



April 2017 President's Message

Hello to all of our Lee Wulff Chapter members!

I cannot believe the year of meetings is almost coming to an end! I trust many of you have already been up in the Driftless landing some great trout, as this has been a remarkable spring. I am so looking forward to being back out on the water again after a long winter. Currently I have settled for fishing for some very large bluegill here locally, but I cannot wait to land my first brown this season!

We have an exciting speaker this month. We are looking forward to welcoming Ann Miller from Michigan. Ann is the president of the Michigan Fly Girls, an amazing, super active group of women fly fishers. Ann is also an entomology guru and will be talking to us about "Hatchbusters." Common hatches in the Midwest and flies that can be used as alternatives to "bust the hatch", so to speak. Ann always brings a fresh and innovative program wherever she speaks.

Fox Bluff is coming along very well and we are looking forward to placing our trout from our two TIC projects in the ponds very soon! This past Saturday was the last work day, and the team has done an outstanding job of clearing the area in preparation.

Also we are planning a casual day on May 6 for a picnic at Fox Bluff. This will be in lieu of our monthly chapter meeting. It will be a social time with plenty of room for casting practice. Also folks will have the opportunity to see all of the hard work our guys have done to make a home for our trout. I could use a few volunteers to help get this event setup. Please call me or approach me at the meeting.

Our outing season is about to take off. Please see the details in our newsletter and on our web site for details.

****Please note we have made a change in the payment method for our WaWaSum outing.*****

The cost of the trip is \$325.00. Full payment is due by May 22. We are going to use the same system we have in place for payment for the Salmon Outing in that we are asking for full payment. This will simplify things for our treasurer, and it will be easier for us to track payments. The online store is the quickest and easiest way to pay for the trip. However, if you prefer to pay by check, you can send those to Yves Charron, 1414 New Haven Drive, Cary, IL 60013. Please feel free to contact me or Yves with any questions or if you need to discuss other arrangements.

We still have plenty of space for the WaWaSum outing. The dates are June 7-11. Don't miss out on the opportunity to join us. New attendees to the outing will be included in a raffle to join me for an evening half day float trip on the famous AuSable river. We will be catering the food this year so all have the optimal amount of time on the water.

This will be my last year as chapter president, as I will be passing the torch next fall to our future officers. We are still in the process of finalizing next year's officers and we will announce once we have things confirmed. It has been a joy being your president for the last 4 years, and I have made so many wonderful friends. You all mean the world to me, and our chapter will be in very good hands as we move forward.

I hope everyone enjoys the month and please attend this terrific meeting! Tight lines! Send photos to me of your prize winning catches! And I will also see you in Viroqua April 28!

Thanks, Meg

Where We Meet
Village Pizza and Pub
145 N. Kennedy Drive
Carpentersville, IL

Social Hour: 6:00 - 7:30 p.m. with all you can eat pizza and pop served for \$15.00 per person

Main program: 7:30 p.m.

Other menu choices, cocktails and spirits are available for purchase.

Please RSVP to Yves Charron at yvesjcharron@aol.com by Tuesday April 20th so we know how many pizzas to preorder

Our April Speaker – Ann Miller



Ann Miller has been fishing her entire life, but can now say that she has been exclusively fly fishing for more than half that time. A member of the Federation of Fly Fishers and Trout Unlimited, she decided to become more active in the Great Lakes Council 20 years ago, becoming editor of the now defunct newsletter, “*The Leader*”. Editing the newsletter quickly lead to writing, and before long she was penning essays for other publications. Tom Helgeson encouraged her to submit her work to *Midwest Fly Fishing*, and soon she was writing her own bimonthly column, Natural Settings, for the magazine.

Ann’s most recent project stemmed from her love of fly fishing and teaching. While teaching beginning and intermediate fly fishing schools, she became frustrated with the lack of comprehensive Midwest information on insect hatches, taxonomy, behavior, and flies to match them. An aquatic biologist, she decided to tackle the world of bugs head on, and the result is the book “Hatch Guide for Upper Midwest

Streams”. Ann will have books with her. The cost is \$30.00 and cash is always appreciated.

