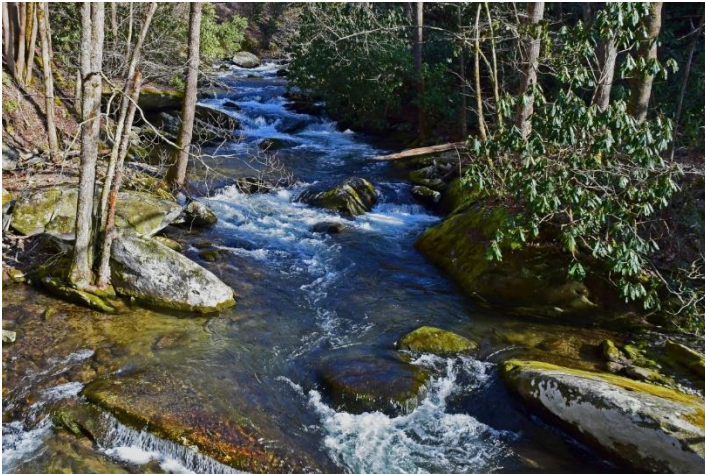


Blue Ridge NC Trout Unlimited



July 2023 Newsletter

Visit us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/BlueRidgeTU/>



It's summertime in North Carolina and many lower streams are too warm for catch and release of trout. It's time to head higher up into the mountains and do a little rock hopping. This month we will talk a bit about how to fish those streams.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

It is summertime again. Time to travel, fish, go to the beach and enjoy family gatherings. This year we will take the summer off, July and August with no activities planned. However, if there is enough interest and attendance our fly-tying classes may continue on Wednesdays.

Our Board however will be busy planning for Trout in the classroom program that kicks in towards end of August, Chapter meetings, trips, conservation efforts, board elections. We are working on a hands-on fly fishing skills Chapter meeting in September at one of the local parks. Board elections and our Annual meeting will be in October. A new fishing trip to Bryson City in October with the Charlotte chapter. We are considering a chili cookoff in the late fall. Last, we will be doing another restoration on Elk creek in Todd/ Boone area in January /February. So although our members are off for the summer, our board is not.

We have all put in our time to bring you all these events. If you have enjoyed our activities, we ask that you step up and volunteer to be a board member. This summer 3 positions will become vacant and so we are looking for few good men or women to do their part and join the board. Please let us know by sending an email to our chapter

blueridgetuws@gmail.com or contact Fred Frank at (336) 442-4676 our treasurer if you would like to serve.

Robbie Abou-Rizk

ACTION ALERT

You have been receiving action alerts from NCTU council asking you to contact your house representative to vote yes for Bill 613 S to have a 25 foot buffer zone on all farm land on trout streams. I would like to ask you to do that now if you have not already. Click the link:

[Write Your Representative](#)

Here is the link for the actual bill

[See The Bill](#)

Sediment is filling out our trout streams. It does not take much, two properties on the Mitchell River that have no buffer zones have filled up the hard black rocky bottom with sediment from 2 inches in places to 16 inches by the fields with no buffer zones. Just walk up to the end of the delayed harvest section one day and see the difference. The same company, the Bottomley's, has destroyed 3 brook trout streams, one DH and one Hatchery supported in 2020 and 2021. The Mitchell is next.

So please take action now and click the link above to tell our House representatives to vote yes for bill 613 S to approve a 25 ft buffer zone on trout streams in NC.



This photo shows the sediment gauge from the top of the Mitchell DH section showing an accumulation of 5 inches of sediment from March 1st-May 11th, most of it accumulated in April once the field above the DH section was plowed. Just look at the floor, nothing but silt, all rocks and life buried. This sits on top of 20 inches of sediment from the previous year.

