

The Flyline



A publication of Mountain Laurel Trout Unlimited

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President's Message

by Randy Buchanan

“Looking ahead” are words that show anticipation. I know at this time of year most of us are saying, “Wow, where did the year go?” I know that, for many of us, if we look back, we can't believe all the years that have gone behind. For myself, I would like to think that I have looked forward more often than not.

When I was eleven, I looked forward to being twelve so that I could get my junior hunting license. At fifteen, I couldn't wait to be sixteen so that I could start driving. For the past 40 years, I would look forward to vacations that Pat and I would take, most of which would include fishing. By now you get the idea of looking ahead.

I hope everyone had a Merry Christmas and that you are now looking ahead to the new year. Looking ahead, Gary and the banquet committee are busy planning our annual banquet fundraiser. This will be the last newsletter before the banquet, so mark the date and come out to support the Chapter. The funds raised will help the Chapter to continue our Trout in the Classroom programs and determine the in-stream habitat projects for the upcoming year.

Look ahead, find the time and come out and give the chapter a little help.

Catch one!

Randy



MLTU President, Randy Buchanan, prepares to release a wild trout from a Pennsylvania wild trout stream that is not stocked and has no special regulations of any type including limiting of tackle choice.

See related story beginning on page 4.

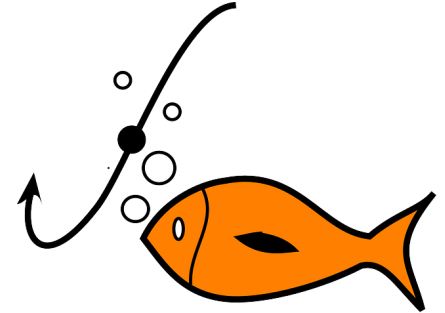
Photo by Len Lichwar

Natural Thoughts

By Gary Cooper

Winter reminds us of our mortality. It is a time of reflection; a time to remember. We reflect back on past seasons afield and astream and look forward to seasons to come. Perhaps some of the flies which we tie are the result of past experimentation or were suggested by an old friend. We look forward to testing our handiwork on the harshest judges of all, the trout! As we think back, we recall many days, successful or not, shared with old fishing partners. We recall difficult fish and days when we got skunked. We recall days when we couldn't keep the fish off our hooks. What geniuses we thought we were! But nature always has a way of bringing us down to earth. There were days of fish rising everywhere and yet not a fish was caught. What now, geniuses?

Some of those old friends will never grace our company again. We will miss their wit and their wisdom, but most of all their friendship. We shared much, laughter, tears, triumph, and defeat. We are reminded that life is fleeting, and that another fishing season is not guaranteed. So pause, reminisce with friends, plan the coming season, and be thankful for all the blessings of this life.



Fly tying Course Reminder

MLTU will offer its popular beginning fly tying courses in January and February. Interested persons may choose from a Saturday course from 9 AM until 12 PM or a Monday evening course from 6 PM until 9 PM. Courses are held at the Richland Municipal Building. Each course lasts for five weeks, but six dates are scheduled in case of inclement weather or extra time is needed. Dates for the Saturday course are January 4, 11, 18, and 25 and February 1 and 8. Dates for the Monday night course are January 6, 13, 20, and 27 and February 3 and 10. The courses are free to the public, but pre-registration is required. Call Gary Cooper at 814-266-4763 by January 1 to register or if you have any questions.

We Could Use Your Help!

By Gary Cooper

At the annual fund-raising banquet, guests get to see a wide variety of very nice prizes. Many of these prizes are the result of members who have tied flies or made a basket. Some of you went to local businesses and solicited a prize. You can support the chapter not only by attending the banquet, but by also working to get prizes for the banquet. Many of you are fly tiers. Why not tie a dozen flies for the banquet? Can you make a basket or perhaps have a wife or a girlfriend who can make one? Many of you regularly visit certain businesses. Perhaps you could solicit a prize. We will accept anything. Can't get a prize?! How about an ad in our program? Get a form from Randy Buchanan and present the idea of an ad. Please, help us out.

