

Blue Ridge NC Trout Unlimited



December 2023 Newsletter

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It's probably not something you've considered, but be sure to have some dry flies in your tackle box when you go fishing this winter. Several years ago on the Watauga, I experienced a snowfall about like the one in the photo. The snowflakes on the water fooled the trout into thinking there was a hatch in progress and they started rising. I switched to a dry fly and caught several trout before it ended.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Happy holidays to every member of BRTU! This time of year turns our thoughts to gratitude and family. I am certainly grateful for my BRTU family.

The more you put into BRTU, the more you get out of it. It takes involvement and participation from every member to keep our chapter strong.

I would ask each of you to spend some time in thought about what you can do to help out. I'd like to challenge everyone to sign up to volunteer at least once. You may truly enjoy it as I have over the past few years. You will get to know members on a different level and you can feel proud about your contributions to our many worthy causes! Hopefully it will be something you'll want to do again in the future. Blessings to you and your families.

Fred Frank

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"The beauty of and solitude of a trout stream in winter with snow falling around you cannot even be imagined without being there."Anonymous

DECEMBER MEETING/EVENT

When: Sunday, December 10th, 4-6 PM
Where: Fiddlin' Fish Brewing Company
772 Trade Street
What: Chili Cookoff

Pull out your recipe books and find your best chili recipe because at the event we will vote on the best pot of chili. Bring a pot of chili to share and join the fun as we celebrate the holidays and trade fish stories. Please sign up if you will be attending [ChiliCookOff](#).

FUTURE MEETINGS

January: Chris Barclay, owner of the C. Barclay Fly Rod Company in Winston-Salem will be speaking about the various types of fiberglass rods they sell.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Fly Tying Classes: At 9 AM on Wednesdays Project Healing Waters will host fly tying classes and at 6 PM on Wednesday evenings Blue Ridge Trout Unlimited will host classes. The classes will be held at the South Fork Community Center at 4403 Country Club Road in Winston Salem. 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.

Elk Creek Streambank Planting: The date for the next phase of streambank protection at Elk Creek is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, February 3rd or 10th. Put a hold on those dates on your calendars. We will confirm that date as soon as it's set.

TEMPERATURE LOGGING AT MITCHELL RIVER IN SURRY COUNTY, NC

by Bob Lassiter

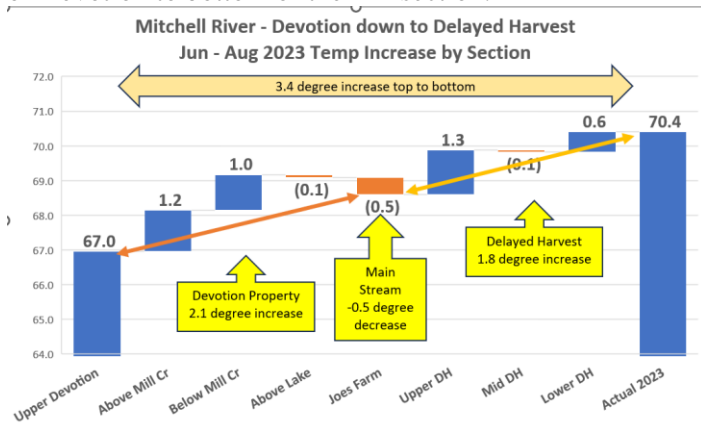
For the past 3 years, the Winston-Salem Blue Ridge Trout Unlimited chapter has monitored water temperatures on the Mitchell River in Surry County NC. Temp loggers were placed along a 6 mile stretch starting at the headwaters on private property at Devotion, NC and at points downstream through the 2.5 mi. Delayed Harvest section ending at Kapps Mill Rd. The objective was to determine:

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.

