



Clear Water Journal

The Official Newsletter of the Clear Fork Chapter of Trout Unlimited

September 2003

The Clear Water Journal is the newsletter of the Clear Fork Chapter of Trout Unlimited #OH667.

Trout Unlimited is a national conservation organization with more than 115,000 members dedicated to "protect and restore North America's coldwater fisheries and their watersheds."

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A Journey to New Waters

Fly Fishing For Northern Pike

By Skip Nault

I'm relatively new at fly fishing, having taken up the sport five years ago when my wife surprised me with a Christmas present of a 6-weight, 8 1/2 foot Orvis rod and matching reel. However, until I retired from the OARDC in January 2002, I fly fished fewer than a dozen times.

Since retiring, I have been trying to make up for lost time. I have fly fished in Oregon for rainbows (my daughter lives in Bend), several trout species in New York State where my son lives, and traveled to Pennsylvania with John Rochus to fish for browns and steelhead. Here in Ohio I have chased browns, bass, bluegill and carp with my fly rod. What fun!! Catching any species of fish on a fly rod is twice the fun as catching the same fish with spinning gear. And better yet, is to catch a fish on a fly that I have tied. Now I have five fly rods ... it's like a disease, you can never have enough!

So, when my next door neighbor Bill Taylor asked me to join him and his son Chip and a dozen or so of their friends for their annual outing to fish for Northern Pike in Amisk Lake in north-east Saskatchewan, I jumped at the chance. They use spinning gear and regularly catch dozens of fish daily, most averaging 3 to 4 pounds and 25 to 30 inches long. The group of Bill and Chip's friends are still looking for that 40 inch plus, 20 pound northern that so far has

eluded them. They created a special club for fishermen who have boated a 40-incher. So far no members.

When I asked whether anyone used a fly rod, they mentioned that a friend brought one up a few years back and caught a few, but spin fishing was the way to go. Chip said he would bring along a 9-weight rod I could use to cast some streamers he had in his tackle box. So I busied myself at my tying bench to create some Clouser minnows on #4 and #6 streamer hooks. I tied them up with a weed guard made of 25 pound test monofilament. I was also told that these toothy critters would tear up a monofilament leader so I purchased half a dozen, 9-inch long "haywires" and made up my own 8-foot leaders using a 25 pound test butt section, 20 pound mid section and a 15 pound tip tied to the haywire.

Just for the heck of it I brought along that original 6-weight Orvis fly rod, but fitted it to my large arbor Cabella reel loaded with 7-weight line that I used last winter for steelheading. I practiced on a local pond nearby and found I could regularly get out about 40 feet with the Clousers. Perhaps I would not need Chip's 9-weight after all!

So, on June 12, Bill and I headed for the Cleveland airport for our three-legged journey to Brainerd, Minn., to join up with Chip and his pickup truck and 19 foot Yar Craft fishing boat. Our journey

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started just after midnight on Saturday the 15th and ended 19 hours later at Lake Amisk.

The fishing camp there has 8 cabins and spaces for a dozen or more campers. All in all there were 60 to 70 people at the camp of whom perhaps three-quarters were fishermen and women. But this is a big lake, 25 or more miles long and 15 to 20 miles wide with numerous islands and bays. Rarely did we see another boat nearby when we were fishing. Eagles overhead and loons, white pelicans and seagulls on the water made it all worthwhile even if we didn't catch fish.

But catch fish we surely did! We headed out about 8:30 Sunday morning in the Yar Craft powered by Chip's 225 hp outboard. It didn't take long for us to get within half a mile of the shoreline dotted with shallow bays and islands that we wanted to fish. We crept along keeping a lookout for shallow reefs and submerged boulders until we reached our fishing grounds. The pike were just off their spawning beds and hanging out in shallow water 2 to 6 feet deep near weed beds and rocky bottoms. We soon had our spinning gear and casting reels in hand and were busy throwing spoons of various colors. Within a half hour we all had our first pike and by early afternoon we all had caught and released a dozen or more, most ranging in size between 26 and 30 inches. I learned all about jaw spreaders for the first time and how to use heavy duty pliers to remove the big treble hooks. It took me a while to learn how to do it properly. I have many holes and cuts in the fingers of my right hand as a result of improper technique.

