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President's Message & Upcoming Chapter Events

Greetings fellow LWTU members,

March is upon us. The days are getting longer and we've had a few fleeting tastes of spring weather. Fear not, reliable trout fishing weather will soon be here.

Please join us for our **March Monthly Meetup** that will take place at [Village Pizza & Pub \(145 N John F. Kennedy Dr, Carpentersville, IL 60110\)](#) on Thursday, March 19, 2026 with social hour starting at 6:00 PM. Consider joining us even if you live further out, tollway access is convenient.

Our evening will feature **Dan Makauskas**, from Illinois DNR. Dan is the Project Manager of the Lake Michigan project. His presentation will highlight Salmonids in the

Great Lakes. Anyone that enjoys targeting amazing fish in the big lakes and their tributaries will be sure to enjoy this program.

Our **April Monthly Meetup** will serve as a warmup for the Westby Early Spring Outing. We will run a skills fair where we'll be tying and sharing flies that work well late in April. We will also discuss fishing techniques, places to fish, and tell a few fish stories. Finally there will be a limited number of Driftless Area maps available for the taking. If you have other timely topics you'd like covered, please email prez@leewulfftu.org.

The **Early Spring Outing** will once again be based out of Westby WI and run from April 23 through April 26. Logan Mill Lodge is fully subscribed and we may be looking for volunteers to share the rooms that have multiple beds. If you still want to attend, you can also make other local lodging arrangements or camp. All are welcome to join the stream buddy system and communal dinners. Details will be published closer to the date.

The **Late Spring Outing** will be based out of Fennimore and run from May 14 through May 17. Lodging and dining details are not yet set on this event, so stay tuned for more information.

To express interest or ask questions regarding the outings, please contact Ralph Lessor at outings@leewulfftu.org.

Our **book exchange** program will once again be available at in-person chapter meetups. Purchase books for as little as \$5, and then optionally return them after reading for a \$3 exchange credit. There will also be prize-drawings! Tickets will be available to purchase at \$5 each.

Our **February meetup** featured Kyle Richards, Don Pluemer, and Ted Swenson from Nohr Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Kyle, Don, and Ted showcased Nohr's extensive conservation projects in the Blue River watershed in Grant and Iowa Counties.

Bob Olach's bamboo rod was passed from Brent Burval to Scott Lammers for the 2026 season. Scott has been a tireless champion for the chapter. He is currently serving as chapter secretary and has organized our holiday banquet for many years running. Thank you, Scott, for your service to LWTU.

In a stunning development, it appears that Jonathan Culli has sprouted a pair of antlers just prior to the meetup. See the photo below.



Scenes from the February Meetup with Nohr Chapter TU

Don't let the cooler temperatures keep you from getting out to fish. [Wisconsin Early Catch and Release Season](#) is now open in case you enjoy fishing in the cold. There is a significant change to [Wisconsin harvest season regulations](#). It will now open the first Saturday of April (4/4) rather than in May. Remember that [Iowa trout season](#) is open **year round**, so head on over there if you need to scratch an itch.

Once some warmer temperatures arrive, it will be time to think about **Lake Michigan tributary fishing** for big chinook, coho, steelhead, and brown trout. Rain drives fish into the tributaries, but be mindful of [water flows](#) and do not wade if levels are unsafe. If you need a few pointers, feel free to ask fellow chapter members for tips at our monthly meetups.

Our **Trout in the Classroom** program is up and running. This year we are working with rainbow trout instead of brook trout as in the past. The fish are in the tanks and release the fish sometime in the spring. Please email me at prez@leewulfftu.org for further information.

Please track your **volunteer hours** and report volunteer hours to the chapter treasurer by 4/10/2026 at treasurer@leewulfftu.org. We should have an online portal available soon to make this process a breeze.