- the rise of temperatures from the Devotion headwaters to the bottom of the Delayed Harvest section, and
- opportunities to improve overall water temperatures

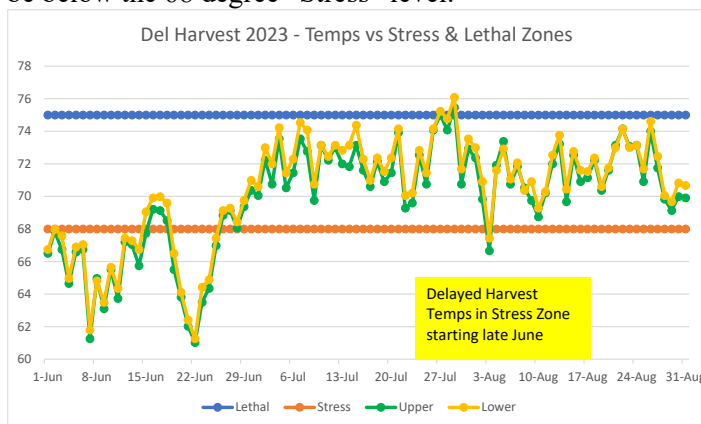
Temp Data Range – From Top to Bottom :

Below shows the 3.4 degree water temperature rise from top of Devotion to bottom of the DH section:



Fish viability in the Delayed Harvest Section

Water temps would need to be reduced some 5-6 degrees to be below the 68 degree “Stress” level.



Conclusions

- The joint Blue Ridge TU & Devotion owners installation of an outtake pipe at the bottom of the lower lake (thereby avoiding overflow of warm surface water into the river) was successful
- Planting bank stabilization plants and trees was not successful due to farm traffic along the stream bank and hot summer temps
- Significant reduction in stream temps would require installing outtake pipe at bottom of dam at the large Devotion upper lake
- Sediment from increased farming along the Mitchell river is destroying insect life from below Devotion property to the bottom of Delayed Harvest section.



SUPREME COURT, NC LEGISLATURE DELIVER ONE-TOW KIDNEY PUNCH TO TROUT HABITAT

By Scott Schang, Director, Wake Forest Environmental Law and Policy Clinic

Wetlands have been described as the kidneys of the waters and land. They filter out pollution and store water during heavy rainfall events. They also provide vital habitat for fish and myriad other species. But in the past few months, the US Supreme Court and North Carolina legislature ended protections for over 2.5 million acres of wetlands in the State. Expect dirtier water, fewer trout, increased flooding, and a decrease in ecosystem quality as a result.

States have always been at the forefront of protecting waters from pollution. After the industrial revolution, states ran a race to the bottom in protecting air and water as they competed for businesses. In the 1970s, the federal Clean Water Act set pollution levels that apply to navigable waters (meaning major rivers and streams subject to federal jurisdiction) and adjacent wetlands that states should not exceed and are free to make more stringent. Meanwhile, all other state waters and wetlands remained subject to state pollution control. This and other federal environmental laws have been largely successful, with the air being far cleaner and water pollution lessening while the gross domestic product has tripled simultaneously.

But there has been a 20-year-long tug-of-war over the scope of federal jurisdiction over water pollution. Just where do you draw a line in the water to say federal jurisdiction ends here and state jurisdiction continues there? It’s a very difficult question. This summer the Supreme Court reimagined this line in the most restrictive fashion ever. The divided Court ruled that only wetlands with a continuous surface water connection to navigable waters could receive federal protection.

This new rule ignores hydrology and ecology. Many if not most wetlands provide water filtering and water retention services to these navigable waters without a continuous surface water connection. The wetlands could have a groundwater connection, an intermittent surface water connection, or a connection that is interrupted by a structure, like a dike or canal. But the new Supreme Court ruling ends federal jurisdiction over them, meaning the majority of wetlands in the country are now once again dependent on states for protection.

Some pundits argue that this is exactly how the federal-state relationship should work: limit federal power to the maximum extent possible because the states retain their core duty to protect their state

waters. But in North Carolina, the legislature added a provision into this year's Farm Bill after the Supreme Court's decision was released that prohibits state regulation of wetlands beyond federal jurisdiction. In other words, the very places that North Carolina is expected to protect no matter the level of federal protections, from ecologically-sensitive isolated wetlands to Pocosin wetlands to wetlands that provide trout habitat and protect towns from flooding that are not connected to navigable waters, may now be open for development and destruction.