In addition to writing, Ann is the president and co-founder of Flygirls, an organization whose purpose is to help women to get into the field of fly fishing. The club was founded in 1996 and continues in its purpose to teach women to fly fish as well as provide fly fishing and fly tying outings around the state. More information on Flygirls can be found at <http://flygirls.ws/>

**NOTICE!!! OUR MAY MEETING/PICNIC WILL BE SATURDAY
MAY 6TH**

**AT 11:00 am to 2-3pm at Fox Bluff
A Cookout, Casting Practice Get Together!!**

Directions:

From Algonquin, drive north on Main street (old RT. 31)Do not take the new road that by passes Algonquin, drive through the middle of town to the top of the hill and turn right on Cary-Algonquin road. Proceed till you are able to see Fox Trails north on the west side of the road. This is a subdivision road. There will be signs on the opposite side of Cary- Algonquin road to indicate where to park.

From Cary and Route 14 Take Cary Algonquin road south east to Fox Trails North Subdivision entrance and look for the signs on the east side of the road for parking.

Spey Casting Clinics with Doug Taylor

Doug Taylor will be offering free clinics for spey casting on the 3rd Saturday of each month at Glenwood Park in Batavia. The first one will be this coming Saturday April 15.

Trout in the Classroom

The fish are doing well and getting ready to go to their new home at Fox Bluff. There are going to be two separate releases this year. The first will be with Beth's class from Dundee Middle School on Friday 5/5 with a severe rain date of 5/8. The release with Rich's class from Rockford East will be on Saturday 5/13. I'll pin times down later and announce them at the meeting this month.

Bob Becker

Conservation News

The four work days scheduled at Fox Bluff this spring have been a great success. Members from Lee Wulff, Gary Borger, Elliott Donnley, and Oakbrook chapters volunteered to help. Also participating were Stewards from Mc Henry County, wives of members, and children of members too. Ages ranged from 13 to over 80. There were a total of 81 workers on 4 Saturday mornings which totaled 244 hours of work. Chapter members that do not get to the regular meetings were there to help, it was great to meet them.

The objectives of the work days were to clear brush around the ponds, remove trees that had fallen in the ponds, increase the speed of the stream flow through the system to maintain a cooler water temperature and restore the natural look of this beautiful area.

The temperature monitors were again placed in the ponds to document any temperature change from the first study two years ago. Hopefully the increase in sunshine caused by brush clearing will be mitigated by the improvement of flow velocity in the upper and middle ponds.

All workday participants were entered into a drawing for an Echo rod donated by Kurt Watts. The winner was Pat Sullivan, Denny Sullivan's wife. Pat was at every work day, she pulled brush, hauled logs and helped others understand what was needed. Congratulations Pat, now just keep Denny's hands off that fly rod.

Thanks to everyone that helped this spring. The people that came out should be proud of what was accomplished.

The Conservation Committee will be working throughout the summer to plan our next project on "Pete's Run" which is another spring run at Fox Bluff. Work on that spring run will begin in September. There are no ponds on this stream and there will be less brush clearing but more in-stream improvement work.

The Conservation committee has been expanded to four members, Jerry Sapp chairman, Pete Koenig, Jerry Ward, and Denny Sullivan. We need a fifth member who will actively participate. If you would like to be on the committee talk to Jerry Sapp.

Conservation Raffle

Don't forget to get your entries in to the conservation raffle. Tickets will also be for sale at the April meeting and at the May 6th picnic. The drawing will be at the picnic. The rods will be at both events for viewing.

TIME IS SHORT 1st DATE April 26th!!!!

Youth Program 2017 – Volunteer Today!

In partnership with the Northern Illinois Special Recreation Association (NISRA), Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation and LL Bean, our Chapter created the award winning Fishin' So Fly program for at-risk youth. This unique program brings local needy children together with Lee Wulff TU members to create valuable and life-changing experiences to both the children and members. Fishin' So Fly includes 4 weekly fly fishing instruction and conservation clinics and a day trip to the streams of the Driftless Area of Southwest Wisconsin during the month of May. Consider sharing your love of fly fishing with children, who would otherwise, never have these opportunities. Consider volunteering today....you will be hooked on this rewarding experience!