Upcoming Chapter Events

- Winter Fly Tying - Tuesday evenings through late March - Village Pizza
- March Chapter Meetup - Thursday, March 19 - Village Pizza
- April Chapter Meetup - Thursday, April 16 - Village Pizza
- Early Spring Driftless Outing - April 23 through April 26 - Westby WI
- Duker School Event - Monday, May 11 - McHenry IL (volunteers needed, [click here](#) to RSVP via email or for more information about this event)
- Late Spring Driftless Outing - May 14 through May 17 - Fennimore WI

Do you have an idea for a **future speaker** or program? Please email speakers@leewulfftu.org.

Finally, we are always seeking **volunteers** to help out the chapter. Please email me at prez@leewulfftu.org for further information. Here's an easy one - could someone take the initiative to **snap some photos at the monthly meetups**? We need to save some memories for posterity and obtain new content for our banquet slideshow.

Watch your email for **Evite** invitations to upcoming events. I hope to see all of you very soon.

Tight Lines!!

Jonathan Culli



Grumpy's Page by Kurt Haberl

I know those of you who read this history of adventurers, ne-er-do-wells and river keepers are used to the likes of our chapter members, Grumpy, Schnoz, Wet Curtis, Roy the Plumber, Dewey, Ghost Mary, Johnny Fessup, Billy Bob, Old Ben Waverly, Gordon, Allie, and Calamity John, but sometimes reality intrudes and requires some unusual measures to tell a story that matters and get to the heart of what our sport, and indeed, friendship, fellowship, and the ironies of life are all about.

That means in this episode, I will change the names of the innocent and guilty (you decide which is which) to chronicle real events concerning our chapter and its long history. The details may have become a little fuzzy, and the dialogue is reconstructed, but everything happened with no exaggeration at all. None.

One of our members, let's call him "Bob," from the beginning has been a booster, a contradiction, and a complex character. To begin with, (um, what is his alias?) oh, yes, "Bob," was the second to accost yours truly at my initial attendance at a chapter meeting. The first was "Gordon," a gentleman and chapter founder who noticed the lost look in my eyes and led me to the bar to correct the situation. I was soon buttonholed by "Bob," who insisted I sit at his table so we could plan an outing, discuss our police records, and begin the process of building a friendship. "Bob" had apparently worn out most of the other chapter members, so he needed a new sidekick. "Gordon" tried to warn me with raised eyebrows, a slight head shake, and even the famous *Sting* movie tipoff of an index finger touching the side of his nose, but I, being a true newbie, didn't get the message until it was too late.

Bear with me as I jump to the outing. It may not have been the first, but it was relatively early in our times that we made a day trip to well-known stream that I will call by its alias "Black Earth Creek." It had been a tiring day of wading the many switchbacks beginning at a park and ending at the park after retracing our steps. It was not a particularly rewarding day. We might have caught a couple of fish, but the day was more memorable for the summer bugs, mostly gnats and mosquitos that found us and drained us of our well-earned sweat and at least of liter of blood each. When we made it back to the bridge where our car was parked, the sun had already given up on the day and gone to bed. That's when the hatch started, not the amazing orgy of the large *hexagenia limbata* that causes a feeding frenzy but the risings of a small un-seeable bug that looks like raindrops on a glassy surface. "Bob," stayed in the stream at the bridge and began casting to one regular riser while I opened up the car, got out of my waders, stowed my rod, and drank the last of my cold coffee before our three-hour drive home. I called to "Bob" and reminded him that it was after 8 o'clock. The water was quickly changing from a beautiful purple to a glossy gray before it became an opaque black. And yet, that single fish kept rising.

"I have to change flies," he called.

"I have to pee," I called back.

"Go to the other side of the bridge."

I returned, found an emergency flashlight in the car with one of its batteries still bleeding enough energy to give “Bob” a shadow and show that the single trout was rising every twenty seconds or so.

“You can’t leave rising fish,” he called. “It’s getting hard to see. Start the car and shine the headlights on this guy so I can catch him.”

“Shine the headlights? ‘Bob,’ to do that I’d have to park the car straight across the bridge. Nobody could get through.”

“If somebody comes, you could move it.”