- Unfortunately, other states have followed suit. Many western states have laws that prohibit their environmental laws from being more stringent than federal law, meaning that the Supreme Court's ruling automatically reduced state control over many wetlands, intermittent streams, and other waters.
- This is bad environmental policy and bad government. As rain events are becoming more severe, we need more wetlands protection, not less. Development and agriculture pose increasing threats to trout habitat. But at a time of increased need for wetlands protection, the NC legislature has decided to abandon its duty to protect the state's waters, fish, animals, and citizens.

RANGER LYNETTE HICKS AWARDED FOR SERVICE TO TROUT IN THE CLASSROOM



(l-r) Matt O'Bryant Lynette Hicks, Kassie Moore, Mary Kay Miller, Ed Farr, Fred Frank

Ranger Lynette Hicks and the staff at Stone Mountain State Park were honored at the November BRTU meeting for support of the Trout in the Classroom program. Long time TIC Chairman Matt O'Bryant presented the award. Lynette has been coordinating the release since 2005 for BRTU and more recently for the Hickory, Rocky River, and Stone Mountain chapters. In 2023 she coached 23 classrooms and an estimated 800 students during the release. BRTU donated nets and seines to be used for the collection of macroinvertebrates at the release.

Also at the meeting, Ranger Hicks received the NCTU Council President's Friend of the Trout Award for her service to Trout in the Classroom. Rusty Berrier, BRTU council representative presented the award.



To see the effort that Ranger Hicks puts into the annual releases you can view the video of the 2023 TIC release at: [2023 TIC Release](#)

WINTER TROUT STOCKING SCHEDULE

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission is expanding seasonal angling opportunities by stocking surplus trout in select impoundments across central and western North Carolina in November and December. The following regulations apply:

- Seven (7) trout per day creel limit.
- No minimum length limit.
- No bait restrictions.
- Trout may be harvested year-round.
- Basic state fishing license required.

For locations and dates visit [Winter-Trout-Stocking](#)

This can be a great opportunity for a scout troop to earn the fly fishing merit badge. One requirement of the badge is to catch a fish on a fly. We did this on the pond at Betsy's Ole Country Store a few years ago and the boys loved it. For details about the fly fishing merit badge visit [Fly Fishing Merit Badge](#)

Note: Many fishermen including our members that can't wade in streams anymore will go to these ponds to fish. They have complained repeatedly about poaching and fishermen keeping a lot more than the seven fish allowed, fishing the ponds out very quickly, depriving others from the enjoyment of fishing. There has been no presence of WRC wardens to police the ponds We ask people who see violations to call the WRC hot line . The more calls the WRC receives about a location the more likely they will send a warden to check the area. The inland fishing violation number is (800) 662-7137 Poaching hotline is 855 WildTip

Both are listed on the back of the fishing license



WINTER FISHING

Published by Rome News-Tribune

Here's a story from James Payne of the Trout Unlimited Blue Ridge [Georgia] Chapter:

The problem with winter fishing is...it's cold! Your fishing buddies are not easily convinced to abandon their warm homes and step into a freezing trout stream. You will hear all sorts of excuses. They will be tying flies or sorting fishing tackle. They may even say they are shopping with their wives; just anything to stay indoors. When its cold, most reasonable people are in their recliners watching TV or reading a good book. But there are a few of us who long to hit the trout streams in the winter.

It was January several years ago and I decided to stop by the Tallulah River on my way to Rabun County Rendezvous. The bank clock in Hiawassee read 24 degrees. I had to break the ice to enter the river. The guides on the fly rod kept icing up. I caught a couple of nice trout. On the same trip there was an encounter with a notorious game warden (who sounded like Andy Griffith) that was unrelated to fishing, but I digress.

