

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

www.Mershon-TU.org

THE M E R S H O N MUDDLER

◆ *Newsletter of the William B. Mershon 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
Don Albrecht



Don Albrecht, chapter president

It's getting close to banquet time! I hope you all are planning on coming this year. It is going to be a special event. And, remember, this is our biggest fundraising event of the year. We need to be successful if we are going to fulfill our mission of helping to maintain coldwater fisheries in Michigan. Come on out and support your chapter.

Spring is coming, and with spring we intensify our fishing activity. Steelhead enter our rivers in large numbers and small flies start emerging. What wonderful activities we have in Michigan to fish for trout and other species! As I sit here in Arizona while writing this, I'm reminded of how lucky we are to have coldwater streams with naturally reproducing trout. Yesterday, I spent some time at a fly shop exploring possibilities for fishing. Trout fishing in Arizona is pretty much a winter proposition, except for the Colorado River by Page. Everything else is a put-and-take fishery, with Arizona doing significant plantings by Sedona, Payson, and several ponds and streams of the Salt River near Phoenix. Right now, my best fishing is suckers in the Salt River or Carp in holding ponds around Phoenix. Not exactly what I get excited for. So, this is another good reason to support our Mershon chapter—most of our funds raised go toward maintaining good trout habitat on the Rifle and Au Sable River. WE ARE BLESSED.

There are a couple of really serious issues facing us in Michigan. I've talked about these before, but they are worth repeating again.

First is aquaculture. This is one of the most serious threats to our coldwater fisheries ever encountered. The hearings going on now concerning the fish farm on the Au Sable River are very important. This farm, producing 300,000 pounds of fish per year, will be dumping all their fish excrement and excess fish food into the Au Sable River. There is a lot of precedent on this type of farm, and it has seriously

(See Meanders, page 9)

ANNUAL SPRING FUNDRAISING BANQUET

Saturday, April 23, 2016

Curtis Hall at SVSU, 7400 Bay Road, Saginaw

5:30 p.m. ~ Hors d'oeuvres, as well as prize-gazing and generous bidding.
7:00 p.m. ~ Plated dinner, dessert and refreshments included. Cash bar.

To register, contact Andy at 989-326-2652 or wbmershontu@gmail.com.
Or, book online at mkt.com/wbmershontu.

Mershon chapter sponsors first all-women event

by Laurie Seibert, chapter director

The William B. Mershon Chapter of Trout Unlimited is sponsoring their first all-women event Saturday, May 21, 2016, at the Saginaw Bay Visitor's Center. If you're new to the sport or just want to improve your skills, our women's-only event promises to be full of fun and information.

Basic fundamentals such as how to set up your gear, knot tying, safety, etiquette, and access points in our area will be covered. John VanDalen, experienced casting instructor, will be holding small group casting classes guaranteed to improve anyone's ability to get the fly where you want it. These lessons will be held outdoors unless weather is severe, so please come dressed appropriately.

Ann Miller, author of *Match the Hatch* will present information on Michigan entomology and how to use

this knowledge when choosing flies. She will also discuss gear choices for the beginning fly fisher.

Katie Hambone Ferner will also be speaking. Katie is well known in Michigan as an expert in fishing most species such as small mouth bass, steelhead, salmon and trout. She is an adroit fisher and instructor, as well as developer of "Women Only" fly fishing clinics.

Michigan Fly Girls, an International Federation of Fly Fishers club, will be on hand to discuss all aspects of the sport. The Fly Girls offer many classes on the art and sport of casting, fly tying, insect identification, knots and rigging, rod building, as well as holding retreats and regularly scheduled outings.

The event runs from 9a.m. 3p.m. on Saturday, May 21st. Cost is \$15.00 with lunch provided. Registration is required and can be done by visiting www.mershon-tu.org.

You must have a state park pass to enter the Saginaw Bay Visitor's Center, located at 3582 State Park Drive, Bay City, Michigan.

Participants who have never belonged to Trout Unlimited will receive a year's free membership.

For further information, please contact Laurie Seibert at 989-205-3763 or email her in care of wbmershontu@gmail.com. ♦

Spring Banquet coming soon

Our annual spring banquet is just a few weeks away. This year's banquet is **Saturday, April 23**, and will be held at a new venue, Curtiss Hall on the campus of Saginaw Valley State University. Your ticket reservation form will be mailed to you soon, but we want to make sure you catch two things on that form.

First, this year's banquet is on Saturday rather than Friday, as it has been the past few years. Hopefully that will make your day a little less hectic.

The second thing we want to make sure you notice is that you need to pre-select your dinner entrée this year when you order your tickets, as this year we will have a served meal with dessert. You will also find the ticket costs have gone down this year, so we hope we'll have an exceptional turnout.

So, it's a new venue, an exceptional meal, and we already have some terrific auction items with more coming in every day; it's a banquet you won't want to miss. Be sure to save March 23rd on your calendar and join us for a night that will fund the river improvement projects we have planned for this summer. Hope to see you there!