Soon, you will be receiving your 2020 spring banquet tickets. When you get them, put them where you will see them every day. As soon as you can, fill the stubs out and send them with a check to:

Mr. Gary L. Cooper
Rear 704 Scalp Ave.
Johnstown, PA 15904

So what is new this year? We have added a third meal choice to the ticket. The ticket also says, "Donation. I will not be attending the banquet." If you can't make it, but wish to donate the cost of a ticket(s), check this box. This way, we will not order a meal for you.

Nothing much else has changed. Same time! - Doors open at 5:00 PM. Same place! - Holiday Inn Downtown Johnstown. Same Cost! - Thirty five dollars a ticket.

Don't forget to check a meal choice on your stubs before you send them in.

You will find a wide array of fishing gear, nice baskets, restaurant certificates, silent auction items (including jewelry for the ladies), and much more. Bring your family, friends, and significant others. Cash or credit cards accepted. Very short awards program. Why attend? Do you support clean, cold water? If so, support the work of MLTU. Your grandchildren will thank you for it.

HAPPY NEW YEAR



Len Lichvar

Photo by Logan Lichvar

MLTU Board Member, Len Lichvar, was recognized by the Somerset County Sportsmen's League for his professional natural resource conservation efforts as District Manager of the Somerset Conservation District, as well as his 12 years of volunteer service as a state-appointed official serving as the District 4 Commissioner for the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. Len, who is a professional freelance outdoor writer, also serves as the Chairman of the Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project, Co-Chairman of the Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited Trout Management Committee, a board member of the Somerset County Conservancy and the Somerset Lake Action Committee and is involved in numerous other conservation and sportsmen organizations. The award was presented at the League's Annual Fund Raising Banquet in October.

The Complexity of Trout Regulations

It's complicated. That is the often heard concern from anglers as well hunters in regard to the varying regulations both resource agencies utilize to best serve the resource and the user. The wide diversity of resources in the state coupled with the multiple methods used by hunters and anglers add to the potential methods of management. The CWD situation has added even more to the hunting guidelines, and disease such as gill lice have created havoc in the fishing regs that are also not always easily navigated.

In recent years, special regulations have become increasingly placed under the spotlight at the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC). The PFBC currently has trout water regulations that include Delayed Harvest Artificial Lures, Catch and Release Artificial Lures, Catch and Release Fly Fishing Only, Catch and Release All Tackle, All Tackle Trophy Trout, and Trophy Trout Artificial Lures, all of which have differing guidelines on the waters they apply to. Then, there are waters that have other miscellaneous regs.

District 4 Commissioner for the PFBC, Don Anderson, supports the need and concept of special regs, but also adds, "The down side is trying to market the sport especially to new anglers can be difficult because the many regs can seem a little overwhelming and can intimidate some from taking up the sport."

The challenge for resource managers and decision makers then becomes how to simplify and be inclusive yet still protect the resource while still providing maximum angling opportunities.

Ken Undercoffer is a past President of the Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited and a wild brook trout enthusiast. Undercoffer also fully believes that special regs need to remain a tool in the tool box for fisheries managers, but also suggest that, "In general, more restrictive regs should occur on small waters that receive a lot of angling pressure and perhaps less restrictive regs should be used on water that are larger, have more difficult fish such as brown trout, and where angling pressure is more spread out."

Anderson concurs. "Perhaps there is a way to consolidate some of the current regs in particular on the larger waters where angling is more challenging both because of size and where the use of bait could also be considered as an option."

That leads into the great debate concerning the mortality of trout caught and released by fly, lure or bait anglers and should special regs include tackle restrictions and if so, to what degree and where. From his own life long angling exploits with artificial lures, Anderson says, "I believe I only have a mortality rate of 1 to 2% of the trout I release and I contribute to that level by de-barbing all my hooks, including treble hooks. I think we might want to revisit the expanded use of barbless hooks."

