

# Trout Unlimited

## Little River Chapter



### NEXT MEETING

Tuesday

March 27th

**Barley's**  
Maryville

## President's Corner

I would like to thank Derrick White, Chapter Treasurer and Hannah Tully, Past-Treasurer for the work they have done for our annual reporting. The first of the year has reporting requirements for both state and federal agencies which are critical for the chapter to keep its charitable designation.

As an example of what can happen when the paper work is not done, the Cumberland chapter has been decertified by the National TU and now the State Council must try to bring 600 plus members some sort of organization.

Little River clean-up is scheduled for March 24 at Metcalf Bottoms picnic area. There is a 9:00 start time but try to get there a little early for reach and equipment assignment. Lunch will be provided and Stan Starkey is doing the cooking. If you were at the clean-up last year, you may remember Stan does a great pulled pork.

Chapter meeting will be Tuesday March 27 at Barley's in downtown Maryville. Social hour starts at 6:00 and the business meeting will start at 7:00. We meet in the upstairs banquet room. The Eddy George award will



# IT'S THE TIME SPENT, NOT THE FISH

BY IAN RUTTER

be given at the meeting.

*Many men go fishing all their lives without knowing it is not fish they are after.*

**Henry David Thoreau**

Spring fishing has arrived and I hope everyone has a few special trips to look forward to this season. Even if you don't have a fishing trip that requires the risk of an airline losing your gear you can have an exceptionally productive year staying close to home. Sometimes we forget that the point isn't to catch fish as much as it is to get out on the river. Ironically, I've learned this many times over two decades as a professional fly fishing guide here in east Tennessee.

Back in the mid 1990's I was told several times that the Smokies was a poor place to become a guide. The fish were relatively difficult to catch and the somewhat small average size would never bring numbers of anglers to keep a guide working. I'm still not sure whether I was too smart or too stupid to follow that advice, but I'm still here working with anglers from quite literally all over the world. My customers have ranged from such locations as England, France, Dubai, Turkey, and Australia not to mention all across the United States.

For many years I was extremely concerned with how many fish a customer would catch and always hope they might hook a little bit better than average fish. In fact, I think I sometimes made myself physically ill over days when the fishing was tough because of the combination of river conditions and the angler's skill level. Over time I came to realize that my expectations for the day were almost always much higher than those of customers. What took me years to appreciate was that many of the things I take for granted are extraordinary to someone who isn't privileged to have the Great Smoky Mountains as a backyard.



*I could watch this all day long!!*

One of the best examples I have is from a summer trip I took out some number of years ago. It was on a hot day in July and stream levels were just low enough to make the fish even more skittish than usual. My angler was capable, but admitted to only fishing a few times a year for most of his adult life. Fly fishing was something he dearly loved but rarely had the time to pursue. His home in Ohio was just far enough from mountain trout streams to



require a few days to make the trip. Work and family commitments kept those fishing trips few and far between.

His wading was a little clumsy and I'd try to avoid wincing so obviously as he'd sometimes stumble into a run, his noisy wading certainly spooking trout before ever getting off a cast. I didn't want to show any aggravation with him and would direct him where to cast anyway, while always looking ahead for a "sure thing" spot where he could walk easily across gravel to make a short cast into a good run where a nice fish would hold. It was a tough day. Strikes didn't come frequently and most of those were missed.

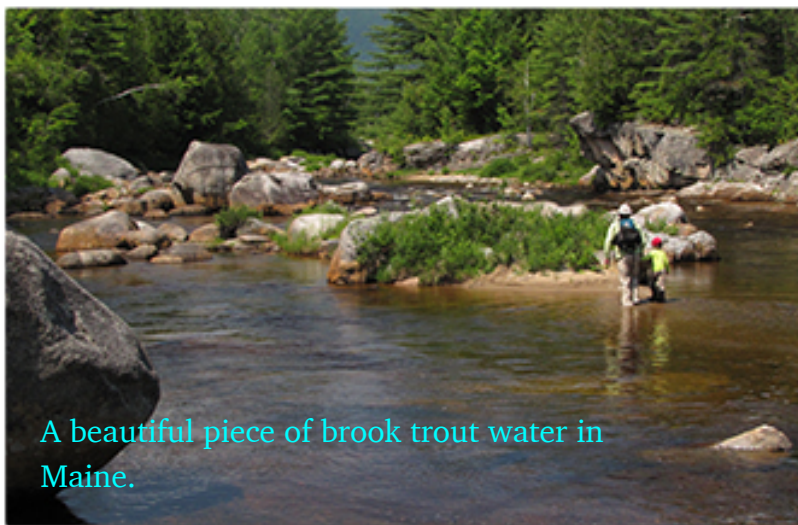
I couldn't rely on numerous fish releases and high fives to take up the time so I asked the man about his occupation in order to keep his mind off making a bad cast and help the day pass. As it turned out he was a doctor. His specialty was in geriatrics, working with the elderly, and for this doctor those in the last phases of their life in particular.