Fishin' So Fly dates for this year are 4/26, 5/3, 5/10 and 5/17. It will again be held at Max McGraw Wildlife and each class will run from 6-8 each evening. Our Wisconsin outing to the Driftless area with the kids will be held on 6/5 leaving DMS at 7AM. I think we will have 10 kids in this year's program so the more volunteers the merrier.

See you at the meeting next week.

Bob Becker

Veteran's Programs – Scott Roane

We have 2 great Veterans programs we can participate in and help the Vets.

- PHWFF (Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing) for North Chicago VA Vets. This is being run by Jeff Reinke from the Gary Borger chapter. This is a more traditional program. See <http://www.projecthealingwaters.org/> They are based to Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Libertyville. This is traditional fly tying and fly fishing at a local forest preserve when the weather permits. Jeff is working on expanding this to outpatient Vets.

- Hines VA (in Maywood) Vets program run by DRIFT; Glenn Hazen and Gene Kazmark.

The Vets are associated with the Hines Blind Center. They are mostly low vision ladies and gentlemen.

They are either residents or attend school for a few weeks to learn computer skills, etc. There is a fly tying program and also a fishing program.

This is not strictly fly fishing. It's spin casting or whatever works. See the picture from the last outing a few weeks ago.



Either program is really about one on one camaraderie and just having something interesting to do and getting out.

You don't have to be a Vet to help out. It's just one on one conversation and building a relationship.

Anyone interested send me an email and I can fill you in on more detail and which program may be better depending on your interest and location.

Thanks,

Scott Roane

rscottroane@gmail.com

847-687-5856

To all Illinois TU members:

We are actively recruiting campers to attend the Illinois Council of TU Conservation and Fly Fishing Camp which is an exceptional opportunity for boys & girls aged 13 to 18. The camp takes place on the Au Sable River near Grayling, Michigan from July 23 thru July 28, 2017. Transportation, lodging, meals and equipment are all provided.

We encourage you to browse the latest version of our Illinois Youth Camp presentation which provides a good overview & pictures from camp: <http://obtu.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/2017-TU-Youth-Camp-Overview.pdf>

We also request your assistance in passing the word to interested youth. For more information please contact:

Willie Beshire
Camp Director
(630) 200-2532
wbeshire@aol.com

Chapter Outings for 2017

2017 Early Spring Outing April 28th-30th - Viroqua, WI

Time is short! Make your reservations at the Viroqua Inn today!

This is our annual outing to Southwest WI in the Driftless area. **Our Chapter will gather at the Vernon Inn in Viroqua, WI. For reservations call 800/501-0664. Let them know you are with the Lee Wulff Chapter of Trout Unlimited as a block of rooms has been reserved but they will be released a week prior to the outing. Make your reservations today!** Members are responsible for finding their own roommate, if they want one, and making their own reservations.

Some will be camping at the West Fork Sportsmans Club in Avalanche, WI. You must be a member to camp and the cost for membership is currently \$10 per year. The

campground does not take reservations unless you are going to rent one of the two cabins they have.

This area includes the famed West Fork of the Kickapoo, Timber Coulee, Bishops Branch, Tainter Creek and Elk Creek to only mention a few. The early WI season is open only to catch and release.

We offer, to current Lee Wulff members, an opportunity to spend some time with an experienced member. So, if you're new to the area, new to fly fishing or would like to hook up with, and spend some time with, an experienced member this is the trip for you.

You must RSVP to Gordon Rudd at 815/245-2425 or McHenryFlyFisher@sbcglobal.net no later than April 20th for the Buddy System. If there is a work project scheduled the Buddy System will be rescheduled. The Buddy System takes place Saturday morning until noon.

Dinner is scheduled at the Old Towne Inn, located northwest of Viroqua on Route 14 in Westby, WI. Dinner reservations are at 7:30 PM for Friday and **7:15** PM Saturday and individuals are responsible for their own meals and libations. We will be seated as soon as our table is ready.