Over the years many groups supported us with advocacy, writing letters, lobbying when we needed them. Organizations like NCTU Council [NCTU](#), NC Wildlife Federation [NCWF](#), Yadkin River Keeper [YRK](#), Audubon Society [Audubon](#), Sierra Club [Sierra](#), Piedmont Environmental Action Coalition [PEAC](#) and many more. They

You are receiving this newsletter either as a member or prospective member of the Blue Ridge Chapter of Trout Unlimited. If you do not wish to receive this newsletter, please respond by email to BRNCNews@gmail.com and let us know.

helped us on Ramey Creek and they are helping us now with the buffer zone legislation. They have sent our action alerts to their members and in turn we will send you their action alerts for support when they need it. Please think about all the help they provided when you receive action alerts for other organization. Please click on their links and support them.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Fly Tying Classes

At 9 AM on Wednesdays Project Healing Waters will host fly tying classes and at 6pm on Wednesday evenings Blue Ridge Trout Unlimited will host classes. The classes are free and all are welcome - from beginners to advanced. No need to sign up, just come join us. If you have specific questions about the evening classes, you can contact, Rusty Berrier at rustyberrier@outlook.com.

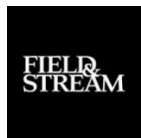
Bryson City Oct 12-15: This year we will switch from going to Balsam Smoky Mountain Retreat. That area hosts all kinds of streams and opportunities.

Rod Building Classes

Rod building classes continue on Wednesday mornings and evenings at 9:00AM - 12:00PM and 6:00PM - 8:30PM through July 26, 2023. For information about the classes please contact [Ed Graham](mailto:EdGraham)

Edgraham31@gmail.com

336-413-5457



FLY FISHING IN SMALL STREAMS

by Steve Culton

Published Aug 25, 2021

In the heat of late summer, it's hard to beat a small stream full of brook trout.



OLYMPUS DIGITAL CAMERA. *Steve Culton*

If there's a better way to enjoy fly fishing at its most wondrous than on a small stream, I've yet to experience it. There's something about a thin blue line hidden deep in the woods that invites you to touch fly fishing's very soul. I consider my beloved small streams to be not so much fishing spots as cathedrals. The water is cold and clean, the air unspoiled, and the resident char wild. Their lineage dates back to the previous ice age. It's not hard to imagine that a thousand years ago these sacred waters and woods looked exactly as they do today.

Small streams are everywhere. Some of them are miles from any town. Others are hidden in plain sight in urban and industrial areas. Many of them are home to self-sustaining populations of wild trout. And one of the best parts of fly fishing these gems is that it's easy to get started.

The Best Fly Fishing Gear for Fishing Small Streams

Small Stream Fly Rod

You don't need expensive gear to enjoy small stream fishing. I like a short, slow-action rod between 6 and 7 feet—that length is easy to maneuver in dense underbrush. It's hard to go wrong with a 5-weight, although many aficionados love their 3- and 4-weights. A new 6'6" Cabela's CGR 4-weight will run you well under a hundred dollars. And it gets you into fiberglass, a classic rod blank material. You can also look for deals in the used section of your local fly shop. (I own several previously loved small stream rods and reels).

Fly Fishing Reel and Line for Fishing Small Streams

Get the cheapest reel you can find. The vast majority of fish you'll be catching will never go on the reel; it's merely a line retention device. Get a floating line to match your rod; I like double-taper lines like Cortland 444 Peach. Double tapers load the rod quickly, and when one end gets ragged you can simply reverse it. I like a tapered leader to match the rod length, and I carry tippet spools of 5x and 6x.

Other Fly Fishing Gear

You can wear a vest or pack, or go light and stuff things into pockets. You should at least carry some basics: small pliers, nippers, and a stream thermometer; insect repellent that does double-duty on ticks and mosquitoes; and your phone, although you're at the mercy of the nearest cell tower. Get a small landing net that's made of fish-friendly netting material. The stocking truck never comes to most small streams, and you'll want a net that protects your catch before you release it.

What to Wear When Fishing Small Streams

Many anglers like to wet wade in shorts, especially in summer, but I'm a big fan of waders on small streams for several reasons. One, the water's often cold. Two, I'm a klutz, and my shins have a gift for finding submerged rocks. I also find ticks to be a compelling reason to cover your legs. And worst of all, I'm highly allergic to poison ivy.

Depending on where you find your small stream nirvana, you may be hiking distances that can be measured in miles. So lightweight, supportive footwear is a must. My boots are outfitted with tungsten studs for extra gripping power.

Use common sense and dress for the weather. Layering, especially on colder days, is a best practice. Wear a hat and polarized sunglasses. I know, I said gearing up was easy. But you probably have most of these things already.