At the end of the day my angler had landed two small trout and missed a small handful of others. It was one of those days that was so frustrating for me. I had seen numerous trout spook from clumsy wading and one nice fish holding high in the water disappear after a mass of fly line piled onto its head. Like many guides, I knew my angler could have caught those fish and was beating myself up for not communicating better so that cast might have been better. Or done something to help him wade quieter. Or, or, or....

"Sorry it was a tough day. You really did a pretty good job under tough conditions," I assured him as we walked down the path in the direction of the trailhead.

"That was a tough day?" he chuckled.

"Yeah.... I'd like to think we could have done better, but...."



A beautiful piece of brook trout water in Maine.

The doctor belly laughed as I gave him a confused look. "I go fishing when I can, but I almost never catch anything. Today was pretty good by my standard!" I nodded, struggling to reconcile his idea of a good day with mine.

"And you know what else? I didn't have to pick up a single phone today and I didn't have to watch anyone die. It was the best day of the year!"

And I knew he wasn't trying to make me feel better. It really was one of the best days this man ever had on the stream and the main reason he'd go fishing was

to get away from the stress of his daily life. If my bad day at work is taking someone to a beautiful

stream and the trout won't cooperate, that's nothing compared to a guy who deals with death with far more ease than I deal with periodic high stream flows.

Over the years I'd like to think I've matured as an angler; taken the intensity level down several ticks. I remember the words of one old mountaineer I used see on the river. He once commented that I fished like I was fighting a fire, as if someone's life depended on it. Maybe it's numerous years of watching others fish more than fishing myself but when I get on the water alone I'm more likely to sit and watch a rising trout for some time than cast at it right away.

In the summer of 2014 Charity and I took a family fishing and camping trip to the Mount Katahdin region of Maine. It was a new adventure for us as we were excited to see a new part of the country. The rivers and streams there are full of brook trout, landlock salmon, and smallmouth bass depending on where you decide to fish. We stayed along the banks of the East Branch of the Penobscot River at the historic Lunksoos fish and hunting camp. The small rural town of Patten was about a 40 minute drive on a single lane gravel road from our camp. This area is at least as remote as North River or the Holly Flats section of Bald River in the Cherokee National Forest here in Tennessee but the rivers and streams were far larger.

I was intrigued to learn that Henry David Thoreau had floated the river with a Wabenaki guide in 1857 and the region must have been a true wilderness. I was fortunate to find a copy of Thoreau's journal of the trip and was amused to find that he had much more to say about various teas his Indian guide brewed from local plants than he did the fishing.

We floated the East Branch and took turns paddling our canoe while the other cast poppers for smallmouth. It was a bit of a challenge as our children would nearly capsize the boat while leaning over the gunnel to dip their hands in the water. The river was brand new to us and we missed some great spots to drop a fly because we were watching for rapids and checking the occasional views of Katahdin in the distance.

Charity easily guided the canoe through a swift run then steered us toward the bank. I looked over my shoulder and she said it seemed like a good place to maybe take a break, nodding toward the children. It was a great spot with a sandy beach. Boone and Willow ran to the top of the run and let the gentle rapids sweep them into the deep green hole as they laughed with delight. I spied a sign along the river and discovered this intuitively inviting spot was Thoreau's "Hemlock Tea" campsite, where his guide made him a pot of tea from hemlock boughs in 1857. I sat down by a fresh moose track in the sand and traced it with my fingers and listened to the children's laughter and splashes mingle with the soft gurgle of the river. A beaver quietly carved a smooth wake along the bank on the far side of the river.



No, it wasn't the fish I was after.

*Thank you Ian for sharing!*

## Trout in the Classroom

by Joyce Frey

All the schools released their fry into the tanks this month. We've got lots of fish! The picture is of the John Sevier Elementary tank.

Students and teachers are busy learning how to feed them just the right amount and keeping track of the water quality. The second graders at Clayton Bradley Academy all have specific assigned tasks for particular days. They are responsible for checking the water levels, water temperature, water quality for ammonia, nitrites and nitrates and feeding. They have recently learned how to tell time on an analog clock and are using it to time the 5 minutes for each of the water chemical tests. It's exciting to see their minds in action.