On another freezing day we were fishing the Conasauga River in the Cohutta Wilderness. We hadn't caught a thing all morning. I came back down the stream and found my buddy sitting on the bank reading a book. He's a professional writer and can sit by the river and read and nobody makes fun of him. I flipped a nymph in the river in front of him. The bead head nymph was heavily weighted and I fished it very deep. To his dismay I caught a brown and a rainbow trout in the run he had just been fishing. The water had warmed up. Trout feed more actively when the water is in the 45-65 degree range.

When winter fishing you always need a buddy, even if he can't catch fish and reads. If you fall in with the water temperature in the 40s, hypothermia will set in quickly and affects your reasoning ability. Your companion can start a fire (because he has brought waterproof matches or some other means of starting a fire) and can help you change into dry clothes (because you knew to bring extra dry clothes). If neither of you had the insight to prepare, then he can at least go back up the trail and tell folks where they can find your body.

So, winter fishing is like being in the Boy Scouts. Use the buddy system and always be prepared. Have someone you trust to be with you. Do not go alone. Be prepared for the worst case scenarios. Wear appropriate clothing and be layered. The Orvis shirt you wore last summer may look stylish, but you might want to think about wool or flannel for the winter. Warm flannel wading pants are great under the waders. Have a change of clothing in a waterproof bag.

I won't bore you with my "Nestea Plunge" into the West Fork of the Chattooga or watching my good friend desperately hanging onto a root as it slowly lowered him into freezing water. Just know it can and will happen at some point.

WINTER FLY FISHING TIPS



Extracted from the article:

Winter Fly Fishing: Guide Tactics And 20 Tips For More Fish

By [Graham - River Guide / Instructor](#) February 26, 2023

Winter fishing can be very good for a few reasons:

1. There are no crowds, lots of solitude, and plenty of hungry fish.
2. The fish are not pressured or spooked so they can be easy to catch
3. Fish tend to concentrate in specific areas and are less spread out.
4. Some of the biggest trout and steelhead are caught in the winter
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Winter fishing Challenges:

1. The frigid air temperatures and water temps are hard on anglers that don't know how to dress for the cold.
2. The fish's feeding windows are shorter
3. Not every day is a good day to fish
4. Fewer bugs and icy water can cause fish to stop eating.
5. Slush can be impossible to fish
6. Dry fly fishing is almost non existent.
7. Handling fly line can make your hands wet and extra cold
8. Slow down and fish deeper
9. Fish smaller flies and more natural patterns
10. Focus on deeper pools and slower sections of the river
11. Understand water temperature and how it affects the fish
12. Fish at different times of the day
13. Stay warm and dry with the right gear
14. Stay safe

Dip your frozen rod guides into the water on your line retrieve to let the water melt the ice off. This works when the

air temperature is below freezing but the water is not that cold.

There are three reasons to use a lighter tippet in the winter.

1. Trout and steelhead will hold in slower and deeper water when it's very cold and when the water is slow the fish have more time to inspect your fly and they have more chance to see your tippet and refuse your fly, so a lighter tippet is a better option.
2. The other reason is that a lighter and thinner tippet allows the fly to sink faster and deeper and the thinner tippet will get pushed by the current much less which slows your fly down. Deep and slow is the name of the game.
3. You can get away with a lighter tippet because during the winter, the trout and steelhead can be sluggish in the ice-cold water and won't fight as hard so it's possible to use a lighter tippet,

When choosing waders for cold weather conditions Consider these things:

- ⊗
1. A bigger boot will allow for thicker socks and more blood flow which keeps your feet warm.
 2. Boot foot waders are better at keeping your feet warm and stocking foot waders are always cold.
 3. Neoprene stocking foot waders in 5mm to 7mm thickness will keep your feet a bit warmer.

These tips will help:

1. Wear layers: Wear two sets of baselayer and 1 set of outer-layer combined with a good wading jacket.
2. Have two sets of gloves with you in case one set gets wet. Many anglers like half-finger gloves and I prefer them too but only if they are flip-mitt gloves that go over the finger when I'm moving from spot to spot.
3. Thick Merino wool socks are a great idea
4. Wear a wool-type hat
5. Use hand and foot warmers

GUIDE TIP: My best fishing in the winter is between 11 am and 2 pm on sunny days, so sleep in a start late. Focus on deeper runs and pools where trout tend to school up during colder months.