By the way, if you have something you want to donate for this year's banquet auction, send Laurie Seibert an email describing your donation. Laurie's email is lbeachteacher@gmail.com. ♦



Pay It Forward

WILLIAM B. MERSHON CHAPTER OF TROUT UNLIMITED

53rd Annual Spring Fundraising Banquet

Saturday, April 23, 2016

CURTISS HALL AT SVSU

7400 Bay Road, Saginaw

5:30 p.m. \$ Hors d'oeuvres, as well as prize-gazing and generous bidding.

7:00 p.m. \$ Plated dinner, dessert and refreshments included. Cash bar.

Live auction, silent auction, bucket and card raffles, 50/50!

All proceeds designated for the protection and preservation of the cold-water fisheries of the Au Sable and Rifle Rivers.

Make your reservations now—seating is limited!

To register, contact Andy at 989-326-2652 or wbmershontu@gmail.com.

Or, book online at mkt.com/wbmershontu.

Brown Trout Redd Survey— South Branch of the Au Sable

by Howard N. Johnson, chapter advisor

The brown trout redd survey on the South Branch of the Au Sable River was completed on November 4 & 5, 2015. Sixteen members of both the Wm. B. Mershon Chapter and the Mason-Griffith Founders Chapter participated over the two days. Eleven reaches were inventoried between Chase Bridge and Smith Bridge. Seventy redd sites were identified and recorded.

This is the third year of the survey; therefore, until we learn where the productive spawning areas are, different reaches are being surveyed each year. However, three reaches were duplicated in both 2014 and

2015. One of the duplicated reaches had 30% reductions in redds and another reach had a 70% reduction in redds, while the third had an increase of 20%. Steve Johnson will tabulated and plot all GPS points to river maps.

Mershon chapter volunteers were Dan Keane, Don Albrecht, Don Meyer, and Kris Cicinelli. Trainers included Boyd Dillon, Gerry Lake, Bob Andrus, and Steve Johnson, each from the Mason-Griffith Founders Chapter; and Tim Cwalinski, Fisheries Biologist, MDNR. Steve Loudon, Bruce Hambell, Cris Jones, Bob Lafferty, and Ben Pinti from the Roscommon area also helped with the project. Howard N. Johnson, chapter advisor, coordinated the south branch redd survey.

Trout redds are the spawning beds created by the female trout. The location and size of spawning trout redds provides:

- DNR Fisheries an estimate of the female trout population.

- Yearly averages of redd sizes identifies trends of fish size.
- Identifies protective cover needs.
- Identifies productive and non-productive river reaches.

The survey on the South Branch will follow the same guidelines and procedure that Gerry Lake has been doing on the North Branch for years. Gerry will be helping with training of new volunteers, and others from MGFTU Chapter will also assist in the coming years.

Next year, we plan to expand the coverage area to include selected reaches below Smith Bridge. If you would like to help with the survey next fall, please let Howard know by contacting him at hjohnson@aol.com or 989-280-0381. ♦



Female trout redd; Au Sable River - south branch

Steelin' Time

by Snarly Windknot

*From his poignant and thoughtful
collect of poems and prose,
Flies, Lies and Otherwise*

To be perfectly honest with you, I hate the cold. In fact, one of the reasons I love fly fishing is because I do it in the summer. I don't have to wear a coat or long johns like I always did when I went deer hunting, and I don't have to worry about getting cold before I've been at it for an hour. In fact, some days when you're fly fishing, it's so warm you wade a little deeper into that cool river than you really need to just because that cold water feels so good even through your waders. To state it plainly, I would rather sweat than shiver.

And that explains pretty much why Curly can't talk me into going steelheadin' with him.

You see, the way Curly likes to fish for steelhead is to wade out to his armpits right at the mouth of the river and try to catch them as they head upstream to spawn. He is what I think of as a typical steelheader. Curly will stand in that ice water all day casting at fish he isn't sure are even there, knowing full well they probably won't strike his fly even if they are. And when he gets so cold he can't even talk anymore, he'll grin and give you the "hi" sign, even though his hand is shaking so bad from his shivers it makes it look like he's conducting a marching band. And Curly calls that fun!

Well, last year, after he had pestered me for the nine-thousandth time and chose a day he knew I would be off work so I

couldn't use that excuse again, I finally weakened and agreed to accompany him on one of his polar expeditions. We tried to get Bill to go, too, but he saw it coming and arranged to have the deadline for his newspaper column fall on that day so that he would have an ironclad excuse. Mike just said, "You guys are nuts" and refused to even discuss it.

So, like the "numbskull easily led astray" that my wife says I am, I agreed to go with Curly, even though I knew full well I would come to regret it. Curly's truck was in the shop, so I drove. I loaded my fishing gear and half the clothes in my closet into my truck and picked Curly up way too early in the morning for me to do anything but mumble, and we headed for his favorite spot. This poem tells the rest of the story about my first, last, and only experience fishing for steelhead. ♦

It was so cold I was sure I could walk on the water,
But, my buddy says, "This is the time to be here."
I was freezin' my toes and wipin' my nose and watchin'
For a sleigh pulled by reindeer.

