



April 2022 President's Message

Thanks to all of you who participated in our Spring Conservation Sweepstakes. We passed our goal of \$4,500 by \$225. The lucky winners are Joe Svoboda first prize, Jonathan Culli second and Ralph Lessor third.

The wait is over we are finally going to have an **in-person** meeting this month. I have delayed announcing the news due to a covid upswing, but I think that we can safely meet with caution. Please wear a mask if you have not been vaccinated and do not attend if you are not feeling well. Masks are optional but are advised.

The meeting will be held at 6:30 on April 21 at Village Pizza in Carpentersville, located on RT.25 (where we met before covid). Pizza and soda will be available for \$15; alcoholic beverages are paid for separately. And to celebrate getting together in person, there will be raffle prizes at \$5 a ticket. Bob Olach and I each donated a box of flies for the raffle but there will also be some great fishing books available and some other goodies.

Instead of a speaker, a TIE-A-Thon is planned which will benefit *Casting for Recovery*. The flies we tie will go to fisherwomen recovering from breast cancer. Even non-tiers will be able to participate. The Squirmmie Wormies fly requires no experience and there will be vices available for the non-tiers to work on. All materials will be provided for the Wormies, and you may keep a few you tie for yourself. Materials will be available to tie some other flies like woolly buggers etc. If you want to tie, please let me know what you are tying. Any materials that the chapter has will be provided for your flies. Call me at 847 284 4824 with questions. See your friends, grab a beer, sit down, swap stories and tie a few flies and tell a few lies for a worthy cause.

In other news, the chapter's outing to Fenimore is scheduled for Thursday, April 28th through Sunday, April 30th. If you are new to the Fenimore area or a new fisher, please contact Ralph Lessor, r_lessor@msn.com to arrange for a mentor to help you get oriented Saturday morning. Most of us will be staying at the *Napps Motel* in Fenimore but an alternate motel is, the *Fennimore Hills Motel* just west of town.

Our tank of *Trout in the Classroom* brook trout continues to thrive and will be released by the students on May 6 or 13 at the Fox Bluff Forest Preserve. During the release we will also do some entomological studies with the students.

The teacher involved with the TIC program is attempting to get permission for her students to be involved in our SO-FLY program. If all goes well, we will meet two times at McGraw with the students and possibly do some casting practice at the school before the outings. Approximately 6 or 7 students will be involved. That means we need at least 6 volunteers to work with them. Possible dates are May 5 and 12 starting around 4:30. So, if you are interested let either me or Bob Meschewski, neschro@sbcglobal.net, know and we will keep you up to date. This program is rewarding for the students as well as the volunteers. Come see these special kids have a great time.

Hope to see you in person on Thursday the 21st.
Jerry Sapp

Spring Outings Update

Fennimore Outing (4/28-5/1): There are a few rooms left in the block being held at Napps Motel. We need to release the unreserved rooms at the end of March, so if you have not reserved a room, please call Mike at Napps (608-822-3226) and do so before then or you may not find a room available. Please notify Ralph if you are planning to come, as he needs a headcount in case the bratwurst supper is possible, and needs email information for attendees to distribute information

Exchange Outing, Westby/Viroqua, May 19-22: Deposit deadline extended to 3/20; if you have not sent in your deposit of let Ralph know you're coming, do so ASAP. We have had a great response for this outing, especially from members of the West Denver chapter, and the originally reserved space at Logan Mill Lodge has been filled, but we are seeking additional space there. We are still in need of "guides" from LWTU to assist the Colorado guests in finding good water to fish and driving, please contact Ralph if you are interested in signing up, or attending the outing without acting as a guide. A reminder that "guides" get preferred status for the return outing in Colorado if space is limited, and that the guys from Colorado already know how to fish, you just have to drive them to the stream and point at it 😊.

Exchange Outing Part 2, Colorado: The West Denver Chapter has tentatively scheduled the Colorado leg of the exchange for July 14-16 in the area around Frisco, CO. If you are interested, please contact Ralph to be put on the list for information distribution as plans develop further.

Ralph Lessor, LWTU Outings Coordinator
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Bob Olach's Fly of the Month

The Sulky Cruncher
(Nymph or Soft Hackle)

A couple months ago, I stumbled upon a website in the UK (<https://www.robdenson.co.uk>) that had quite a few interesting fly fishing / fly tying articles. I copied several of the fly tying articles for future reference and tying.

The fly tying videos and other good videos can also be seen on “*The Trout and Salmon Magazine*” [YouTube link](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCuXW_NbgKvmkY57dvQrZJLg/videos) (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCuXW_NbgKvmkY57dvQrZJLg/videos) (especially if you like Hardy reels and rods).

Since I like fishing flies with either a peacock herl body or thorax, I decided to try a few of the “*Sulky Cruncher*” dressing. (<https://www.robdenson.co.uk/rough-red-cruncher>), where you can see the original dressing and picture.

Although the original UK-version is tied more as a nymph, my variation of the “*Sulky Cruncher*” is more towards a US-style of a soft hackle.



Here's the materials I used in tying this “*Sulky Cruncher*” variation.

