



November 2021 President's Message

The Salmon are nearly finished spawning, and the Browns and Steelhead should be in the tributaries. The Milwaukee was loaded with salmon this year below Capitol Drive. I wonder why they are doing this well without a large alewife population. We might find out the answer this month from our guest speaker, Dave Rowe. Dave is the supervisor at the Middleton division of the Wisconsin DNR. He will be presenting a program about the trout streams of the Driftless Area and what the DNR does to protect them. This program includes information on specific trout stream populations and streams with the largest trout. I hope you do not miss this one.

November is the month that Trout in the Classroom starts again. We are going to place eggs in three classes this year and hope to place a bunch of fry in Fox Bluff next spring after two years of little or no stocking due to Covid 19.

Chapter representatives met with a zoology and a fishing club from Huntley high school Nov. 10 after school to talk about trout, why they need cold clean water and about fishing for them. We will have a regular Zoom meeting on Dec.16 our speaker then will be Ann Miller, entomologist, and author of "*Hatch Guide for Upper Midwest Streams*".

Lee Wulff TU Meeting

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The Spring Outing calendar for LWTU for 2022 has been tentatively set as follows:

Early Spring Outing (Fennimore, WI) April 28-May 1

The year's first outing will be to the Fennimore area, with fishing available on the Little Green River, Big Green River, Castle Rock Creek, Blue River and a variety of other tributaries and creeks. Details on reservations and activities will follow early in 2022.

Spring Outing/Colorado Chapter Exchange (Viroqua/Westby, WI, May 19-22)

Our spring trip to the Viroqua/Westby area (May 19-22) will include a new wrinkle; we will be joined by some anglers from the Colorado West Denver TU chapter that our former LWTU President, Bob Becker, has joined. We envision this as an exchange program, with a reciprocal visit to Colorado for interested LWTU members, to be scheduled sometime during mid to late July (after the spring runoff has ended).

We're looking for individual LWTU members who will volunteer to guide visiting anglers on Driftless area waters around Viroqua/Westby on a 1:1 or 1:2 basis, on one or more days of the outing. If interested please contact Ralph Lessor (new LWTU Outings Coordinator, email r_lessor@msn.com) by the end of this year. Volunteer guides for this outing would have preference for inclusion in the reciprocal outing to Colorado, with members of the West Denver chapter acting as guides to their local waters, if that outing ends up with space limitations. If

you're interested in fishing in Colorado with the group, whether you will be able to guide anglers in May or not, please let Ralph know.

Accommodations for this outing will likely be at the Logan Mill Lodge in Westby, which offers better opportunities for socialization and exchange of fish stories than the Vernon Inn, but to reserve these rooms we will need a preliminary headcount, so if you're interested let us know ASAP.

Late Spring Outing (Wa-Wa-Sum replacement, late June)

Due to declining attendance by LWTU members and decreased fishing quality, the Board has decided not to renew our window at Wa-Wa-Sum in Michigan, to allow other groups that can more fully utilize the facility a chance to experience it. Instead, we will likely organize a second outing to the Viroqua/Westby area if there is sufficient interest. Details to follow early in 2022.

Colorado Exchange Outing (July)

details will follow once we've worked them out with the Colorado chapter

Bob Olach's Fly of the Month

Spiders, Soft Hackles, Nymphs & a Dry Fly (or Two)

In the past few years, maybe 15 years or so, I've spent most of my fly tying activities on certain fly dressings, tending to shy away from some (not all) of what many modern fly-fishers tend to tie and fish. Thus the heading of "*Spiders, Soft Hackles, Nymphs & a Dry Fly*"

Can't remember exactly when I became interested in the old (mostly) English "*Spiders*" but after buying Edmunds' & Lee's "*Brook & River Troutling*" and T. E. Pritt's "*North Country Flies*" books, my interest in, and search for, more information began. More books were found, almost all written and published in the UK plus a few from US authors, including Dave Highes, Leisenring & Hidy, etc. which then got me into soft hackles and flymphs that originated in the USA.

Unfortunately, after reading these books, it became necessary to buy MANY more threads (silk and synthetic), dubbings, and hackles - various hen skins plus Hungarian Partridge, English Red Grouse, English Woodcock, Golden Plover, Starling, Moorhen / Waterhen, Jack Snipe & Common Snipe, plus substitutes for Landrail, Dotterel, Blackbird, Owl, Heron, etc. (illegal to use this protected species) and even Egyptian Goose (have yet to use it).

Dave Hughes, plus Lesisenring & Hidy, got me tying many soft hackles & flymph dressings, that tend to be quite different in materials and appearance from the UK Spiders, so more materials had to be found.

Peacock bodied soft hackle dressings (*Egg Laying Caddis, Red Ass, Coachman wet variations*) with various hen and partridge hackles, as are Hare's Ear dubbed bodies (natural, dark and red) with Hungarian Partridge or European Snipe Rump hackles have proven to be my go-to wet flies in both the Wisconsin and Michigan trout waters

For those that have seen (and raided) my fly boxes, there's literally hundreds of different Spider, Soft Hackle and Flymph dressings that I've tied although it's probably impossible to fish all of the different dressings. But, to paraphrase the old saying "*He who dies with the most toys (or flies)!*"

Years ago, John Bethke taught me how to mix his Pink Squirrel dubbing mixture and what materials to use in tying his original Pink Squirrel nymph dressing, which is always a Driftless Area favorite.