Now, I fish for trout from opening day 'til
The very last day of the season.
But, this was my first time for givin' steelhead a try,
And I can assure you there's a very good reason.

I was wearin' the same waders that I always wear,
But inside them I had four layers of clothes.
They fit so tight I walked like a duck,
And there was no chance of touchin' my toes.

I put on three pairs of socks, then went back for a fourth,
Hopin' my feet would stay warm.
But, with all of those socks I couldn't lace my boots,
So I had to duct tape them on.

So, with my boots all taped on and my waders so tight
I can hardly bend at the knees,
I was tryin' my best to walk to the river, when my buddy says,
"Hey, I need your car keys."

Now my keys were in my jeans, which were under my huntin' pants,
Inside my waders, stretched tight as a drum,
And I'd just zipped up my coat and pulled on my gloves,
And I was thinkin' I should have stayed home.

To make a long story short, when we got to the river,
We heard the steelhead weren't in.
My buddy says, "No biggy, we're off work tomorrow;
We'll get up early and try it again."

Now, you may think I swore and bit him and kicked him,
But the truth is I didn't even try.
In fact, all I said was, "You go right ahead. I'll be back
Sometime in July."

Grayling fish hatchery update

by Paul Morand, chapter advisor

Tom Baird, President of the Anglers of the Au Sable, and Josh Greenberg, owner of Gates Au Sable Lodge, recently spoke to chapter members attending the January dinner. They presented information concerning the proposed commercial expansion of the fish hatchery located in Grayling, utilizing waters of the Au Sable and the discharge of effluent from the hatchery into the river. As currently permitted by the DEQ, the hatchery poses a serious environmental risk to the river and its aquatic life with potentially catastrophic effects. The following information is an update on the first week of hearings regarding the proposed large capacity fish farming operation. The report is by Tom Baird. More information concerning the hatchery can be found at www.ausableanglers.org. We urge you to visit the site and become better informed about the issue.

Fish Farm Hearings Start; First Week Ends Well

The hearing contesting the fish farm pollution permit for the Grayling fish farm started Monday, February 8, and continued through Friday. It was packed with important witnesses, and ended on a high note. But it isn't over yet - we have seven more days of hearing scheduled into early March. This special edition of Flow is to help keep you up to date as the trial progresses.

The witnesses basically testified about the contents of the permit, fish hatchery science and technology, water pollution and fish diseases. Future witnesses will expand on that testimony, and will also address damages to the river, to the fishery, to local business and the local economy, and to property values and tax revenues.

DEQ Witnesses

The first witnesses were employees of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). They testified about their role in issuing the permit, and their rationales for including weak standards for

phosphorus and suspended solids (fish food and feces), omitting standards for other pollutants (including ammonia), also omitting a standard for dissolved oxygen, allowing an insufficient water quality and disease monitoring program, failing to require a meaningful waste water treatment system, and denying our request for a performance bond.

The DEQ admitted that when the fish farm discharges effluent at the maximum levels allowed by the permit, the fish farm will emit 160,000 pounds of fish poop and uneaten fish food, and 1,600 pounds of phosphorus per year. ** Without getting into detail, suffice it to say the DEQ testimony was weak. It reminded me of what the Flint Water Advisory Task Force said about the DEQ's performance there: "Minimalist," willing to accept mere "technical compliance" to protect the public, dismissive of others who raise concerns, and wrong in its interpretation of the law.

DNR Witnesses

After that, the testimony picked up considerably. Two Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Fisheries Division employees testified. Ed Eisch is the director of fish hatcheries for the DNR. Gary Whelan is currently the director of fisheries research. Among other things, Gary, and now Ed, managed the Platte River State Fish Hatchery. Gary was instrumental in settling the litigation brought by Platte Lake property owners over pollution from the steelhead and salmon rearing activities there.

Ed Eisch testified that there are wastewater treatment technologies far superior to what is being proposed for Grayling, such as those at the Platte River facility, which he described in detail. He said a similar wastewater treatment system would be ideal for the Grayling fish farm. Gary confirmed Ed's testimony, and he also discussed the problems caused by domesticated hatchery fish and creation of breeding grounds for disease downstream. He also mentioned the problems other states

have experienced, such as the destruction of the wild brook trout fishery at Big Spring, Pennsylvania, and the spread of whirling disease from fish farms in Idaho.

Angler's Initial Witness, Dr. Ray Canale

Finally, our expert environmental engineer, Dr. Ray Canale, testified at length. Dr. Canale is a professor emeritus from the University of Michigan. His field is environmental engineering, and he has researched and written extensively about modeling the effects of fish hatchery pollution on the water quality of downstream waters. As a court appointed monitor, Dr. Canale coordinated the improvements that were required at the Platte River hatchery.