There is a great fly shop in Viroqua called the Driftless Angler owned by Mat Wagner and Geri Meyer, www.driftlessangler.com 608/637-8779. Guide service is available from them as well as from the following guides.

Dave Barron, Jacquish Hollow Angler, 608-604-6690 dbarron@wicw.net

Jim Bartelt, Spring Creek Specialties, 608-206-5651 jimbartelt@yahoo.com

Rich Osthoff - 608/847-5192

Some books of interest for these outings include; No Hatch to Match by Rich Osthoff

Fly Fishing Midwestern Spring Creeks by Ross Mueller

Exploring Wisconsin Trout Streams-The Angler's Guide by Steve Born

Flyfisher's Guide to Wisconsin & Iowa by John Motoviloff

Wisconsin Atlas & Gazetteer by DeLorme.

Viroqua is located approximately 2 hours northwest of Madison, WI on Route 14.

2017 Fennimore Outing May 19th-21st Outing/Fennimore, WI

The second outing takes place in the Southwest part of Wisconsin, again in the Driftless Area. A block of rooms have been reserved at Napps Motel, 645 12th Street, Highway 18 East. This is on the east side of town on the south side of the street. We have reserved, 4 single rooms and 4 double rooms. Members are responsible for finding their own roommate, if they want one, and making their own reservations. Make sure to let them know that you are with the Lee Wulff Chapter of TU. Their phone number is 608-822-3226. Camping is not readily available however if you Google "camping in Grant County, WI", you will see there is some camping in the area, just not close to Fennimore. Fennimore is located approximately 1½ hours due west of Madison.

There are many great trout streams, with easy access, in this part of the state. Some to mention include The Big Green, Castle Rock, Doc Smith, Crooked Creek the Blue and Big Spring. These streams have sizeable trout populations and sizeable fish. There are no fly shops in the area so if you need anything shop before you arrive. If you are interested in a guide here are some that I would recommend;

Dave Barron, Jacquish Hollow Angler, 608-604-6690 dbarron@wicw.net

Jim Bartelt, Spring Creek Specialties, 608-206-5651 jimbartelt@yahoo.com

Rich Osthoff, 608-847-5192

Jim Romberg, Flyfisherman's Lair Guide Service, 608-822-3005

Option one. Friday night we will have a brat cookout at the motel. This will include brats, chips, potato salad and soft drinks/water. BYOB for adult libations. A RSVP is required no later than May 12th to Gordon Rudd, mchenryflyfisher@sbcglobal.net or 815-245-2425. Cost is \$7 per person paid by May 16th. Approximate time 7-7:30.

Saturday night we will have pizza party at the motel. This will include pizza, chips and soft drinks/water. BYOB for adult libations. A RSVP is required no later than May 12th to Gordon Rudd, mchenryflyfisher@sbcglobal.net or 815-245-2425. Cost is \$8 per person paid by May 16th. Approximate time 7-7:30.

Option two. Friday night we will have a brat cookout at the motel. This will include brats, chips, potato salad and soft drinks/water. BYOB for adult libations. A RSVP is required no later than May 12th to Gordon Rudd, mchenryflyfisher@sbcglobal.net or 815-245-2425. Cost is \$7 per person paid by May 16th. Approximate time 7-7:30.

Saturday night we will meet at the Cottonwood Sports Bar, 4716 Green River Rd., Fennimore, WI off of Highway 61 north of town. Everyone will be responsible for their own food and drinks. Approximate time 7-7:30.

2017 Wa Wa Sum Outing June 7th-11th Grayling, MI

This is an excellent outing to the historic rustic lodge owned by Michigan State University and situated on the banks of the "Holy Waters" of the famed Au Sable River. This location is a short walk upstream from the very spot upon which Trout Unlimited was founded. The outing includes four nights lodging and fabulous fishing *opportunities* on the Au Sable and Manistee Rivers. Wa Wa Sum lodge is located just east of Grayling and it takes approximately 7 hours to drive there from the Chicago area.