I didn’t move the car, but I kept the flashlight on him. If he stumbled and drowned in the dark, I wanted to know where to tell the police to start looking. I don’t know how much time passed. After three more fly changes, and maybe a half an hour that seemed like three days, “Bob” somehow managed to get the timing impossibly right, and cast his fly directly into the fish’s mouth. At least that’s what it looked like.

“Got him,” “Bob” called triumphantly. I kept the dying flashlight on him as he played and brought an average ten-inch brown to his net. He held to fish up to me as if it were a four-pound slab, kissed the fish, and let it go. He stumbled out of the water, narrated every second of the casting, the catalogue of flies used, the “take” and the landing of that single, unremarkable trout. It became an epic saga while he got out of his waders, put his gear away, and got in the car.

I knew the saga was over when he said, “What a great day! Did you see that last fish? It must have been at least sixteen inches.”

I should have said something, but I didn’t, and that led to a re-telling of the saga, minute by minute as “Bob” made sure I didn’t fall asleep on our long drive home. What do you do with such an infuriating fishing buddy?

Here’s the other side.

On another day trip to the same well-known stream, a cloudless Memorial Day over 90 degrees when we expected all fish to hunker down in the coolest water they could find, we trudged up and down the switchbacks and caught well over 50 fish. At least that’s where we lost count. At one point, “Bob” pointed out a pod of brookies in a narrow run the size of a bathtub under a scrubby tree. While he went on, I caught at least a dozen in that one spot alone. What do you do on such an impossible day, when your buddy’s persistence results in the best fishing ever?

Fast forward to another day, a relatively unremarkable day on a campout weekend where we explored new streams, and finished by realizing we missed the dinner bell back at camp. Instead, we found a small town I’ll call “Cashton” with an open restaurant and collapsed into comfortable chairs before noting steak fillets were on the menu. Before we finished gorging ourselves, a local mother came into the restaurant with her two daughters, both of whom were dressed in pastel formals to match their hair arranged in impossible crowns, and sat across the room from us.

“Wow, are we underdressed for this restaurant?” “Bob” said to the waitress.

“No,” she replied. “It’s become kind of a custom in town that on prom night, before the actual dance and whatever the high school has planned for an after party, families will sometimes come to the restaurant to show off daughters in their prom dresses.”

“Families?” I said.

“Usually.”

“Okay,” “Bob” said. “So, I want you to make sure the three of them get anything they want on the menu, steak or whatever. Tell lies if you have to. Be sure dessert is included. Then I want their bill added to mine. If they don’t find out who’s paying, I’ll include a really good tip for you.”

“I’ll take care of it,” the waitress said and she did. What do you do with a fishing buddy like that?

I could go on about the infuriating times “Bob” woke everyone in camp at 5 A.M. by shaking tents and yelling “Rise and shine! Coffee’s on,” even on cold mornings when we wouldn’t hit the streams until 10. Later on, he “adopted” a visitor from England at the local fly shop and spent the next three days guiding him up the best streams we knew. It also became almost standard practice that “Bob,” who was certainly the best fly tyer among us, would leave his canvas backpack full of large plastic fly boxes on a random picnic table, knowing full well we would pilfer flies with no shame, often announcing it to the whole camp. It’s even more than flies. Most of his friends have been given bamboo rods that he made from blanks he bought years ago. You get the idea. With “Bob,” deciding that he would no longer count fish, meant that on good day of catching a dozen or so would become eighteen or two dozen (we’re not counting, remember), and a decent fish of 14 inches would become 16 or 18 by the time a campfire was lit.

This is a fishing life well done. Fishers are kind. Fishers are infuriating. Fishers are persistent. Fishers share everything. Even secret honey holes are found out eventually. Fishers are flexible. “Huh, you don’t like a bead head pheasant tail? Well, take this!” Fishers are impatient. Fishers tell stories that are always true, but not literally. Well done, “Bob.”



When moving between bodies of water while fishing please be extra diligent in cleaning and drying your gear. Read [this recent press release about *Previously Undetected Parasite Discovered In Wild Wisconsin Trout*](#) to learn more about why this is so important.