Dr. Canale first described the sources of the data he had used in the study of the Grayling fish farm and the Au Sable River. It included DNR studies and reports, USGS gauging station records, data on water quality gathered by Anglers of the Au Sable and MGTU, and numerous scholarly works. In addition, Dr. Canale just wrote a peer reviewed paper on hatchery effluent modeling with Dr. Stephen Chapra of Tufts University, which will be published in the 50th Anniversary Edition of the Journal of Environmental Engineering. It uses the Au Sable River as the vehicle for a discussion of their modeling techniques, which was perfect for the hearing.

Dr. Canale went on to describe the relevant parameters of the Au Sable River as it exists today, i.e., the baseline condition. This involved the chemical constituents of the water, flow, temperature, diurnal variations, various inputs (such as the North and South Branches), and related data down to Mio. Importantly, he testified that the DEQ's data was wrong, its sampling of phosphorous

was statistically insignificant, its laboratory does not have sufficient protocols to accurately measure low levels of phosphorous, and its analysis does not conform to the law. Dr. Canale found it extremely important to note that the river is often very close to the designated minimums for dissolved oxygen, and that it regularly violates dissolved oxygen standards. Dissolved oxygen standards are established to protect the fishery in the Au Sable and other coldwater fisheries.

Finally, Dr. Canale applied his new model to the Au Sable River, and then assessed the effects the fish farm would have under various scenarios. His testimony and exhibits were stunning. He found that, even without the Grayling fish farm, the river violates oxygen standards. He said that, even if the fish farm performs the best possible treatment of its fish poop and feeding, the river will continue to violate dissolved oxygen standards. Finally, he said that, during low flows (summer drought conditions), if the fish farm were at maximum production with no treatment, oxygen standards at Stephan Bridge would be violated 98% of the time!

In concluding their testimony, Ed Eisch, Gary Whelan and Dr. Canale were clear, concise and consistent. Ed Eisch testified that the goal of hatchery management should be an environmentally neutral operation, and that the technology exists to achieve that goal. Gary Whelan testified that hatchery effluent discharges should be near background levels. Dr. Canale testified that hatchery discharges should be zero, or else additional violations of water quality standards will occur and increase. His findings regarding dissolved oxygen levels at Stephan Bridge were particularly alarming. Gary Whelan was asked if the current DEQ permit is sufficient

to protect the river. His answer was short, sweet and to the point: "No."

The hearing will resume on February 24. We will present our biology and economic experts, who will show the increase in algae already occurring downstream from the fish farm, the increased threat of disease, and the devastating damage to the Au Sable River economy and property values which will occur if the fish farm continues to pollute the river. We may also find out how much the fish farm is now producing, so we can more accurately assess the damage which is occurring right now.

We will provide you with updates as they become available. As always, thank you for your continued support. The river needs our help and protection like never before.

—Tom Baird
President
Angler of the Au Sable

** These numbers assume the fish farm stays within the pollution limits contained in the permit. By comparison, if the facility ramps up production to 300,000 pounds of fish per year, as proposed by the owners, it is estimated that every year it will produce raw loads (before treatment, if any) of 3,540 pounds of phosphorous, and 217,234 pounds of suspended solids, mostly fish feces and uneaten fish food.



Advice, I am Giving

by Bob Kren, Advisor and Mr. Flyfisherpersonguy

It's the weekend of the opening of the latest "Star Wars" movie. I've been schlepping around the house in my XXXXXXXXL Jabba the Hutt jammies, gawking discreetly at my wife, who's wearing her Princess Leia harem girl outfit for only the seventh time. I'm trying not to think about how old Harrison Ford is. The entire cast has come to mind, especially one greenish-grey goblin, Yoda. A too-tall stack of flyfishing books makes me think: what if Yoda were to give his advice to flyfishers? What follows is my vision of standard instructions, from a variety of flyfishing how-to books, in Yodaspeak.

To me for advice you have come. Obi-wan Krenobi has sent you. Weak with you Da Force is, it seems. With 6-weight light sabre we shall start. More will come.

Best place to curdle your interests is a flyfishing "Show." Famous people there will be, selling their books, schmoozing with the *hoi polloi*, making it sound and look easy. Nod knowingly, dress nicely, attend every session, ask no questions, but take many notes, make many drawings. Grab many business cards, promise to "get back" to their donors. Every such card, recycle; every such promise, ignore. All about lying fishing is, best early you get started. Hone your skills.

Tackle and Stuff you must have. Expensive it will be: tough tarts, old Padawan. Only the best you need buy. Much of it, never will you use. To your mate, lie about cost: after all, around in life only once we go. Noma D'Anglers will have things for you. To them with Jedi MasterCard go: to them say "I'm a newbie. Sell me Stuff." Their big smiles, ignore. A large vehicle bring. Need it, you will. When bill you get, do not flinch. In a while, breathing again will resume.

Important you pick a mentor/paragon—people like Rusty Kreh, Jimmy-Jack Borger, Joe Humpyfree, Kelly Galloping—all are good. Consistent be. Adopt advice of just one. Wrong one, it probably will turn out.