Do not take the fish out of the water when it is below freezing, even for a quick photo. This can cause their gills to freeze. If you want a photo, take one of the fish in the net.

A BIT OF WILSON CREEK HISTORY

[Wilson Creek Memories from Edgemont: The Camp Grandfather CCC Era - YouTube](#)

THE 10 WINTER FLIES FOR WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA & EAST TENNESSEE

Written by: Brown Hobson, [Brown Trout Fly Fishing](#)



This winter rainbow came from the Wautauga River. Photo courtesy Brown Hobson

Winter fishing in the Southeast isn't what it is in the rest of the country. We are blessed with average lows in the high 20s and average highs in the upper 40s. That still puts average water temperatures in the high 30s and low 40s, unless you are close enough to a dam to enjoy temps in the upper 40s. Those temperatures are warm enough to allow enjoyable fishing all winter, but do put trout in feeding modes that are different from those of spring, summer, fall. I fish all over Western North Carolina and East Tennessee, and these are flies that I have found work all over during the winter months on both freestones and tailwaters.

[Click the name of each fly to be taken to a place to buy, a recipe, or a video.]



1. Squirmy Worm a.k.a. The Worm

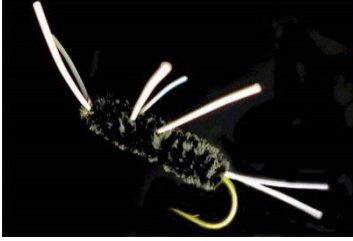
This worm pattern has significantly more action than its little cousin, the San Juan Worm. In the winter, I fish this fly pretty large, like a size 8 or 10. We get more rain during the winter, so terrestrial worms are washed into the river systems and because of its size, fish often will move to it even when they aren't actively searching for food.



2. The Brain – a.k.a. Micro Spawn

This fly is a monster, size 12, at least in terms of egg patterns used for trout. We find that fish eat this fly more because of its shock value than because it simulates fish roe. As with

many of the large flies on this list, winter fish aren't feeding as actively as they do when water temps are warmer, but this big meal is one that they often can't pass on.



3. Girdle Bug

Most of our streams have stonefly populations, and trout seem to be looking for these big meals periodically throughout the year. Even our tailwaters have big stones, and it seems like the fish only need to see a few before keying in on them. This is also a great big fly that will get fish moving during cold weather.



4. Rainbow Warrior

Lance Egan really hit a homerun when he designed this fly. It is super effective on almost every stream I fish, and I prefer sizes 16-22 during the winter. We don't have nearly as many bugs crawling around during the winter, but the few that do are usually in the smaller sizes. The flashy nature of this bug seems to really attract fish well when standard looking flies aren't.



5. Pheasant Tail

This fly is pretty standard and doesn't need more publicity, but it is so effective that I couldn't leave it off. I have an entire box dedicated to variations of this fly in sizes 8-24. I find that during the winter this fly—with a copper bead in sizes 18-24—is a go-to pattern every day.



6. Walt's Worm

I've seen a lot of tutorials going around the Internet about how to tie this fly and its cousin, the sexy Walt's worm.

Caddisfly larvae in the South this time of year are only two or three months away from hatching and are usually becoming quite large. I have caught fish on this fly in the really large sizes, such as 8 and 10, as well as in sizes 14 and 16. I usually put a bright, colored bead or bright dubbing behind a metallic bead for this fly during the winter.



7. Soft Hackle Surveyor

This fly works great in deep, slow pools where trout are resting. The dubbing color has just enough flash to get fish's attention, and the big, billowy partridge feathers are tantalizing in the slower moving water. I mostly have this fly in sizes 10 and 12.