Hook: Daiichi #1550 or #1530 wet fly hook

Tail: A few fibers of a ginger or brown colored rooster

Rib: Red holographic tinsel

Body & Thorax: Peacock herl

Hackle: Hen hackle the same color as the tail

Thread: Red Danville 6/0

In the future, it might be a good idea to substitute a brown or ginger rooster cape / saddle hackle and use it as a dry fly this season.

Cheers

Bob



Grumpy's Page by Kurt Haberl

Fishing for a day with Roy the Plumber had a rhythm to it, a kind of predictable swirl the same way water always flows downhill. While everyone else in camp finished fried eggs and sopped up the last of the bits of bacon and grease off their plates, or opened the backs of trucks to load waders and boots, Roy stumbled out of his old camper, a large coffee in hand, the first of three, and announced to the world in his fine bass voice, “Begorra, ‘tis a fine emerald of a morning for a man to still be able to count his aches and bless his mates.”

“Roy,” I called over, “are you Irish? I thought you were Slav or Greek or something.”

“Me? Not Irish. I’m mongrel. I just like saying ‘Begorra,’ by God. Everyone should begin the day with an interjection, and that’s one of my favorites. So, who’s fishing with me today?”

He called this out loudly as Schnoz drove off with Dewey, Ghost Mary put her gear into Wet Curtis’s SUV next to The General, as fine a retriever as Labrador had ever produced, and Fat Henry and Hook Line and Sinker Hinkeler just finished arguing about who was going to drive and began the argument over which stream they would plunder. Roy took a long drink from his travel mug of black coffee that I suspected was one drip away from syrup with probably the consistency and similar effect of drain cleaner. He took a slow survey over the campground and said, “Grumpy, did you not object to being the last chosen?”

“I did not,” I said. “I thought I might go with Wet Curtis, but The General growled at me this morning for some remark I made about him last night.”

“Ah, yes, the unfortunate remark about wet, furry animals smelling like cold mushrooms and something fecal. I thought The General might have heard that. Well, no matter, come in my camper for a minute for some breakfast and then we’ll pick a stream to victimize.”

“But I already ate,” I said. “Bacon, eggs, some unidentifiable pastry Schnoz brought, and coffee.”

“That’s irrelevant. I’ve made twice as much fried eggs, fried bologna, fried hash browns, and burnt coffee than I can down, so you must contribute to the reduction of waste or I will have no peace of mind at all today.”

“Well…” I said, thinking I would just skip lunch.

“Good. Come in and have a seat. You get the one that doesn’t have an oval hole in the middle, and we will soon be on our way, warmed, sated, nourished, and calorized for the day.”

“Is ‘calorized’ a word?”

“It’s a philosophical concept, but let’s not get into that.”

“Have you thought about where you would like to fish this morning?”

“Well, Grumpy, metaphorically, everywhere we go we are fishing. If we go to the store, we are fishing. If we go to a party, we are fishing. If I root through a toolbox to find a ball peen hammer to make the latest dent in my fender worse, I’m fishing. Even your question to me unfurled like a roll cast as you began to fish. Think of it, we can go fishing all day, every day in the existential waters of life if we choose to see it that way.”

“I love that,” I said. “So, have you thought about where you would like to fish this morning?”

“Oh, you want an actual answer. Yes. You know I have three favorite streams up here. Sterrit’s Run has the beautiful drop pool just up from the pullout, and I plied those waters yesterday morning. Brown’s Switchbacks is another favorite because you can cover a lot of water and only go fifty yards from the stile. I burgled that water yesterday afternoon and caught the most intelligent brown trout holding there, the one at the top of the pyramid, you understand.”

“You caught one?”

“Yes, the most intelligent, elusive, and wary ten-incher in the whole stream, mind you. It was quite an achievement. I also caught a cheek chub, but that was just a gluttonous five-incher that took my fly out of stupidity, unlike the fine brown who chased away all lesser fish to devour my fly. That leaves my third favorite - the Bittersweet. If you walk up from the stile past the first two riffles, there is a little run with a good boulder in it across from my special friend the willow. Do you know the place?”

“Yes. The far side is steep and lined with wild roses.”

“That’s the place. I have developed a warm, personal relationship with every bush on that steep bank, along with the willow. Anyway, in the soft spot below the boulder there is a fine trout at least twelve inches long that I have not visited yet this year, so I would like to check in with her to be sure she is okay. You know, the trout that school up in a pod are a mere crowd and may tempt us with a good day of catching, but sometimes I prefer to spend some time with a particular friend if she is in her parlor and accepting visitors.”

“The Bittersweet it is,” I said. We ate until Roy burped, which was his alarm to stop, then he put the remaining eggs, bologna, and hash browns into a plastic container which went into a nearly empty tiny refrigerator in his camper. He offered to drive but when he did a “test ignition,” his engine barely turned over, and he said, “You know, on this trip, either the battery on my camper has enough charge from being plugged in, or my Suburban starts, but not both. I guess I will have to replace one or the other batteries when I get home.”