Then, your outfit you must assemble. For me, "part A in hole B" works. Best you go back to Noma D'Anglers and ask them to place line on reel. A dollar a foot for backing is cheap, when you think how much bother to do it yourself is. Ask for free advice, but none will they have.

To catch a fish, in its way a fly you must put. "Putting" does not involve a golf club, but a thing called "casting" with your rod. For this, the Interweb is your friend. Google "slashing the air with an expensive stick," and on the third entry down*, click. Ancient pictures of Joannie Woof in hotpants, ignore. Bad it is, that you can't mimic videos indoor, so don't do. Best it is you watch ten seconds, pause, go outside, do what you remember, go back in, ten seconds more, repeat. By this way, in only two weeks, mediocre caster

you are. Taking smartypants 'phone outside makes easier, cuts time down to fourteen days.

Different fish reside on different planets, some species dangerous are. Fish on planet of your birth. Hopeful am I that seasons there are, relieving boredom of nice weather, and giving time to hang out at shops and buy more Stuff. There being water a nice touch is. Some fishing places famous will be, some not. Ask others their secret spots, then go elsewhere. Pretty pictures in books never tell the truth, only good weather and clear water they show. A "guide" may be of use, but habit-forming will be. Easy, they make it seem; when you fail while alone, their eager bosoms again await. Your retirement, easily they will drain. Worth it.

Now, on a quarry you must decide. Many are the possibilities: bass, bluegill, qwertyfish, carp, salmon, gromchatnies, steelhead, and the ultimate, trout. Big fish seem the obvious choice to be. Not true! Easy to see, they are; easy to catch, they ain't. Bluegill first pursue, and do not fish in neighbor's koi pond.

Water you must add, before you can start. Of water types there are two, not counting salty. All good fish exist in moving water, not all types in still water reside. Salmon and steelhead only in moving water, old Padawan. Still water boring is—easy to fish, no chance to fall down. Opportunity to fall down is first rule. Stream with slick bottom you should choose, big rocks next best is. Fish can be anywhere, so fish everywhere, recklessly.



Not enough it is to pick a slippery and dangerous place to fish. At this place you must seek spots where fish may lurk. "Foam is home," old Padawan, unless at base of waterfall. Look for a line of bubbles, but not below Flint's sewage treatment plant. Fish will on either right or left side of string of bubbles reside, but always below surface. Sometimes surprise you they will, rubbing your ankles like hungry cats—prepared you must be, every advantage to take! Worst are sleeping fish, rocks into water you must throw, their naps to interrupt. Stumbling and cursing also their attention will get. Mostly, fish will "hit" your fly when least expected, so iPad frequently check while casting. Excuse me, but pee I must. Eight hundred years old am I, with enlarged trospate.

Back from taking pee I am, old Padawan. To my notes I refer. Did you look at them (mumbles "flies in trees, places, shows, . . .") while gone I was? Probably not clever enough, but a strange feeling about it, I have. Continue I do.

Flyfishing a "fly" involves—a tiny hook with a boundless number of boundless components it is. You can make your own, involving at least as much money as you have spent before on Stuff. Many joyously frustrating hours in tying, ahead of you can lie. DO IT NOT! Back to Noma D'Anglers go, and count on spending another afternoon of

spending. Many are the types of flies they will sell you, some of which you will use. Best to buy several of each, to match the obstacles where they will finally expire. Every fly lost will be in a slovenly tree or bush or stately redwood, or submerged log, or grabsome rock, whichever vegetable or mineral enemy nearby is. Much pride there is, in showing nonchalance when a fly is lost, out-of-reach, but close enough to show off to admirers how expensive it was.

The fly is "tied" to a tiny nylon rope with a knot. To tie this knot, step up to fly, grasp firmly, insert rope, twist back, bring forward, loop through, again and again, loop back, pull tight, short end cut**. Never will come loose. Maybe.

The fly a bug represents. Bugs are easy to understand, hard to imitate. Most underwater live, only sometimes come into the air. This change a "hatch" is called. Exciting it is, for fish and fisher. Itty-bitty things, called "nymphs," float along happily, except for dying in fishes' jaws, then burst free from the bondage of Wall Street bankers and, um, well, another story that is. Easier to catch fish with nymph than with flying insect, despite most impressions of flyfishing. Do not be tricked by pretty pictures of fish jumping!

I grow tired of you, old Padawan. Never once did you put down your smartypants 'phone. As we say, "good luck, and break your rod." Dumkopf! ♦

* The first two are always ads, anyway.

** In my semi-extensive research for this piece, I came across a description of how to tie an improved clinch knot—no pictures, no drawings, just words. Not too helpful.

Meanders, continued from page 1

affected the fishing below the fish farm wherever it has been done. We need to continue raising our concerns to our state representatives in Lansing.

