short sales pitch, they agreed to go down the river with me. Despite their extensive wilderness experience, they had little idea of what lay ahead. We loaded the boats, paddles, life jackets, provisions, and drybags. Tomorrow, we would head into a five-mile stretch of river largely unknown to any of us.

My wonderful, understanding wife dropped us off upstream that morning. The take-out spot was a distant bridge found downstream. I told her to expect a call from us in two or three hours. She gave me a knowing look that said, "I've heard that before." She said, "Good luck!" Then, we launched into a river that was bank full with a strong current.

The first log jam went bank to bank. We portaged over it. The next three log jams required more portaging. In a short time, we left the area I was familiar with and entered an easy passage of rapids with large rocks. The current was swift but manageable. The log jams were behind us. The noisy rapids lay ahead of us. Sweepers became more numerous. Open hardwoods gave way to dense stands of conifers. The surrounding forest became deep and dark. Huge hemlock, spruce, and white pine competed for sun light and growing space. Some trees were eighty feet tall with two- or three-foot diameters. The riverbank had also changed. What began as a fairly level sand gravel profile had changed to a steadily rising bank composed of layered sandstone underlain by beds of gravel and occasional clay shelves. Thick moss, tall ferns, and pockets of fungus grew

everywhere under the trees. Dead trees had fallen over and rotted where they lay. There was no sign of a human presence.

The current seemed to be increasing as the riverbank rose above us. Occasionally, we passed into a quiet pool at the foot of a rapids. But the pools were becoming scarce and the rapids were growing more abundant. We listened to the rising sound of roaring rushing water ahead. Soon, we were in continuous rapids of ever increasing gradient and strength. My cousin, Ann, got hung up on a rock. I beached my boat and went to get her. Before I got there, she went crosswise to the current and capsized. I caught her paddle. I drained her boat and sent her on her way. She would have the same experience five more times that day. The other cousins fared little better.

Her worst spill pinned her standing with a sweeper behind her and her boat in front of her. As the boat filled with water, the current increased the boat's pressure against her shins. At any moment, she could easily break her legs. Luckily, she did not—her sister, Cathy, and husband, Bob, pulled the boat away and sent it downstream to me. I tried to walk upstream but the swift, foot-deep current swept me off my feet. Ann had some big purple bruises on both shins. We drained the boats and proceeded onward. The rapids extended downstream as far as we could see.

The next stretch looked even more treacherous. A steep four-foot slope followed by a series of standing waves. It looked like a waterfall to me. That was not on the map. I paddled hard for speed and shot over the falls only to bury the nose in the standing waves. The kayak quickly swamped. The water shifted in the hull, and the boat rolled over in a

(See *Intensions*, page 6)



Intensions, continued from page 5

pool. I came up sputtering. The others hung up on the falls and struggled down. Again, we drained the boats and re-launched.

Many of the worst rapids were too shallow, too swift, or too steep to run. These were best negotiated by portaging or holding your boat by the stern and walking it downstream to deeper water then carefully stepping back in. Forget about staying dry. We drank lots of water and always wore our life-vests. We found the best way to run large long rapids was to follow the deep fast current. Go next to the big rocks but don't hit them. To stay

maneuverable, keep your boat speed faster than the current. Stay aligned parallel with the current—being perpendicular to the current will cause you to capsize. When our arms cramped, or we began to stumble, we would take a break to relieve dehydration or fatigue. While resting on a sandbar, we would drink water and eat high energy foods. Everyone had their share of spills, yet our spirits remained high. Our motto was "stay together, look out for each other, and learn as you go."

We continued our ascent through the rapids for about three hours. Then we entered a different stretch of river with long reaches of gravel, quiet pools, and high clay banks with springs. On the

top of one clay bluff sat a log cabin. At last, we were in familiar territory. The end of our trip was near. Soon, the bridge came into view. My wife, Connie, was waiting for us. "I was worried about you guys, so I decided to wait here." "How long have you been waiting?" I asked. "I have been here for about an hour. You are two hours late." The entire trip with all the mishaps had lasted five hours. Luckily, we were all safe and sound. All of us had scratches and bruises. We were wet, exhausted, and hungry. I knew where I wanted to fish. I asked if anyone ever wanted to make a second run. A unanimous reply came back, "Never Again." ♦

Trashy job, but someone's gotta do it

And, we did it well! The Rifle River, from Sage Lake Road all the way down to Troll's Landing and from Moffat Bridge to River View, was a better place after members of Mershon-Neumann Heritage Chapter, Boy Scouts, and the local community floated down in canoes and kayaks picking up garbage. Bottles, chairs, broken fishing poles—even a resin rabbit—

were all pulled from the water. It was a long, tiring, but extremely satisfying, day—one we are excited to repeat next year! ♦



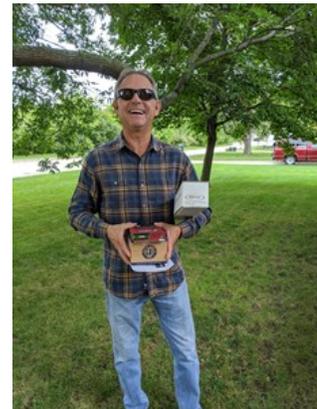
Raffle Winners

On September 10, 2020, the Mershon-Neumann Heritage Chapter held its annual raffle drawing. Bruce Isotalo was the winner of the rod and reel combo. Bruce, originally from the UP, has been fishing with a three-weight and looking to add a five-weight to his rod collection, so he was the perfect person to win. With grandchildren

starting to fish, Bruce is sure the rod will be well used.

The grill found a new home with Daniel Garant of Saginaw. No details (or invitations) of future cookouts have been given.

Thank you to Little Forks and Woodside Ace Hardware. ♦



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OF TROUT UNLIMITED
2020-2021**

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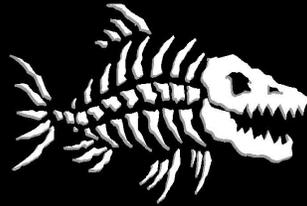
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WILLIAM B. MERSHON CHAPTER OF TROUT UNLIMITED

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING SCHEDULE

*All Board meetings will be held on the first Wednesday of the month
at 5:30 p.m. We usually meet at W.L. Case Funeral Home, 4480 Mackinaw Road, Saginaw.
However, until it is safe and feasible to meet in-person, we are meeting via Zoom.*

Wednesday, October 7, 2020
Wednesday, November 4, 2020
Wednesday, December 2, 2020

—No meetings during summer months—

**We welcome you to attend any of the board meetings.
Your input is an invaluable resource in our efforts to serve the resources we enjoy.**

To join our Zoom board meeting, use this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86037144769>.