Michigan has two "free fishing weekends" per year and this year, while we are there, fishing on Saturday and Sunday do not require a license or trout stamp however, you will

need a license and trout stamp to fish the other days while there. You can obtain your license and stamp on line or at one of the local fly shops.

****Please note we have made a change in the payment method for our WaWaSum outing.*****

The cost of the trip is \$325.00. Full payment is due by May 22. We are going to use the same system we have in place for payment for the Salmon Outing in that we are asking for full payment. This will simplify things for our treasurer, and it will be easier for us to track payments. The online store is the quickest and easiest way to pay for the trip. However, if you prefer to pay by check, you can send those to Yves Charron, 1414 New Haven Drive, Cary, IL 60013. Please feel free to contact me or Yves with any questions or if you need to discuss other arrangements.

As stated, this is a rustic lodge, and you need to bring your own bed linens (sleeping bag & pillow) along with towel and washcloth.

Guided float trips are very popular, but hard to get this time of year. So, if you think this is something you'd like to do make your reservations early. Here are some fly shops and guides to consider:

Gates Au Sable Lodge, www.gateslodge.com 989/348-8462

Old Au Sable Fly Shop, www.oldausable.com 989/343-3330

Fuller's North Branch Outing Club www.fullersnboc.com 989/348-7951

Dave Mauro-www.brooksandbrownsguideservice.com/about-us.html

We will be offering a nice incentive for new attendees to WaWaSum this year !!

Meg is going to be booking a half day evening float trip one evening with her guide and friend Dave Mauro. Anyone who is attending WaWaSum for the **first time** will have their name dropped into a **drawing** to join her for the evening. The AuSable offers some of the most amazing evening and night fishing !

To RSVP or for more information on any of these outings, contact

Meg Gallagher : prez@leewulfftu.org

2017 Early Summer Outing/June 23rd-25th /Viroqua, WI

This is the fourth outing of the year. It takes place in one of the finest trout fishing areas of the Country known as the Driftless Area. A block of 6 rooms have been reserved at the Vernon Inn in Viroqua (Toll free: 800-501-0664). Let them know you're with the Lee Wulff group when you make your reservation. Members are responsible for finding their own roommate, if they want one, and making their own reservations.

Some will be camping at the West Fork Sportsmans Club in Avalanche, WI. You must be a member to camp and the cost for membership is currently \$10 per year. The campground does not take reservations unless you are going to rent one of the two cabins they have.

This area includes the famed West Fork of the Kickapoo, Timber Coulee and Camp Creek to only mention a few. The early WI season is open only to catch and release fishing.

A group dinner is scheduled at the Old Towne Inn, located northwest of Viroqua on Route 14 in Westby, WI. Dinner reservations are at 7:30 PM for Friday and Saturday and individuals are responsible for their own meals and libations.

There is a great fly shop in Viroqua called the Driftless Angler owned by Mat Wagner and Geri Meyer. Guide service is available by calling 608/637-8779.

Some other guides to consider are:

Dave Barron, Jacquish Hollow Angler, 608-604-6690 dbarron@wicw.net

Jim Bartelt, Spring Creek Specialties, 608-206-5651 jimbartelt@yahoo.com

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Some books of interest for these outings include; No Hatch to Match by Rich Osthoff
Fly Fishing Midwestern Spring Creeks by Ross Mueller

Exploring Wisconsin Trout Streams-The Angler's Guide by Steve Born

Flyfisher's Guide to Wisconsin & Iowa by John Motoviloff

Wisconsin Atlas & Gazetteer by DeLorme.

Viroqua is located approximately 2 hours northwest of Madison, WI on Route 14.

End of the Season Outing Oct 13th-15th, 2017

The last WI outing will be on Oct 13th-15th. We will once again be in the Viroqua/Westby area and several will be camping at the West Fork Sportsmens Club in Avalanche along the West Fork of the Kickapoo. You must be a member to camp and the cost for membership is currently \$10 per year. The campground does not take reservations unless you are going to rent one of the two cabins they have.