A Basic Small Stream Fly Box

If you love fishing dry flies, you're in for a treat: many small stream fish will rise to a dry year-round. To start off, keep things simple. Think bushy patterns like Stimulators and Elk Hair Caddis, sizes 12-16. I like to have a few small nymphs on hand, if only to use in a dry/dropper combo. Size 16-18 bead head Pheasant Tails will serve you well, as they look like lots of things small stream fish eat.



You don't need a lot of flies to fish for brook trout in a small stream.

Small stream residents are very curious about any submerged fly introduced into their world. There are times when I fish a pool with a dry and get no takers—but when I offer them a wet fly or small streamer, they bull-rush it. I like to carry a few small soft-hackles, as well as some tungsten bead head micro Woolly Buggers (size 10 or smaller). Those can be jigged or stripped. This basic fly box will cover your needs for most small stream situations.

How to Find Viable Small Streams

“Where?” That’s the million-dollar question. My home state of Connecticut publishes a list of small streams, and classifies them from wild trout only to those with supplemental stocking. Check to see if your state’s fish-and-game department does likewise. Other than a list, there are two great ways to find viable small streams. The first involves paying attention as you travel. Take note of all the small streams you cross. Check them out when you can. One of them may be your next secret spot.

The other method involves a little detective work. Get a good, old-fashioned road atlas of your state—one that shows every river and stream—and go exploring. Late summer/early fall is a fantastic time for this because water levels are usually at their lowest and warmest. Many streams will quickly self-eliminate—too dry, too hot, barren of any life. You’re looking for brooks that still have decent flow, canopy to protect them from summer sun, and most of all, cooler water. Many small streams rely on “spring houses”—pockets of water cooled by underground springs—to maintain summer viability. Find a stream with spring houses and you’ve struck gold.

Once you discover a good small stream, keep quiet about it. If you tell one person, you probably just told ten. If you blab on the internet, you just told thousands and thousands.

Don't be that person. An overfished, highly-pressured small stream can go south fast. I've seen it happen.



Look for streams with a canopy of trees to keep the water cool.

Steve Culton

Basic Tactics for Fly Fishing in Small Streams

The best way to learn how to fish small streams is to go out and do it. Here are some things to try:

- Stay out of the water as much as possible.
- Tread lightly near soft, slow pools. The fish can feel you coming and may spook. Also, be aware of making sudden movements that can startle fish.
- Try fishing upstream, working the whitewater and seams near plunges with a bushy dry fly.
- Fish the same runs downstream. Try dangling and walking the fly near plunges; it's a lethal tactic for brook trout.
- Try fishing a dry fly with a small bead head nymph dropped off the hook bend. The fish will always tell you which fly they prefer.
- I like to fish wets and streamers downstream, swinging them down current, then jigging or stripping them back.

How to Handle your catch with care

Use only barbless hooks.

Land fish quickly.

Always handle fish with wet hands.

Keep photos to a minimum; always keep fish submerged, then quickly lift and shoot.

Steve Culton is a guide, speaker, fly tier, and outdoor writer who lives in Connecticut. His website is currentseams.com.

Editor's Note: Kin Hodges, a biologist at NCWRC, made a presentation on high mountain streams convenient to those of us in the eastern end of the NC mountains. Stream maps and fish studies for these streams can be found at Wild Trout Streams.

Fly Fishing Tip: If you botch a cast don't yank it up and re-cast again. Let it ride out the drift as best you can. Toss in a mend to help if needed. At a minimum, a botched cast can show you what the current is doing.

ADVICE FROM THE VISE

In spite of our lovely cool June, summer is upon us and I turn my attention to the smallmouth and even the panfish bite on my stretch of river- or head to the higher high country and fish the blue lines for wild fish. There are indeed some nice wild browns and bows to be had out there. They get big by eating the abundant protein source of those small baitfish that are also feeding heavily in the summer. Enter the streamer, and this month I'll tie one of the best, the Muddler Minnow. This fly dates back to 1937 from the Boundary Waters region of Minnesota. Shades of Nick Adams in Hemingway's Big Two Hearted River in this pattern. Dan Bailey got it wider acclaim in the 60's, and it was certainly a pattern I as familiar with as a kid.