Our second concern is invasive species. Last year, a new snail was discovered in the Pere Marquette River. This snail reproduces rapidly

and consumes all the food in the river required for mayflies, caddis and other low-level food chain species. In western states where this snail has invaded, we have seen a significant drop in bug hatches. So, what can we do? Be sure to CLEAN YOUR WADERS when going from stream to stream. These snail larvae can live on your boots and waders 2 weeks or more without water. So, use bleach or 409 to disinfect them if you are moving to a different stream.

Have a great spring and summer. I hope you have used the winter to plan some great fishing time together with family and friends. AND, I hope to see you at our spring banquet.

Tight lines,
Don Albrecht, president

Piscatorial Priorities

by David Oeming, chapter director

None of us except, perhaps, the self-acclaimed Mr. Trump controls all aspects of our workday. We are burdened by insufficient information and resources to do our jobs, unreasonable co-workers and bosses, and demanding, uninformed customers. We are duty-bound to meet and maintain a high objective standard, despite these distractions. We try to produce the best product we can, but this sometimes seems out of our control. The reflection we see in the office mirror is closer to Munch's "The Scream" than our image. Reduction of expectations is not what is needed; rather, stress relief must be found by reducing these unknowns to manageable proportions. A fishing trip should not only be considered; it is an absolute necessity.

Uncle Joe held that, for pleasure trips, the time spent at the destination must equal or exceed travel time going to and returning from the site. This rule, applied to a weekday evening's fishing jaunt, has informed my after-work expeditions to the Rifle River. I could make it from the office to the Rifle in less than two hours. If I could get free before five, I should be able to gear up, put together enough foodlike substances for an evening repast, and be on the river in time for a little prospecting and the evening rise.

The USGS site advised that early summer flow rates and temperature on the Rifle were approaching fishable conditions, so I blocked out the calendar for Thursday afternoon, and planned my appointments and production accordingly. As Bobby Burns would have it, these plans did *gang aft agley*; by Wednesday, the unaddressed details at work were piling up, and my fishing trip looked more like abandonment of responsibility than a planned evening off. I had memos to write, clients to

counsel, staff to direct, documents to produce, and a business to run. All of this had to be done at once, or even yesterday; how could I even consider an evening off?

Simply, by turning off the computer and leaving.

At home, I doffed my work outfit on the run and tossed vest, waders, and miscellaneous gear into the back of the SUV. I assembled rod, reel, and terminal tackle while waiting for my take-out at the local Number One Chinese. A hare's ear nymph might work for starters. I carefully balanced the fragrant styrofoam container in my small cooler, and headed up US-23. On the road, the obligations and details of work receded. My thoughts directed themselves toward reviewing preparation for this expedition, and which portion of my usual reach on the river should be productive. Everything seemed to be in place, and my anxiety about irresponsibly fleeing work faded as I passed M-55.

Flyfishing, reduced to its prime, is about managing unknowns. No angler knows which line and leader combination or which fake bug will fool a trout. The weather, stream conditions, and angler competition play a part in this game, and we naively declare to ourselves that we have prepared for these contingencies. We are ready, dammit; lesser fisherpersons may not be able to seize the day, but our experience and expertise must, and will, win out. We are not marionettes, dancing to strings of opaque facts, obtuse rules, fuzzy logic, and anonymous authorities; we, the fisherpeople, are running the show. Fish of Size will be our just reward.

I turned off Sage Lake Road onto an old two-track, pleased to note that the truck and four-wheeler ruts were several days old. After donning waders and vest, I consumed my lukewarm mystery meat with Chinese vegetables and plastic goblet of cheap wine streamside. I was alone: no others fishing, no campers, only

muted traffic sounds from the distant highway. This was not a spiritual moment, though; not only was I the only person on the river, but I was in charge. In contrast to my job, I was both participant and scorekeeper. No one else had a vote.

A ring in the water disturbed this reverie. I traded the detritus of my evening meal for rod and reel, directed my flinty gaze to the river, and started downstream.

A few small fish were fooled by my weighted nymph, and my attention drifted from working prospective hides to sights and sounds on the river. A hen mallard softly warned of my approach as she led her brood behind an enormous downed ash tree rootball in the stream. Bright yellow marsh marigolds had appeared in the bank greenery; that was a sign of decent hatches, according to our fisherman's lore. I found stands of purple loosestrife along the river, and stopped to pull as much of it as I could.

My pastoral observer persona converted to predator mode when a small brown trout took my offering, idly swinging in the current below the former loosestrife garden. Time to get serious, and try different tactics. My trusty San Juan worm produced a savage strike from a five-inch chub. A dropper fly and gold-ribbed nymph rig, put together to double my chances for a Fish of Size, was promptly lost on a snag. I even tried a "casting bubble" (read: overpriced tiny bobber), but the experience was akin to chucking for largemouths with an undersized rod. Nothing worked, but no matter; I was running the show.

The idea, however, was to entice a Fish of Size with a dry-fly imitation. A few bends down the river, I reversed course and switched to a slightly more stout tippet and mayfly. I did not try to match the nonexistent hatch; there were no hatching insects or spinners to be seen. My local insect identification skills are woefully deficient, as is my ability to choose attractive imitators. In any

event, it was getting dark, and the immediate goal was to see the fly, not to impress selective trout.