A block of 5 rooms have been reserved at the Vernon Inn in Viroqua (Toll free: 800-501-0664). Let them know you're with the Lee Wulff group when you make your reservation. Members are responsible for finding their own roommate, if they want one, and making their own reservations.

A group dinner is scheduled at the Old Towne Inn, located northwest of Viroqua on Route 14 in Westby, WI. Dinner reservations are at 7:30 PM for Saturday and individuals are responsible for their own meals and libations. Please keep in mind we will sit down as soon as our table is ready so if you're running late you may be on your own.

If you have any questions or would like to RSVP for dinner contact Gordon Rudd at mchenryflyfisher@sbcglobal.net or 815/245-2425.

Bob Olach's Fly of the Month

Orange Tag & Red Tag

Approx. 10 years ago, a fellow sent me a copy of an old manuscript / booklet about a fly tier who was the River Keeper of the Bradford Waltonians Angling Club's stretch of water on the River Wharfe in the UK. That River Keeper / Fly Tier was named Jim Wynn.

In early 2012, I became aware of a book about Jim Wynn and, in May 2012, I ordered the book written by Martin Cross and titled *"Jim Wynn's Recommended Flies for the River Wharf"*.

Not only does this book (published in 2011) have the same dressings / information that was in the old manuscript copy, but it also contained some new information on Jim Wynn; on North Country flies; and some of fishing methods used by many in the northern UK waters.

Recently, I started glancing through the book and when I opened the book, it was on the dressing called the *"Orange Tag"*, so I decided to tie up a dozen of them to try once the weather gets a little warmer.

There's another dressing that is very similar to the orange Tag except red wool is used as the tail, aptly named the *"Red Tag"*!



Hooks - Daiichi 1990 - size 16

Thread - black Danville 6/0

Body - green peacock herl

Rib - small gold wire

Hackle - brown saddle (or hen if you want a wet fly)

Tag - red or orange crewl wool

There's another old dressing called a "*Treacle Parkin*" that is tied the same as the Orange & Red Tag flies, except the tag / tail is yellow wool and the hackle is a ginger color.

Although I tied these flies with rooster saddle hackle and plan to use them as dry flies, hen hackles of the same color can be used and the flies fished as wet / soft hackles.

Lastly several years ago I had tied a few and they also worked well for the fish I was after in local ponds and Wisconsin waters.



Grumpy's Page by Kurt Haberl

"Hey, Grumpy, I have an idea."

Even though Schnoz was talking to me over the phone a safe distance away, I should have known better than to let him go on. When he gets an idea, it usually does not end well. Sometimes the police get involved. Sometimes he has to sleep over at our house for a week because Huldy won't let him back in. If his idea involves a flame thrower, an invention of his, or anything that might cause him to say, "Here, hold my beer," I know it's time to run away. Sometimes I don't run away because I can't avoid watching the train run off the rails. This was one of those times.

"Look, Grumpy, this idea is perfectly logical. The season is just open and the grass isn't high and the bugs aren't out yet, and the willows haven't even spouted leaves, wouldn't you think inaccessible streams might actually be fishable?"

"Ye-es," I said with some hesitation.

"Here's what I'm thinking. Wouldn't guys go to work for the DNR because they like to fish?"

"Yes."

"And don't the DNR guys put out that map every year with the trout streams marked and classified and color-coded for creel limits and special regulations and even which streams have any trout in them at all?"

"Ye-es."

“So here’s the question. If you were a real DNR guy, would you put your favorite stream on that map and highlight it in red and give it the highest classification for trout, or would you leave it blank, maybe even unnamed, and not let on that it’s the best stream in the state?”

“But it’s their job,” I said.

“Job, schmob. Which is more important to a guy, his job or catching fish? I’ve been looking at the map, and I want to show you something. Huldy wants me out of the house for some reason, so how about if I come over and show you what I’ve found?”

Annie was outside so I said okay. That was my second mistake. In a few minutes he had opened the regulations booklet from the DNR and spread out a gazetteer on our kitchen table with arrows and numbers that showed a lot of work and made no sense whatsoever.