8. Brown's UV Soft Hackle

This is a fly I was hesitant to put my name on because it is so simple and many guides fish flies just like it. I felt it needed a name to be on a list, so there it is. I fish this in size 18 during the winter. I will fish a 16 at times during the rest of the year, but during the winter it's always 18 because that's the right size to match the bugs present in cold weather. The UV dubbing seems to really trigger strikes and while I've tried many bead colors, copper is the best. I either fish this fly behind a larger bug or as a dropper off a dry fly.



9. Zebra Midge

The Zebra midge and the many variations are probably already in your box. Midges are the bugs I see hatch most during the winter, and like the Pheasant Tail and UV Soft Hackle, I always try at least a couple of these behind a worm or stonefly. They are also small enough that you can fish them below a small parachute or even a Comparadun if you see fish midging in slow water.



10. Puff Daddy

This is one you may not have heard of unless you are on the Watauga or South Holston Tailwaters. The Puff Daddy was created by Blake Boyd for the super-picky fish in the slow flat water. It is small and sparse and takes a good helping of Frog's Fanny to keep it afloat, but is very effective. I mostly fish dark colors, such as black and olive, during the winter and match the CDC to the thread body. I use it in sizes 18-22.

Brown Hobson is owner and head guide for [Brown Trout Fly Fishing](#), in Asheville, North Carolina. He's also a former [Trout Bum of the Week](#).

ADVICE FROM THE VISE

I think I often reflect on the season for this column, and how it's a great time to be on the river. I guess reality is that here in Western NC, we are spoiled with fishing all year long. I was speaking with a buddy from Colorado, and he said his season was done until March. Having DH waters all winter long is really something to be thankful for, so do take advantage this winter to get line wet in the afternoon sun.

This month, I'm going with one of my favorite flies, no matter what the year, but this one is especially productive in the winter months. It's not fancy and is as easy a tie as it gets. It simply looks like food, and those winter fish want to invest as little energy as possible for the most return on their work of feeding. I'm referring to the humble Walt's Worm.

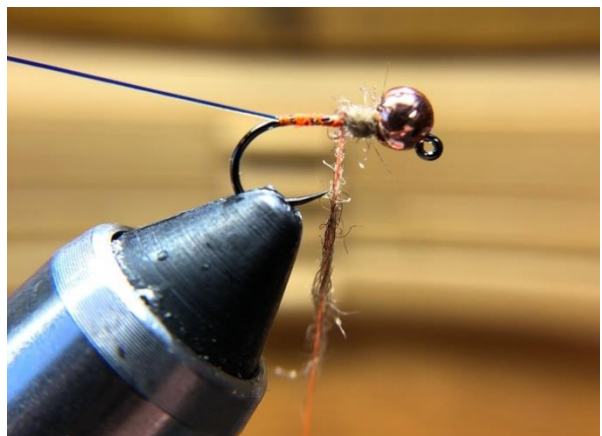
This fly was first designed by a fellow Pennsylvania angler, Walt Young, and has evolved via Dave McKenna into the "Sexy Walt's" that has become a standard jigged nymph in Euro circles. If I had only one fly pattern to use, this would be my go-to. This pattern is at home as a Euro, under an indicator, alone or in pairs, as a dropper off a dry, or as point under a wet rig.

For my winter Walt's, I up the bead to a 4.0 tungsten slotted bead on a #14 400BL hook. This gives me a bit more size to be visible, and a touch more weight to tick along the bottom on the drift where the fish are holding in the colder waters. I also like a variety of colors as light and water conditions change and having light or dark patterns can often be a game changer.

For the "Classic Sexy Walt's", the recipe is pretty simple: fluorescent orange thread, 1/69 Mirage tinsel for the rib and Hares Ear dubbing for the body. I really like a buggy dubbing for this pattern, Arizona Synthetic is my dubbing of choice. It has a very nice spikey look and translucency from the Antron fibers.



Start with dressing the hook from the bead to the bend and tying in a tinsel section from the bend to the bead.



Build a tapered dubbing noodle and lay down a base, then add just a bit more to create a carrot shaped body.