Undercoffer also believes the type of hook has a significant impact on the survival of released trout and suggests that, in addition to supporting and promoting barbless hooks, the use of circle hooks, known for not deep hooking, be looked at more seriously as well.

Undercoffer, however, also believes that as many as 20 to 40% of trout caught and released using natural bait do not survive. Mortality, or lack of, with any type of tackle is among the most hotly

debated issues among anglers, as well as fishery managers.

Dr. Robert Carline, a highly respected retired fisheries biologist, along with associates, conducted a bait mortality study on a central PA trout stream that concluded that a very small percentage of trout released on bait perished. Other professional biologists, such as PFBC Bureau of Fisheries Director Kris Kuhn, at the July 2019 PFBC Quarterly meeting, pointed out several internal control conditions in the Carline study that would not be present in a real world angling setting that could have led to the conclusions drawn.

A variety of other studies exist that also document varying degrees of mortality conclusions. Undercoffer points out that the debate on both sides of the mortality issue is more heated than it should be. He suggests, "A good scientific mortality study on all types of tackle with parameters contained in it that those of both sides can agree on would go a long way to resolve this contentious issue."

Adding yet another twist is that the impacts of special regulations on stocked trout can be totally different than on wild trout. Anderson points out, "The Delayed Harvest Artificial Lure waters, which are stocked trout waters, currently do not allow the use of bait after the June 15 harvest day passes often have fish that perish from marginal water conditions unrelated to angling. I know this has been discussed before, but perhaps we could find a compromise that makes sure these trout are better utilized."

In the last two years times special regs, with restricted tackle, have been recommended by PFBC fisheries staff and approved by the Board of Commissioners placed on a section of a newly designated Class A wild trout water on Penns Creek and a very short section of Spruce Creek that is home to a Class A population of wild trout, but also contains stocked trout. Those actions caused a well-known noted Pennsylvania outdoor writer to very publicly cancel his membership in Trout Unlimited because of that organization's support for the exclusion of bait on those waters.

Others have also weighed in on the regulatory decisions. The Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen and Conservationists' Executive Director spoke out in favor of allowing the use of bait at both locations in question driven by what the President of the Federation wrote that was supported by polling the membership of the organization. However, another author in the same publication, also representing the organization, stated only the board of directors voted to take that stance driven by the lobbying efforts of a single member.

Throwing more wood on the fire, the editor of a statewide outdoor publication recently referred to the phrase "wild trout snobs" in an opinion piece.

In regard to special regs, specifically in reference to wild trout waters, Greg Malaska, President of the PA Council of Trout Unlimited, in a written statement explained, "Just 80 miles of PA's wild trout waters, half of one percent, are governed by regulations restricting the use of bait. It is open on the other 15,925 miles."

Continued under "Trout" on page 6

Trout

Continued from page 5

A clear path forward, as to what is fair for both the natural and human resource unencumbered by emotion and perception, is still not in sight. The greatest impediment to that path just might be because it's complicated.

Reprinted from the Somerset *Daily American*

Keystone Coldwater Conference

The PA Council of Trout Unlimited's 13th biannual Keystone Coldwater Conference will be held Friday-Saturday, February 28-29 at the Ramada Inn Conference Center in State College. This year's theme is "Coldwater Resource Conservation and Education: Resiliency in a Changing Environment." According to its website, the conference "is an opportunity for grassroots conservation organizations, environmental professionals, college faculty, staff, and students to share ideas, concepts, and network in order to protect, conserve and restore Pennsylvania's coldwater resources." An agenda and registration information should soon be available at www.coldwaterconference.org. MLTU encourages its members to attend.