By 2:00 in the afternoon, I had caught and released 18 pike and decided it was time to try out the fly rod, especially that undersized 6 weight. The afternoon was calm, the skies were sunny, and we were by then frequently spotting pike hanging out from just under the surface to the bottom in less than 6 feet of water. Many fish were in easy casting range of 15 to 25 feet of the boat. Some were in fact too close

for a good cast and retrieve. Moreover, often pike would follow our spoons to near the boat and then hang out for a while before scooting away. So, I rigged up and cast to one of these "followers." After two quick strips of my line, bam, I had my first pike on a fly rod. By the end of the day I caught and released another dozen pike on my 6-weight. Most were sighted first, either those that followed Bill and Chip's spoon or those that we crept up on with the trolling motor. I did catch a couple blindly casting to the edges of weed beds that looked like good holding water.

As I expected, battling a pike on a fly rod was twice the fun compared to spinning tackle. They fought harder and longer and were much more challenging, especially those that decided to embed themselves in weeds or dive under the boat and around the trolling motor. Still, my landing rate was just as good as on the spinning rod. I caught many fewer fish than Bill and Chip, but can tell you that I had as much or maybe more fun than they did. I landed 32 pike that first day, 13 coming on the fly rod. The next day, Monday, I fished almost exclusively with my 6-weight and landed 15 pike, including a 35 inch, 12 pounder that gave me quite a battle, repeatedly pulling out line against my drag before giving in.

The following 4 days of fishing the weather was windy, the water choppy, and fly casting tough. I caught only another 5 fish on the fly rod. By the end of the week I had landed 97 pike, 33 coming on the 6-weight. This was way beyond my wildest expectations!!

Oh, on the last day, we fished in the wind and a light rain in a shallow bay where we were taking some big fish over 35 inches. Casting a big spoon I felt a big thud and soon a fish was pulling out my line. Ten minutes later Chip lowered his net and pulled my 41 1/2 inch, 20-pounder from the lake. It took a while to revive this old female and release her so she could continue to spawn in years to come. Along with Bill, who caught a 40-incher the day before, I became the second member of the 40-inch club. But as the big female swam away, all I could think of was how much I wished she had taken a Clouser minnow on my 6-weight.

Of course, I might still be out there on the lake trying to coax her to the boat!!

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Chapter News & Notes

Clear Fork Chapter Receives DNR Award

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources presented the chapter with its Wildlife Award for "helping from the beginning" with beginner's fly fishing clinics at the Castalia Hatchery.

Youth Fly Fishing School

The Chapter's fourth annual Youth Fly Fishing School is Sunday, September 6, and is open to anglers between the ages of 11-16. Due to the cost to the Chapter, we are forced to limit the school to six youngsters. The limited number of openings has not been a problem in the past, but we limit the number from a family to one, and if more than six applications are received, the final six will be determined by a random drawing.

Each participant will receive a free rod, reel, line, leaders and flies to take home with them at the end of the day. There is absolutely no cost for the kids.

The School will start at 1p.m. and will include instruction on equipment, knots, casting, flies, and more. At the end of the instruction, the kids will be given the opportunity to spend the remainder of the day fishing.

The location of the school will be the same as last year, Bill Marlow's cabin outside of Loudonville. Everyone attending the school will

receive a letter from the Chapter with directions and final instructions.

The Chapter also needs members to assist with the school, and to donate flies for the kids to use and take home with them. In the past, our members have been very generous with their time and donations, and we have appreciated this. We have a few flies left that arrived late last year, but could use more.

To register for the class, call "Doc" Stevens at 1-330-345-7049.

Fall Outing to the Yough

The Youghiogheny River at Ohiopyle, Pa., is the destination for our fall trip, September 19, 20 & 21. The Yough is a tail water fishery and the water remains cold all year long and conditions are usually favorable.

The meeting location will be Ohiopyle State Park Campgrounds. On Friday and Saturday evenings we will hold cookouts at the campgrounds, weather permitting. If you would like to make reservations prior to leaving, you can call 1-800-PA-Parks and ask to make camping reservations at Ohiopyle State Park Campground. We usually stay in the area of camp site 204. There is also some lodging in Ohiopyle for those who prefer not to camp.