I worked quickly upstream toward a particular run I wanted to hit before absolute nightfall, pausing only for perfunctory tosses at holes known to harbor decent fish. A few little ones hit, providing false encouragement, and I did not pass my entry point until O-dark-thirty. The timing was good; I heard and sensed a larger fish rise in the run by the low alders upstream. The first few casts produced nothing, and I paused to dress my fly and ignite my cigar against the descending insect horde. On my next offer, the fish hit and broke off immediately. Should have changed that tippet. The fish gods chuckled.

So it went until the time spent extracting gear from the tag alders exceeded the time left for fishing. I had two more decent hits and landed a lovely ten-inch brown. Not trusting my ability to navigate through the woods, I made my way downstream and clambered up the low bank at my picnic site. After flinging the half-smoked cigar streamward, I reversed my costume change, stowed gear, turned on the Tigers, and headed home.

Score: Fish of Size 1, Piscator 0.

Driving down Sage Lake Road and watching for the beady eyes of suicidal deer, I wondered if this really was the score of this evening's game. Consider: my scheduling worked, and I arrived on time with all necessary gear. I had an excellent meal. I used all of my equipment. I left my phone in the car while on the stream, and no hostile calls or messages had appeared on the screen. I was still dry, and I did not break or lose anything except misplaced peasant pride.

By simply retreating from the office, albeit in an orderly fashion, I was able to reduce the uncontrollable and unpredictable variables of my workaday life to managing this fishing trip. Of course, my choices directed success or failure, however defined, but only I could decide the outcome.

I was a winner; the revised score read Piscator 1, Work 0.

Still, I had no Fish of Size. Responsibility for this deficiency and failure to meet performance objectives must be assigned. It wasn't due to personal fault, or traceable to deficient planning and preparation. Execution of the tasks at hand was up to standard, and my technique was exquisite. I felt my attitude was not only acceptable; it was exemplary. Perhaps hereditary

factors too sinister and dark to contemplate played a part, but I doubted it.

No, I did not fool a Fish of Size for any of the usual reasons. When faced with the conundrum of why my plans for trophy trout *ganged aft agley*, Occam's famous razor provided the solution:

I blamed the fish. ♦

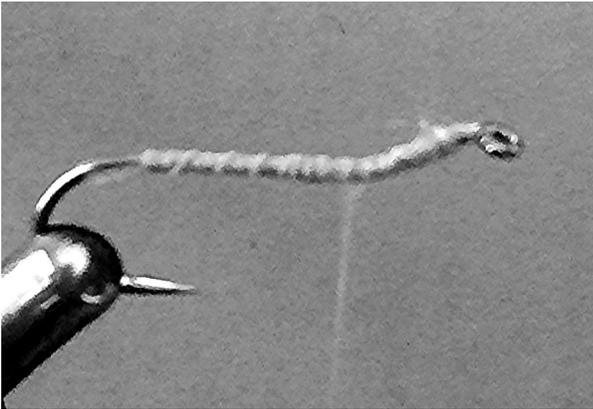


How to tie the Brown Drake Emerger

by Jac Ford, chapter past-president

When fishing for large fish during many hatches like Hennies and Brown Drakes, I've found they often will take an emerger but not a dun on top of the water. The last three photos are patterns utilized by Josh Greenberg, sold in his Gates Lodge Fly Shop. By the way, in my opinion, Josh, like the late Rusty Gates, has the best dry fly fishing flies in Michigan. Josh demonstrated these three patterns at Nomad Anglers in Okemos during a fundraiser to help fight the fish farm on the Au Sable River in Graying, Michigan.

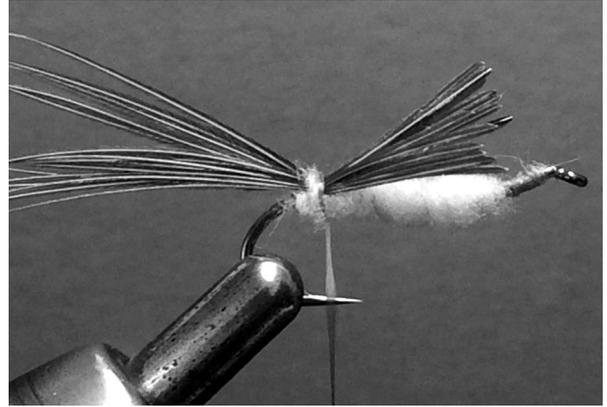
You should always carry different types of Emergers in your fly box.