I was fishing the Little Pigeon in the park several years back, and this was the fly that produced consistently on that trip and sold me to always have a dozen in the box. You can grease it up and fish it like a hopper on top, or let it sink in the column and swing it, and strip it back. It's a great pattern for all conditions.

I have fished these down to a #14 and up to a #4, most commonly, a #8 is a solid imitation for size. Like lots of fly tyers, I take a little artistic license with the pattern to make it my own.

I use a 3X long 1x strong streamer hook. Traditionally, the body is gold tinsel, but I find copper has a great look in our WNC water. A wire rib was used by Dan Bailey to protect the tinsel, I'm using a thin UV coat to an even greater effect, and it gives off some refraction to the Mylar. For the tail and wing, I'm using some mottled turkey quill, squirrel tail for the underwing and some fine deer hair for the collar and head.



Start out with dressing your hook from about 2/3 of the bend. Don't put any thread base on the 1/3 of the shank from the eye rearward, as that will be our spun head and hair spins way better on the bare metal.

Tie in the tail fibers using the turkey quill fibers, and tie in the entire length of the body. This gives it a bit of substance under the mylar.

Tie in the Mylar, and take touching turns up to the start of the body. Once secured in, a thin coat of UV resin makes it sparkle and gives the fragile Mylar some protection.



Tie in the underwing. Clip some fibers from a grey squirrel tail and stack them to align the tips. Take a few wraps rearward with a bit of wax on your thread to build a base for the squirrel, it tends to be slippery, and tie those in. Snip the butt ends and tidy up the tie in point for the wing.



Snip two sections of the quill to form the wing and tie these in on either side of the underwing.



Now comes the magic. Spinning deer hair can be intimidating and I've cut gobs of it off flies that just didn't-spin right. Having a bare hook and strong thread are the key. Having a firm but not too tight touch is also critical- and getting a good spin only to have your thread break is frustrating.

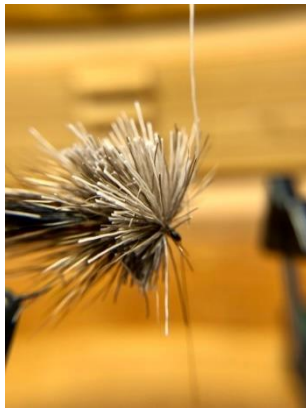


Snip the first clump of deer hair and brush out any underfur and stack that to align the tips. Align the tips with about halfway down the body and take one wrap around the clump. As it splays out, another wrap I'll cause it to spin and spread out around the hook to form a collar to the rear



and long butt ends towards the eye.

Stroke those fibers to the rear, exposing the remaining bare hook. Again, take a second clump, clean up the underfur. I trim off the tips of this clump, just so I can keep those out of my sights when trimming the head. Essentially, you have a clump of butts. Lay the middle of the stack on the bar hook and with a single firm wrap, secure that clump in and let it spin with the next wrap. Stroke the fibers rearward and build a slight thread head, and whip finish the fly.



Carefully trim the long ends to a uniform length, then you can start to shape the head of the fly.



Some good sharp razor scissors are helpful at this stage to clip the hair closer and closer to form the head. That finishes the fly. Now get it wet!

As always, I'm honored to answer questions, give a lesson, or just talk fly tying and fishing. Don't hesitate to contact me at Jacobsforkflytying@gmail.com or check out some of my current ties on Facebook and Instagram at Jacobs Fork Fly Tying.

Dave Everheart

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"While you're at it, get that straight in your own head, too. You want peace, quiet, wildlife, scenery, wild trout, and you don't expect miracles" — John Gierach, Fly Fishing Small Streams

MAYFLY HEX HATCH



The Midwest mayfly hex hatch is an item that every dry fly fisherman should have on the bucket list. If you hit it just right it can be so large that it shows up on radar. There are several species of mayfly, but the hexagenia limbata (hex) is one of the largest mayfly and craved by trout. I had experienced a massive hatch on the Manistee River north of Grayling, Michigan when I was 14 and the water literally boiled with trout rising to gorge on the mayflies. My son Michael took a trip to the AuSable River in Grayling a few years ago. They had been hatching, but the day he arrived a cold front turned them off. I wanted him to see what I had seen so called the Pere Marquette River Lodge in Baldwin, MI and asked them when we should come. They told me the 17th of June should be a prime time and we scheduled a three day trip for the 16th-18th. They hatch normally between mid-June and mid-July and can happen any time. Our guide told us that when it starts it usually lasts about eleven days.