It's Time to Adjust the WI Trout Stamp for Inflation

Wisconsin residents please [click here to contact your legislators](#) to urge them to support a \$6 Inland Trout Stamp inflation adjustment by co-sponsoring this legislation. All Wisconsin trout anglers please thank the authors, [Rep. Duke Tucker](#) and [Sen. Rachael Cabral-Guevara](#), for their leadership on this issue.

Protect the Boundary Waters

The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness is under threat from unprecedented congressional action. On Jan 21st, the House of Representatives narrowly passed a resolution that would permanently overturn a [20-year mineral withdrawal issued by the U.S. Forest Service in 2023](#). Join Trout Unlimited in urging the Senate not to pass this resolution.

At nearly 1.1 million acres, the Boundary Waters spreads across the northeastern tip of Minnesota, containing over 1,100 lakes, 2,000 designated campsites, hundreds of miles of rivers and streams, and the largest contiguous areas of uncut forest remaining in the eastern United States. The three-million-acre Superior National Forest, which includes the Boundary Waters, contains 20 percent of all the fresh water in the entire National Forest System.

The Boundary Waters offers unparalleled opportunities for fishing, hunting, camping, and paddling. It's a haven for hunters and anglers who come to the region to pursue walleye, smallmouth bass, northern pike, whitetail deer, grouse, black bear, and one of the largest self-sustaining populations of native lake trout in America. The potential loss of these unique recreational opportunities is a stark reminder of the stakes involved in protecting this irreplaceable natural resource. [Click here to take action](#).

Safeguard Sensitive Trout Habitat by Supporting Oil & Gas Reforms

Responsible energy development and conservation need not be mutually exclusive, but it depends on smart, balanced policies that support diverse public land uses.

Rolling back key oil and gas leasing reforms would jeopardize valuable fish and wildlife habitat. Please [click here](#) to join Trout Unlimited in urging Congress to keep fiscally responsible leasing reforms and steer leasing away from sensitive trout habitats.

Tell Congress: Protect Roadless Areas

The [U.S. Forest Service recently announced](#) its intent to rescind the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. This action would remove protections for 58.5 million acres of national forest land across 39 states that are home to irreplaceable fish and wildlife habitat.

Roadless areas provide some of the most important habitat for trout and salmon in the United States. They are destination locations for hunters and anglers. Roadless areas provide the spawning and rearing grounds for some of Alaska's most robust salmon and

steelhead runs and serve as the headwaters for the majority of Blue Ribbon trout streams in the West. In the Midwest and East, roadless areas also conserve important trout fisheries. For example, 64 percent of roadless areas in Michigan and 90 percent of roadless areas in New Hampshire provide habitat for native trout.

This issue affects trout and salmon fisheries across the country and anglers need to speak up for these important public lands. Right now, your members of Congress need to hear from their constituents how important these public lands are for our outdoor traditions. Later this summer, the U.S. Forest Service will begin the process of repealing the Roadless Rule – at that time sending messages to the agency will be crucial.

[Please take a moment today to urge your members of Congress to support strong protections for Roadless Areas and to ensure that the Forest Service provides robust opportunities for the public to make their voices heard.](#)

Soil and Water Conservation District Funding Slashed

The 103rd General Assembly of Illinois has finalized the FY25 budget. Sadly, this budget was signed into law with a roughly 48% decrease in Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) operational funding. Illinois' 97 SWCDs experienced a substantial funding shortfall in the FY 2025 state budget. SWCD operations funding was reduced by \$4 million from \$8.5 million in FY 24 to \$4.5 million in FY 25. The shortfall will lead to the loss of trained and qualified Soil and Water Conservation District employees which will take years of training to replace. Without sufficient funding, employees, much like unprotected soil, will erode away. Help petition to restore state funding [here](#).