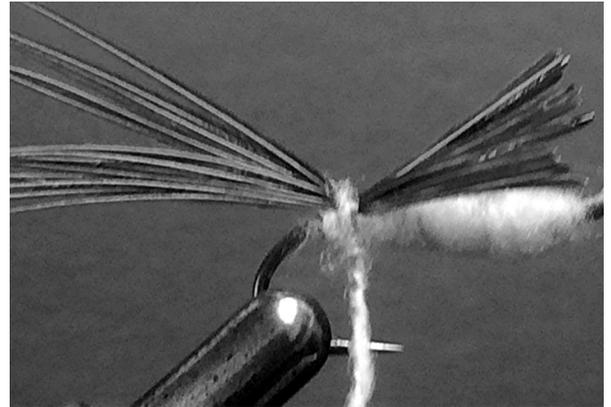
Step 1: Hook-2X Long dry fly hook, slight bend. Install into vise and wrap the thread, covering the hook, in this case a size ten.



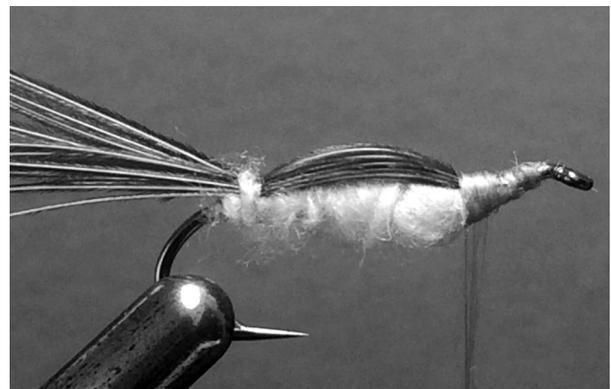
Step 2: Using a pale yellow fine dubbing, dub the thread at the bend of the hook, then wind to the rear of the hook.



Step 3: Using pheasant-tail feather, cut a small bunch two times the length from the bend in the hook to the rear. Tie it in place at the very rear of the dubbing.



Step 4: Your choice—you can dub the thread and wrap to the front like this fly is done; or you can just wrap the thread forward. Maybe crisscross, if you want more of a segmented body.



Step 5: Ready to attach the brown hackle feather and the poly-yarn wing. In tying a dangling body emerger, a smaller-width hackle is used. Just use a hackle that is equal to the width of the hook shank to hook point.



Step 6: Tie in the hackle feather by the stem and then the poly yarn.



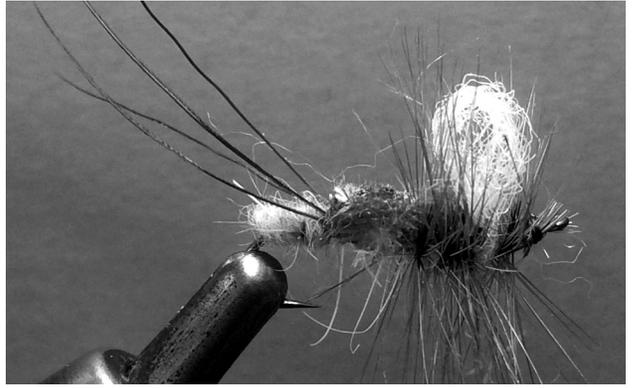
Step 7: Dub the thread very lightly and wind the dubbed thread to near the eye of hooks.



Step 8: Wind the hackle and clip the wing. You have a finished Brown Drake Emerger. Go catch a fish.



The flies in this column are Brown Drake Emergers, demonstrated by Josh Greenberg at fund riser at Nomad Anglers. Josh is a leader in protecting the Au Sable River and an avid fly-tier and fly-fisherman.





“O, Sir. Doubt not that angling is an art; is it not an art to deceive a trout with an artificial fly?”

—Isaak Walton

North Country Spider
Black Widow

WILLIAM B. MERSON 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. at G's Pizzeria, 3823 Bay Road, Saginaw.

Wednesday, April 6, 2016
 Wednesday, May 4, 2016
 Wednesday, September 7, 2016
 Wednesday, October 5, 2016
 —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.**

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2015-2016**

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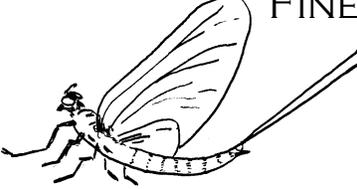
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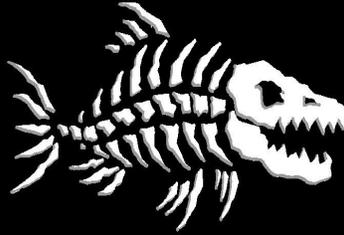
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(Additional information, including any fees, will be found in the News section of our website,
www.mershon-tu.org and on our Facebook page www.facebook.com/mershon.tu.)

Annual Banquet

Saginaw Valley State University Banquet Facility

Saturday, April 23, 2016

Women in Waders

Saginaw Bay Visitor Center, 3582 State Park Drive, Bay City 48706

An opportunity for women of any skill level to learn more about the sport of fly fishing.

Saturday, May 21, 2016

Rifle River Cleanup

Saturday, September 17, 2016

Monthly Board Meetings: 5:30 – 7:00 pm,
1st Wednesday of each month, 2nd Wednesday in March.
—No meetings during summer months—

THE MERSHON MUDDLER

◆ Newsletter of the William B. Mershon Chapter of Trout Unlimited ◆

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