The Pere Marquette we fished is located near Baldwin, MI. My in-laws had a trailer there in the 70s and I chose it over the AuSable for nostalgia and the fact I had experienced massive hatches there. The trailer was on a nearby lake and with that at my door I had never fished the Pere Marquette in the past, but I was familiar with the Pere Marquette River Lodge www.pmlodge.com having driven by it many times on the way to the trailer. They set us up with Casey Heffernan as our guide and he did a great job for us over the three nights.

Fishing the mayfly hatch is much different than most fly fisherman have ever experienced. The hatch normally starts between 10-11 at night. Sunset at that time of year is about 9:30 and the hatch continues well after dark. We met our guide at 6 PM and each night continued to fish until after midnight. We started the trip casting the river above the marsh



area where Casey knew the major hatches occurred. Casey told us the best brown trout fishing was much farther upstream, but we needed to be below that to reach the prime mayfly hatch area. We cast along the way and caught some



smaller brown trout. A big advantage of starting a bit earlier is it gave us time to stop for a while and have dinner and it was the best dinner I've ever had on a fly fishing trip. Casey brought along a small propane grill and while we anchored and sat in the river he grilled up shish kebabs to eat along with some great potato salad and garlic toast.

We were unlucky as there had been a cold front the week we arrived. The first night we only saw about a dozen mayflies hatch. The second night was a couple degrees warmer and we saw only a few more. The third day got up into the 80s during the day and the night was warmer. About 10:30 that hatch we were looking for began.

Fishing the hatch on the Pere Marquette was very different than what I had experienced on the Manistee. The Manistee is a stocked river with a lot of smaller trout and the water would boil with them eating the mayflies. You could throw your fly almost anywhere and catch a fish. The Pere



Marquette is noted for very large brown trout, but fewer fish. Brown trout are very territorial and locate in their places along the river. Since by 10:30 it was dark, the journey became a hunting trip down the river searching

for the fish. Casey knew the river and where each brown hung out and we drifted along in the dark until we heard the slurp of a feeding fish. We would anchor just above the fish and cast to it.

With my old eyes I couldn't see my fly the 10-15' away that we were casting, but Casey is young and set me up for my casting distance. You would cast upstream of the fish, drift down, and when you heard a slurp you set the hook, hoping it was your fly that was being eaten. My son cast first and within a couple minutes brought in an 18" brown. After photos we heard a second fish in the same area so Casey set up for the cast and handed the rod to me. I missed the first slurp. Either it was for a different



fly or because I was new to this and set too late. The second cast I heard the slurp, set the hook, and pulled in a 20" brown. I was feeling pretty good as it was Father's Day and I had the biggest fish. We heard no more at that location so drifted on down the river a way until we heard another fish. My son made several casts with no luck so we turned on a headlamp and found the fish feeding just beyond a log about 30' away and just behind a small log. Casey moved the boat closer and

on the first cast in the dark my son made a perfect cast just over the log and hooked a 23" brown. (Fortunately it was now after midnight and I still had the biggest fish on Father's Day.) We drifted a bit further but the hatch had ended and we didn't hear another fish. We pulled out of the river about one AM and got home about two. The thrill of the hatch and the giant browns we landed made it a great trip.



As I mentioned at the beginning of the article the mayfly hatch should be a bucket list item for every fly fisherman. You really can't imagine what it is like until you have actually experienced it. It's also quite an experience to be drifting a river in the pitch black and we did it on a new moon. You had better have a guide who knows the river well at that time of night. If you're young and hardy you might want to do it again, but for those of us long in the tooth, once will probably be enough. But the mayfly hatch is not the only renown of the Pere



Marquette River.