PA Master Naturalist

by Melissa Reckner

Penguin Court will be hosting a Pennsylvania Master Naturalist (PMN) training for the Laurel Highlands in the fall of 2020. PMN seeks to build a corps of knowledgeable, skilled, and dedicated volunteers who provide education and conservation service to protect Pennsylvania's natural heritage. Any adult who enjoys learning about the natural world and sharing that knowledge may participate. PMN trainees complete 50-55 hours of core training during the 13-week program, which will run every Tuesday evening, August 4 through October 27, 2020 at Penguin Court in Laughlintown. Four Saturday field trips are also mandatory. After this initial training, participants must complete a minimum of 8 hours of advanced training and 30 hours of approved service activities within the first year and then 12 hours of continuing education and 20 hours of service in subsequent years to maintain their certification.

The inaugural training in 2019 at Penguin Court was very well received!

PMN will accept 15 applications for the program and should open the application period in March. Since class size at Penguin Court is limited to 10 participants, interviews will be completed in June.

For more information, visit www.pamasternaturalist.org or contact me at mreckner@brandywine.org.

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NatureWorks 4.0

by Melissa Reckner

Sue Konvolinka, a board member of the BottleWorks Ethnic Arts Center, and Melissa Reckner, Program Manager at Penguin Court, a Preserve of the Brandywine Conservancy, are coordinating the 4th annual NatureWorks event, which will be held Saturday, March 7 from 10 AM to 2 PM at the BottleWorks in the Cambria City section of Johnstown. NatureWorks is a “cabin-fever” event that brings together over 20 non-profit conservation and outdoor recreation organizations to educate families about the abundant natural resources in our region to promote outdoor play, appreciation, and conservation. Participating organizations include, but are not limited to MLTU, Benscreek Canoe Club, Cambria County Solid Waste Authority, Forbes State Forest, Friends of the Incline Plane, SCRIP, and more! Jack Paluh of Waterford, PA will be the featured nature artist and will have works available for purchase. This year, REI’s Distribution Center in Bedford is generously sponsoring the event by covering the facility fee for the day. NatureWorks is free and open to the public. There will be lots of “hands-on” activities and even a visit by Smokey Bear, so save-the-date and tell your friends!



Shane Rudnik & Gary Cooper tie flies at NatureWorks 2019.

Photo by Melissa Reckner.

MLTU welcomes its members and volunteers to help staff its table at NatureWorks. It’s a fun day where members can demonstrate fly tying, help children or adults tie a fly, showcase macroinvertebrates, and discuss MLTU projects. Contact Randy to help out!

Finally, save-the-date of Thursday, March 5 for a Green Drinks event that will support NatureWorks. It will be held from 5:30 PM–7:30 PM, most likely at a venue in Cambria City, so plan to stop by for a drink and some comradery before the MLTU meeting!

**Mountain Laurel
Trout Unlimited**

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We're on the web!
www.mltu.org

Save-the-Dates

Please see page 2 for fly tying class dates.

- January 2 – MLTU meeting 6:30 PM Directors, 7 PM Members at Richland Municipal Bldg.
- January 15 – Banquet Committee Meeting, 7 PM at Randy & Pat Buchanan's House
- February 6 – MLTU meeting 6:30 PM Directors, 7 PM Members at Richland Municipal Bldg.
- February 19 – Banquet Committee Meeting, 7 PM at Randy & Pat Buchanan's House
- February 28-29 – Keystone Coldwater Conference at Ramada Inn, State College. Info on page 6.
- March 5 – MLTU meeting 6:30 PM Directors, 7 PM Members at Richland Municipal Bldg.
- March 5 – Green Drinks, 5:30 PM–7:30 PM, at TBD
- March 7 – NatureWorks, 10 AM–2 PM at BottleWorks Ethnic Arts Center. Details on page 7.
- March 18 – Banquet Committee Meeting, 7 PM at Randy & Pat Buchanan's House
- April 4 – MLTU Annual Fundraising Banquet at Holiday Inn in Downtown Johnstown.
Doors open at 5 PM. See page 3 for details.
- May 7 – Shade-Central City TIC Release Day
- May 26 – Conemaugh Township TIC Release Day

*Don't look back and ask why,
look forward and ask why not.*