“Okay, look at this,” he said proudly. He had drawn intersecting lines on the map like a madman, each line color-coded and marked with tiny notes like, “Headwaters, unfishable after May,” or “Pool where Wet Curtis fell in twice.” There were quite a few references to Wet Curtis. There was even one that read, “Pool where Roy the Plumber caught his fish.” Some streams were highlighted in neon yellow or red or blue to match those in the DNR booklet.

“What do you see?” Schnoz asked proudly.

“I see the confusing geometric drawings of a crazy man,” I said.

“Ha. The line between crazy and genius is very fine. Let me explain it in language you can understand. Do you see that I’ve followed the DNR map to mark streams with special regulations, mostly because they contain spawning beds or are known to reproduce fish, in other words, the most fertile streams where catch and release is mandated.”

“Y-es,” I said with some hesitation.

“Now look. I’ve triangulated the headwaters of the best streams with the tailwaters of the best streams, and look at where they all intersect. There is a little stretch of water smack dab in the middle of the best streams that runs down the one side of a valley and into Mill Creek, and you know Mill Creek is good because Wet Curtis has fished it a lot. See how many times he’s fallen in?”

“That’s not necessarily a recommendation for-“

“Ha. Why do you think this stream right in the middle of these special streams isn’t given a name? I’ll tell you why. The DNR doesn’t want us to go there. They’re saving it. Guess what, I’ve looked at other topographical maps, and that stream does have a name. Buffalo Creek. The natives knew about that creek – and now we do too.”

“Well, but buffalo is also the name of a warm-water fish and this could be a flowing mud slide, for all we know. I’d feel better if it were called ‘Thousand Brookie Run,’ or something like that.”

“If the DNR put that name on it, what do you think would happen?”

“We’d all fish it, I suppose.”

“Exactly. Let’s go. My gear is in the car and Huldy already kicked me out, so get your junk and we’ll be on our way to fishing adventure.”

That’s when I should have run away, probably to his house where I knew he wouldn’t find me. Instead I loaded my gear into his old car.

“Should I notify the police now?” Annie called, after she heard us go out the front door. “Or the fire department?”

“Only if we’re not back by dark,” I called back. “We’re going out near Mill Creek somewhere. They could find the car, I think. Then they’d just have to listen for me cursing.”

I rode shotgun with the gazetteer on my lap and directed Schnoz along roads the DNR probably didn’t want us to drive on, seeing how little care was put into them. We eventually arrived at an asterisk on his map, which was good, because the gravel road ended in a hedgerow, and there was no place else to go. I saw a farmhouse on a far hill, but no other signs of life, civilization, or DNR.

We got out of his old car, put on waders, strung our rods, and then looked for a stream. Schnoz took the map from me, traced his intersecting lines, looked up and down the hedgerow, and said, “The secret stream should be just on the other side of these trees.”

“These aren’t trees,” I said. “These are brambles and crabapples put here by the Germans to discourage tanks from getting anywhere near St. Lo.”

He looked up and down the impenetrable hedgerow again, folded the map into his vest, and said, “Follow me. I’ve bushwhacked worse places than this. You don’t know what making a path is until you’ve had to do it through wild roses in a swamp and every step was uphill.”

I thought about asking what kind of swamp has rose bushes and goes uphill, but I thought better of it. He strode through low, wet grass, slashed at a few thorny leftovers of last year’s growth with his wading staff, and lunged into the hedgerow. I followed, sometimes pushing him through unforgiving vines, each step marred by thorns and little devils that grabbed, pinched, poked, and scratched.

“Are we having fun yet?” I said.

“Shut up, Wimp. You want a primrose path?”

Eventually we pushed through and fell on top of each other on the other side, finding ourselves in a neglected pasture where the cowpies had dried to flat shale. I looked at Schnoz, who now seemed to be an old version of Edward Scissorhands. His face was lined with red trails; thistles clung to his waders and vests; vines hung from his vest, and his flyrod trailed yards of line and leader back into the hedgerow. Undeterred, he crossed the narrow pasture to another row of bushes, but even before we got there, I could hear water gurgling on the other side.