Illinois House Bill 1873 Water Recreation Rights

As an angler, you know that the many beautiful streams in Illinois could be much greater recreational assets than they now are. Those streams could provide some of those same memorable, on the water experiences that are available to our neighbors in Wisconsin and Michigan just outside their back-doors. An Illinois Supreme Court decision recently called on the state legislature to reassert the public right to use state waters. The idea is to pass a new law clarifying and modernizing existing rights for river access. [HB1873](#) (104th G.A.) is the legislation that can get this done. Your help is needed to tell your legislators to support this much needed legislation. Please do it now. [Click here to easily take action in under a minute of your time.](#)

Save the Kish

Despite much opposition, the Woodstock City Council recently approved all of the preliminary measures that will allow the Lennar Riverwoods proposed high-density development along the banks of the Kishwaukee River in Woodstock to go forward. Follow this situation [here](#). But it's not over until it's over. Voice any opposition you may have by emailing the Woodstock City Council at citycouncil@woodstockil.gov and [signing this petition](#).

Wisconsin Residents: Save Wisconsin's Essential Stewardship Program

Without legislative action, Wisconsin's iconic 30+ year old public lands initiative will expire in the summer of 2026. Bills have been introduced by both Republicans and Democrats to save this flagship Stewardship program, but little action has taken place since. [Click here](#) to ask your legislators to come together to find a compromise that works for all of Wisconsin and reauthorizes the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.

Learn more and explore Stewardship-funded projects here: <https://knowlesnelson.org/>

Additional Action Links

Trout Unlimited is not just about trout angling. [The national founders committed to conservation and preservation when they incorporated in 1959](#). In this spirit, please consider taking a few minutes to explore additional ways to take action:

<https://standup.tu.org/> & <https://www.tu.org/conservation/action-center/>

Upcoming Non-Chapter Events

- SWTU Spring 2026 Workdays - Saturdays starting March 28, 2026 ([click here for details](#))
- [IF4](#) screenings in the region:
 - Manistee, MI @ Vogue Theatre - March 7, 2026
 - Rochester, MN @ Pop's Art Theater - March 19, 2026
 - Hayward, WI @ The Park Theatre - March 21, 2026
 - Decorah, IA @ Hotel Winneshiek - April 25, 2026
 - [Richland Center, WI @ Starlite 14 Drive In - June 5, 2026](#)
- [Fly Fishing Film Tour](#) (F3T) screenings in the region:
 - Cedar Rapids, IA @ Hilton Garden Inn - March 1, 2026
 - Grand Rapids, MI @ Wealthy Theatre - March 5, 2026
 - Ann Arbor, MI @ The State Theatre - March 6, 2026
 - Des Moines, IA @ Hilton Garden Inn - March 7, 2026
 - Novi, MI @ Emagine Novi - March 12, 2026
 - Madison, WI @ The Barrymore Theatre - March 19, 2026
 - Traverse City, MI @ City Opera House - March 21, 2026
 - Menomonie, WI @ The Mabel Tainter Theater - April 3, 2026
 - Lake Forest, IL @ Gorton Center - April 12, 2026
 - Holland, MI @ Knickerbocker Theatre - April 15, 2026
 - Glendale, WI @ The Bavarian Bierhaus - September 17, 2026
- [TU 2026 Midwest Regional Rendezvous - Roscommon, MI](#) - May 1-3, 2026
- [TU CX3 Event](#) - St. Paul, MN - September 23 - 27, 2026
- *Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing* (PHWFF) - Ongoing (click [here](#) to get involved)

Chapter Officers

President: Jonathan Culli
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Vice-President: Ken Bruckner
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Secretary: Scott Lammers
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Treasurer: Marty Jandura
treasurer@leewulfftu.org

Join Trout Unlimited



When joining Trout Unlimited (TU) at the national level, TU automatically assigns you to a local chapter based on your Zip Code and [this chapter boundaries map](#).

If not already a TU member, [click here to join TU for as little as \\$17.50 for your first year](#).

Already a TU member but not assigned to the Lee Wulff chapter? Call TU customer service at 1-800-834-2419 and make the switch to the Lee Wulff chapter (#448) today!