The Pere Marquette River was the first river in America to be stocked with brown trout. In 1883 they were brought from Germany to America by ship and stocked there. Today the Pere Marquette has a large population of very large brown trout. But it is known for a lot more than that. In September the coho and king salmon spawn on the river and from October through April it has a fantastic steelhead run and you can catch all of these fish on a fly. We talked to Casey about it and he suggested that for steelhead the best months were October, November, March, and April. If you've never been there, I would suggest your first trip be about mid-late October as Michigan has some of the most beautiful fall color in America, although at that time you will catch as many leaves as fish. If you decide on November I would recommend before the 15th. Deer season starts on that day and for the remainder of the month you better have an orange vest as you drift down the river. And rather than take a six hour flight to Alaska, you might want to book a salmon trip in September.

Put the Pere Marquette on your bucket list and experience a beautiful river that has some great fishing year around, and while in Baldwin don't forget to stop at Jones' Ice Cream Parlor. It has some great homemade ice cream (black cherry is my favorite) and has been in business for over 80 years for good reason.

We'd love to hear your input. If there is a topic you'd like addressed or if you have something to share in the newsletter, please contact us at BRNCNewsletter@gmail.com.



PHWFF ANNUAL THORNWOOD WEST VIRGINIA CAMP OUTING

Thornwood 4H Camp is located just outside of Durbin, WV in the little town of Thornwood along the banks of the East Fork of the Greenbrier River. All instructions were set up to optimize the location of the school with casting being taught in the field and creek adjacent to the camp. Classroom instruction is given in the mess hall, prior to or just after all meals. The Camp has separate bunk houses for both men and women, along with restroom facilities for each. All indoor facilities are smoke free.

Registration and greetings begin on Friday evening. Saturday begins with breakfast followed by fishing throughout the day. There are 19 rivers and creeks within a 45-minute drive filled with native trout and lots of brookies. In the evening classes are held on reading the water, casting, bugs, knot tying and fly tying. There is lots of time left to mingle among the participants. The last day is breakfast and fish on your own.

For stream or event information contact Rickie Woodson @ Woodson.ra@gmail.com

From Bubba Holt WV PHWFF Regional Coordinator

Thornwood 2023 was excellent this year! Thanks so much to everybody involved in coordinating and executing such an excellent outing! We had 127 folks in attendance. There were 65 Volunteers and 62 Participants. It takes *an* awesome team to put this together. The Bartow Boys can't be thanked enough. You know who you are. You guys are great to have help coordinate this event. I've heard Mossy Creek was a great success as well. Lots of healing occurred in the heart of Appalachia this weekend!!!! The rest of the country had some awesome [Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc.](#) activities going on as well. We strive to make things as best we can for our disabled Veteran Participants on our

Programs. If you agree with what we do and would like to get involved, then please reach out to us. If you know a Veteran you think could benefit from our Program, then please have them reach out to us as well.



Figure 1: Ready to hit the River



Figure 2: A Day at Seneca River



Figure 3: Fly Casting Competition



Figure 4: Learning the mechanics of casting!



Figure 5: Fly Tying from Natives Outfitters

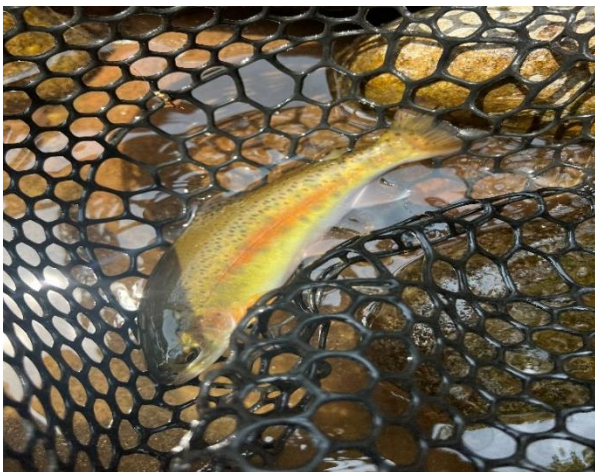


Figure 6: Beautiful wild native trout.



Figure 7: Native Wild Rainbow Trout.

ARARAT RIVER STREAM CLEAN

Our thanks to everyone who attended the spring stream clean at the Ararat river.



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