It was a beautiful stream, gravel-bottomed and strewn with boulders that created resting pockets, a riffle above us that flowed from a deep pool, and another pool below us framed by an old oak whose sturdy branches stretched high across the entire stream.

“What did I tell you?” Schnoz said.

We went downstream first, slipping away from the stream to avoid spooking any fish, and tiptoed in below the pool before tying nymphs on. Schnoz’s first cast drifted along the edge nearest the oak, and that’s when I saw trouble. At first it was just the snap of a branch, but then two towheaded faces appeared partway up the oak as a girl of 10 or so and her slightly younger brother scooted out on the lowest branch over the pool and stared at us.

“Hello,” I said. Schnoz just grunted, and recast nearer the center of the pool.

“Ain’t no fish in there,” the girl said, and the boy repeated, “Ain’t none.”

“How do you know?” I said.

“On account of I can see all the rocks on the bottom and their ain’t no fish.”

“Fish are good at camouflage,” Schnoz said, “So maybe you can’t see them.”

“I know what fish look like,” the girl said, “and them rocks ain’t it. Besides, we’ve played and swum in this pool since we was kids, and ain’t never seen a fish. And double besides, if you go upstream about a run to first base, the water get shallower than your ankles and the spring is up there, so there’s no way for fish to get in from there, and if you go downstream past the barbed wire fence Grampa put up before we was even in trouble for the first time ever, there’s a waterfall taller than you are, and there ain’t no fish going to jump up something that high.”

“Tell him about the men,” the little boy said.

“Oh yeah,” said the girl, “Last year two other men from the gov’mnt came here looking for fish and we told them there weren’t any, but they went in anyway just to play with their shock machine.”

“Yeah,” said the boy, “the had a shock machine.”

“What did they find?” I asked.

The girl laughed. “Three frogs, a sally-mander, and some kind of snake.”

“Yeah,” said the boy, “I wanted the snake to play with when it came around, but they wouldn’t give it to me. It didn’t have no poison, but they wouldn’t give it to me.”

Schnoz reeled in his line and sighed. “I was so sure,” he said.

“You could pretend,” said the little boy. “I do it all the time. Pretend there’s big fish in there and then just talk to yourself like it’s true. Go ahead.”

I’m not sure why, but I cast the nymph near the top of the pool and let it sink.

“Here he comes,” the boy shouted, pointing to where my line entered the water. “Get ready. Now! Now! He’s got it. He’s a big one.”

I raised my rod, and felt – a snag, some kind of branch that gave a little and then snapped back.

“Fight him!” the boy said. “Use your rod. There he goes.”

I turned my rod across stream and the line zinged through the water, exciting the boy even more.

“He’s turning. There he goes! Don’t let him-“ but it was too late. My tippet broke and I reeled in slack line.

“We have to get back,” the girl said. “Daddy will be looking for us.”

“Nice meeting you,” I said.

“You too,” said the boy. Then he spread his arms wide. “He was this big.”

Schnoz trudged back toward the evil hedgerow, his slumped shoulders full of disappointment. I watched the kids shimmy down the tree, and head back along a path. About thirty yards up the path, I saw them disappear into the hedgerow at an angle toward the house. I followed them, walked easily through a break in the trees wide enough for a tractor, and was leaning up against the car by the time Schnoz had slashed, plunged, and bled his way through the hedgerow. He looked at me as if I’d somehow managed to fly over the trees.

“Well, at least I caught one,” I said. “I hate getting skunked.”

“There weren’t any fish in there. You heard the kids.”

“Weren’t you listening to the boy? I hooked one big one. It got off. It happens. Quite a fish,” I said.

“You’re pretending like we’re still young boys,” Schnoz said.

“Exactly.”

“Okay,” Schnoz said. “I guess it was quite a fish at that. I didn’t see it, but I suppose there are a lot of fish we never see.”

“Exactly.”

It’s good to feel like a kid again. It was not a bad start to the season.

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PS: Any grammatical errors spotted in
this newsletter were purposefully put
there to keep you on your toes.
PPS: You Are Welcome.