### TIE 'N LIE: QUILL GORDON SOFT HACKLE

Tie and lie will be Mach 26 at The Casual Pint in Maryville. We will start at 6:00 and be tying the Quill Gordon soft hackle. This is a popular spring fly.

- **Hook** - standard wet fly 10 - 14
- **Thread** - black
- **Tail** - lemon wood duck fibers
- **Body** - stripped peacock quill (lacquered) or artificial quill
- **Rib** - fine gold wire
- **Wings** - lemon wood duck
- **Hackle** - medium blue dun hen or soft rooster

**Comments** - The wire is wrapped in the direction opposite which the quill is wrapped, it will provide for a stronger tied fly.



The schools have already started picking their release dates during the first two weeks of May. I will be coming around at the meeting on March 27 to get volunteers for the events.

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## Meeting notes from February...

The meeting for Feb 27th, 2018 began at 7:00 PM, there were 27 attendees

Ernie Frey – President's remarks

- < The Eustis Family appreciate the support from TU at Tom's funeral service.
- < Next Month the Eddie George Award will be presented
- < Monday, March 26<sup>th</sup>, "Tie & Lie" will feature the "Quill Gordon"
- < Tuesday, March 27<sup>th</sup> will be next regular meeting.

Richard Barnes – Water Sampling

- < Approximately 24 attended the acid deposition training at Park HQ. Some new faces attended.
- < We still need more volunteers for water sampling.
- < Little River Clean-up is scheduled for Saturday, March 24<sup>th</sup> – Stan Starkey will be cooking once again.

Joyce Frey – Trout in the Classroom

- < This year Buffalo Springs Hatchery received eggs from Montana
- < Some eggs were already hatching by the time they were put in the tanks
- < With these eggs there has been a higher mortality rate
- < Fish are darker in color
- < Will release the first of May
- < Last year about 700 children were involved in the release program

Steve Young – Trout Camp

- < We have 17 applicants this year. For the first time we have 5 girls
- < We need women to spend the night with the girls in the tent at Tremont and to help with program activities

Ernie Frey reporting for Pat Tully – Fishing Trip

- < Trip is scheduled for April 13 & 14<sup>th</sup> in Bryson City
- < This will be a camping site with possibly no water

Charity Rutter - Townsend/ Walland TroutFest

- < Townsend / Walland would like to bring back TroutFest
- < Ernie- Feels the membership is burnt out from putting on TroutFest, in fact, we have lost members do the burden of work required
- < Charity, said Dancing Bear Lodge would be willing to host a banquet
- < Ernie, said perhaps this is an event TU State Council would be willing to putting on Ernie will check with Mike.
- < Other comments were perhaps this should be a Little River Festival including more businesses.



Matt Kulp Fishery Biologist (GSMNP) - Guest Speaker– Status of the Brook Trout in the GSMNP

- < Next Brook Trout stream to be restored is Jonas Creek
- < Some Rainbow Trout have been found in Lynn Camp Prong – the source is believed to be a feeder stream, they have addressed that problem and will monitor
- < They have found in some streams there are three different genetic families of Brook Trout that are not cross breeding. This could be good news, in fact, if one genetic group gets wiped out the other two could survive
- < Acid Deposition – most streams are being monitored by TU – 12 streams totaling 42 miles dedicated to Brook Trout.
- < A letter was sent to the Department of Interior to aid in setting policy goals of reducing acid deposition by 60% from a benchmark in 2014 by 2080.
- < Would like to introduce mussels to lower Abrams
- < Greenside Darter and Banded Sculpin introduced range in the mid to upper elevations.
- < Mercury testing in 92 sites throughout the US 2,000 samples 254 were within the Smoky Mountains. Mercury levels in Brook Trout in the Smokies was low, however, mercury levels were high in Small Mouth bass, they may have to issue a warning about consuming Small Mouth Bass.
- < Road Prong , 11-12% of the Brook Trout are 7” or larger
- < Thanks to LRCTU for your volunteer hours. Mike Bryant in 2015 pushed for more TU volunteer hours, in 2015 we had 1,500 hrs of volunteer service that enable the fishery dept. to receive \$40k additional funding. During 2017 TU provided 2,900 volunteer hours generating \$76k of additional funding to the fishery department. Thanks for your support.
- < March 24, 2017 is the Little River Clean-up Day.

Prepared by Chuck James