Rib the body, secure the tinsel with a few wraps and trim off the butt end, and tidy up with a couple more wraps.



Here's another tweak I use to finish this. Swipe the thread with some wax and lightly dub an out an inch section. Don't roll the dubbing tight as we want to have a bit of a fuzzy collar on this one.



Stroke the collar fibers back with your thumb and index finger and take several wraps to build up the hotspot and whip finish.



Those extra few fibers give it some motion and trap those bubbles for a hint of realism to snare those wary trout.

As you saw in the first picture, The pattern lends itself to lots of color combinations. I enjoyed spinning these up for this month's s article, and I would love to get those flies into someone's winter box. The first reader to shoot me an email, wins the set.

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 and check out some of my current ties on Facebook and Instagram at Jacobs Fork Fly Tying.

FLY FISHING GIFT IDEAS

This year we dedicate the list of fly fishing gifts to Etsy.com which brings out craft people from everywhere in America and around the globe. A quick search on "fly fishing gifts" will provide an unlimited list.



Disposing of used tippet and leader is always a nuisance on the river. Nylon tippet can take 600 years to decompose and can be fatal to animals that get tangled in it. This item that is available on Etsy for \$16 is a great way to store that used leader until you can get home to dispose of it.

[Tippet Tomb Fly Fishing Leader and Tippet Line Trash - Etsy](#)



Another way to help eliminate waste is this beautiful bracelet made from recycled fly fishing line. Also available on Etsy for \$15 at: [Flyvines Recycled Spey Line Bracelet - Etsy](#)



Well, I'm not so sure about posting this one, but if your fly fisher is a pipe smoker, here is a way to pack and carry it to the river with you. Easy to use anytime, anywhere - this handy pipe comes with a screw-on lid to keep everything in place. Made of brass or aluminum depending on trout species, it is durable, expertly machined and made to last while also rust-resistant, nontoxic, and designed to prevent heat transfer. Easy to use and maintain as the pipe disassembles for easy cleaning.

[Fly Fishing Curly Maple Trout Smoking Gift Pipe - Etsy](#)



And of course, if your fisherman has the vice of smoking a pipe it is likely that he also enjoys a good nip now and then. This beautiful 6 oz. flask will fit neatly into the fly fishing pack.

[Custom Fly Fishing Flask - Etsy](#)



And of course if that fisherman enjoy's a good drink at home he will need a place to set that glass so it doesn't leave a ring on the table.

[Fly Fishing Absorbent Drink Coasters Set of 4 - Etsy](#)



And of course you must have a glass to pour the drink into.

[Fly Fishing Cocktail Glasses - Etsy](#)



And the morning after all that pipe smoking and bourbon sipping a good cup of coffee is needed to get ready for a day on the river. Etsy has a multitude of designs to choose from. This one is:

[Brown Trout Jumping After Mayfly Handmade Fishing Big Coffee - Etsy](#)



There is probably nothing that enriches the sole and brings more peace of mind to a fly fisherman than the quiet of a beautiful morning on the river. This piece of art can bring that peace into your home and help you get through the days when you aren't on the river. Etsy and other sites have many pieces of art that will make you happy. Thus one is:

[Fly Fisherman on Foggy Morning Fly Fishing - Etsy](#)



And don't forget that our fly tying column author Dave Everhart sells his flies on Etsy. The photo is of "Pat's Rubber Legs" flies that he featured in the December 2022 newsletter. You can find his flies by searching Etsy for Jacob Fork Fly Tying or use this link: [JacobsForkFlyTying - Etsy](#)

This is just a small sampling of the fly fishing items available on Etsy. Almost everything a fly fisher could want is available there including clothing, gear, and from flies to fly tying desks. Give it a try. There a lot of wonderful items there.

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.

WELCOME THE NEW SLATE OF BLUE RIDGE NCTU OFFICERS

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MITCHELL RIVER CLEANUP

On a beautiful October morning several members of the chapter gathered at the Mitchell River for the fall cleanup. Thank you to everyone who participated.