If you still need info, you can call Steve (330-264-8365) or Tony (330-

264- 8286). Hope to see you there.

When We Meet Again

The Clear Fork Chapter of Trout Unlimited meets the second Monday of each month at 7 p.m. in Skou Hall, Room 30 (downstairs) at the OSU-ATI Campus, 1328 Dover Road (U.S. 250), on the south edge of Wooster.

September: Feathers, fur and synthetics will be flying during fly tying demonstrations.

In addition, President Tony DalPra reminds us, it is time for the nomination of officers for October elections. Tony is completing his third term as president and cannot run again. He encourages all members to get involved.

"We are in need of new officers. Please step up and give being a officer a try if you have an interest. We had some new people take positions last year and we need more this year ...

"Please try to make our September meeting for nominations and the October meeting for elections. This T.U. chapter is only as good as the members make it. So far it's been great, but we need help. PLEASE take your involvement one step farther," Thank you Tony

October: Election of officers. Steve Fitch will have a presentation on fishing New Hampshire.

Also Due To Hatch

IN APPRECIATION OF CANE: A gathering of bamboo fly rod enthusiasts is planned for **Noon, Sunday, October 12th**, at Mohican State Park, just downstream from the covered bridge. "We will be 'Show and Telling' about our rods, and maybe do some trading," said Ron Thompson, who is organizing the meeting.

GETAWAY DEALS: Getaway Outfitters (Ad on Page 2) is offering

15 percent discounts to members of fly fishing clubs such as the Clear Fork Chapter. Discounts apply to all regularly priced items, including rods, reels, waders, vests, boots, vises, fly boxes, and tying supplies. **On tap for 2004**, Getaway is planning a bonefish trip to the Bahamas in January and trip to Montana in August. **RENOWNED FLY TYER AT MAD RIVER:** Davy Wotton, described by

Dave Whitlock as the best fly tyer he had ever seen, will be at Mad River Outfitters (Ad on Page 2) on **Saturday, November 8**. He will conduct a fly tying class from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., and then will be in the shop the rest of the day doing tying demonstrations and sharing his expertise! The fly tying class - only - is limited to 10 students and costs \$50. All other activities are free.

Back Casts – If You Missed Our Last Meeting

Water Quality Concerns Take Us To An Apple Creek Headwater

By Don Bearden

Our chapter met streamside August 11 at a primary headwater stream for the Apple Creek Watershed, located at the arboretum of OARDC. Kelly Smith of the Soil and Water Commission and Ben Stonier, an entomologist and trout fisherman, explained the importance of these often impeded, ditched, covered over and otherwise neglected primary headwater streams to all the watersheds.

The watershed of the primary headwater stream is a square acre or less while the headwater stream's watershed is 20 square acres or less. The primary headwater stream, despite its size, accounts for eighty percent of the watershed.

To many people the primary headwater streams are insignificant, but they are as important to the watershed as the leaves on a tree to the trunk and are as critical as veins and capillaries to

the human circulatory system. This is a pattern that repeats itself in nature and one we often minimize to our peril. "Clean rivers spring from their source."

Approximately 28% of primary headwater streams are cold water from springs. As trout fishermen, we know the value of these waters. Primary headwater streams are being evaluated in Ohio by the EPA, but the task is a big one. Based upon my experience at the Brecksville Reservation, volunteer help is valuable to the success of this project to evaluate and conserve these streams.

Using the SWCD map of the Apple Creek Watershed, provided by Eric Schultz, as a guide, trained volunteer teams could help by verifying the location of likely primary headwater streams and help get access to these streams. Volunteers also supplement

the information collected by conservation agencies. Under the guidance of a biologist, they may also report stream channel modifications, habitat quality, observations of fish, salamanders, and aquatic macroinvertebrates, frogs, tadpoles, water temperature, percent of boulder slabs, boulders, cobble, bedrock, measurements of the pool depth and stream width, etc.

The EPA will be conducting a training session September 18, with future dates to be determined. Kelly distributed application forms for training at our streamside meeting. If you are interested let me know. I will have application forms. Kelley also discussed our organization working with others to form an Apple Creek Watershed Conservation Group.

Working together we can conserve this watershed. Based upon our cleanup this past Spring, it needs our help.

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