“I’ll drive,” I said. We loaded our gear and headed out. On the way, I threw one more roll cast at him with something I’d been wondering about for a while. “Roy,” I said, “I’m going to start fishing right now. I’ve been wondering how someone with a degree in philosophy from the prestigious University of Chicago would spend his career as a plumber.”

“It’s the same thing,” he answered.

“Huh?”

“I plumb the depths.” He looked at me with a kind of side eye, nothing like the powerful side eye of most women, but one that hinted, “You can figure it out from here.”

When he saw me struggling, he added, “One of the two options you mentioned paid money on which I could marry and raise a family, and the other did not. Western Civilization determined my career.”

“But they’re not really the same thing.”

“Sure they are. Sometimes both are full of shit. A poor philosophical argument is no different from a leaky toilet. You have to find and plug the leaks. People don’t know they need you until suddenly they do. Running water is life. Stream of consciousness is life. Both generally run downhill unless you consciously pump them to some desired height. In both cases, if you don’t see what’s really there in front of you, you will soon be standing ankle-deep in muck.”

“Okay,” I said tentatively.

“You’ve heard of philosopher kings? We need philosopher truckers, philosopher dentists, philosopher executives, business owners, janitors, and child-raisers. Actually, we are all child-raisers, and the best of us are philosophers.”

It was an easy drive to the Bittersweet, but a not-so-easy climb for Roy to get over the stile, accompanied by grunts and sighs and a shrug when I said, “I see that you have developed the mass necessary to carry around your sizable brain.”

“Air,” he said. “It’s all air.” I left Roy at the little run with the boulder that he favored and headed upstream past three or four soft pools he could fish if he got bored with his visit with the boulder trout.

Some mornings in spring stretch themselves in glory, first donning a green jacket that would be the envy of any golf course, then fastening a boutonniere of yellow daffodil or wild woodland tulip. Dogwood branches suddenly seem to be wearing white gloves, and the stream itself, murky and black during winter, seems to have slipped its legs into Kelly tweeds. Birds flitted everywhere; robins ran and posed, sparrows chased each other through bushes in their own game of tag, taking turns being “it,” and far off, a woodpecker knocked at a lintel to announce he was back and would someone please let them in.

It was, Begorra, a fine morning of fishing as well, the kind of morning when trout ate with their own steady rhythm, having forgotten over winter that some insects were tied on hooks, but anything that looked buggy was worth a taste. It was a morning where two hours went by as if someone told a story with ups and downs, struggles and escapes, fish captured and released with such energy and fun that those hours seemed like ten minutes. Taking three or four good fish in a run seemed the norm, and three or four runs made for a fine morning. Roy was right. Sometimes you just have to say, “Begorra,” and it should be repeated.

I only noticed the passing of time when I heard a rude interruption, far off down the valley in the little town of Glen Finn or Glocca Morra or whatever it was. Since it was the first Tuesday of the month, the city hall siren blew at noon to be sure it was in good order for storm alerts or to call the volunteer firemen to race to the station so the first to arrive would get to drive the single fire truck. When I looked around, I half expected to see a rainbow, but instead saw only the glistening of dew in crisp sunlight against fading veils of morning mist. Begorra.

It was time to check on Roy. We had not yet worn a path along the side of the stream, but the grasses were wet enough to show the footprint of my brogues. I took my time, admiring again the runs where fish tested me and the clearing water showed the earliest tinges of water crowfoots. When I came around the last bend I saw Roy knee deep in the pool with the boulder, his rod bent and quivering with the strong runs of a good fish. He held his tip up patiently, just holding, not reeling, and when the fish veered left of the boulder, his rod dipped right. When the fish ran right, his rod slid down and left. I just watched. In a minute the fish came to the top and he slid her into his net. He waded over to a log half in and half out of the water, lay his rod along the length of the log, and sat down to admire his fish. He took her out of the water only

long enough to slip the hook out of her jaw, then held his net back in the water for her to revive. A minute later, he wet his right hand, clasped his fish to raise her out of the net, kissed her, and then held her in the water until she swam away.

“Well done!” I called. Roy smiled at me.

“For quite a while I thought she had taken up residence somewhere else. Nothing I ran by the drift showed any sign that she was home. Every dry fly floated undisturbed. No nymph, not even an early season black midge drew any interest.”

“What changed?”

“I put on one of Bethke’s pink squirrel nymphs, saw a flash, and on the second pass, she took it. Oh, what a magnificent fish. Did you see?”

“Yes,” I said. “It was all beautifully done.”

“Twelve inches. She was at least twelve inches. Did you see? And oh, the large spots. It was like she wore makeup.”

Twelve inches was not a large fish for the Bittersweet, but sometimes the beauty of a fish and how special a brown could be - had nothing to do with size. If I had been with Schnoz, a twelve inch fish would have grown to thirteen by the time we got back to the car, then fourteen inches during the drive, and sixteen inches by the time he told anyone about his catch. Of course everyone knew Schnoz and knew that sixteen inches meant twelve. Roy was different. I guess to a philosopher, twelve meant twelve.

“Ah, she was a brae, bonny lass.”

“I saw her,” I said.

“Exactly,” Roy answered. “Let’s go back to camp so I can tell my story. A successful day needs to be celebrated. Begorra.”

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