But, I also tend to fish (with and without a bead) more Pheasant Tail, Frenchie and Hare's Ear nymphs than other nymphs, either in tandem or with a soft hackle / dry fly.

As to "*A Dry Fly*", my variation of a "*Crackleback*" and a "*Red Palmer*" (peacock body, red thread with a gold wire rib and a generous amount of palmered brown rooster hackle) float like corks and have been very effective for me when a soft hackle, spider or nymph are tied to the hook bend of this "*Dry Fly*"!

No pics this time around but previous Lee Wulff Newsletters should have all the above referenced dressings.

As we used to do before the Covid situation hit, in the coming weeks (hopefully), we'll resume some of our evening fly tying sessions in Elgin where we'll again start tying some more of the spider, soft hackle and nymph dressings.

Cheers

Bob

PS – Recently became interested in tying Hairwing Salmon / Spey flies ---- more book and material purchases! Don't have a real reason to tie these dressings since I've only done steelhead / salmon fishing twice in my life..... but the flies sure look pretty!



Grumpy's Page by Kurt Haberl

When the phone rang, I knew right away it wasn't Schnoz. When Schnoz calls, the phone sounds like an alarm as if something is on fire, which it often is when Schnoz calls. I don't know how my phone can ring differently when he calls. Maybe that's what they mean by a smart phone, something intelligent enough to warn me, "Hey, answer this call at your own risk. It's Schnoz and he's going to propose some harebrained idea."

Since it was an ordinary call, I answered it.

"Grumpy?" I heard.

"Hey, Roy."

Roy the plumber has a wonderful bass voice, but his calls are ordinary.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"Well, Roy, now that the fishing season just ended, I'm looking at the clock, which has apparently switched to hibernation time because it isn't changing, and I'm trying to figure out when I can block my depression with chocolate, popcorn, Scotch, beef jerky, or all of the above."

"Want to go fishing?"

"We can't. Trout season ended two weeks ago."

"Well, that brings up an interesting philosophical question."

"No, it doesn't. The season ended. It's over. I've already watched the same fly fishing video on catching brookies in puddles on sidewalks four times. Today," I added.

“Here’s the thing, Grumpy. The season on inland trout fishing, that is, fishing in streams not considered a tributary that leads to Lake Michigan, is now over. However, you may recall, Deet gave me the canoe he won at one of the TU chapter’s Christmas party, and we can still cast fly rods on a lake.”

“Deet” was our nickname for Deter, one of our members known to spend hundreds of dollars of his hard-earned money on raffle tickets to win prizes, most of which he didn’t want and just gave away. He liked the thrill of winning and giving away, not owning. I’ve never fished with him because he usually camps with his significant other, and being with a woman who flyfishes with her partner is still somewhat rare and special, unfortunately. My wife usually tells me to mark my camping trips on the calendar, as many as I want, so she knows to stock up on potato chips and dip before she calls her friends to come over and watch movies about rags to riches movie stars, women who overcome terrible obstacles, sometimes with husbands, sometimes not, especially at the times when the husband IS the obstacle, and movies about strangers who fall in love, enemies who fall in love, pets who fall in love, and even comedians who fall in love. If there was a movie about a man and woman fly fisher who fell in love, I’d probably watch it.

“I believe there’s a boat ramp a mere six blocks from your house on Lake Mendota,” Roy said. “If we wear knee boots, we could probably manage to get in the canoe without tipping it, and then fish to our heart’s content, you know, use streamers or leech patterns.”

I thought about watching the brookie video for the fifth time and then said, “I’m game. Let’s go.”

The next morning Roy duly appeared with his new canoe strapped to the top of his rusting Suburban, making me wonder if the canoe wasn’t actually holding pieces of the Suburban together. In fifteen minutes we drove to the boat ramp, put the canoe in the water, donned life jackets, strung up our longest rods with streamers, and took turns holding the canoe in place while one at a time got aboard. If you’ve ever seen someone trying to stand on rollerblades for the first time, that’s what we looked like. We paddled out into the lake leaving a wake like we had followed switchbacks up a mountain, heading generally in the direction we intended, but it included 45 degree swings. I had heard that a hundred yards offshore in this bay there was a steep drop-off of 50 feet that bass fishermen liked to follow, so we headed out at least a hundred yards.

“Okay, cast your streamer,” Roy said.

“You first. I’ve already had hooks in my ear. Don’t be afraid. There are no trees, bushes, or sunken logs out here for you to snag.”

That's when Roy realized he didn't have to cast at all, but could just let line out straight down into the water till he hit bottom and then jig it a little as the morning breeze blew us along the drop-off.

"I just realized something," Roy said. "This is how I should fish on every stream. Just find a rock or a log to sit on above a pool, run or riffle, and let out line. I could swing soft hackles, leech patterns, maybe even dry flies, and avoid the bushes altogether. Trees in my backcast? Na na, na na, na na. Think of the flies I could save. I could make it through an entire season on one soft hackle. I'd never cast into a bush. Actually, I'd never cast at all."

That's when the unthinkable happened. Roy's line tightened, and he yanked on it, so no avail.

"I'm snagged," he said.

"How can that be, Roy? There aren't any trees or bushes within a hundred yards of us, and this lake was created by a glacier a million years ago."

"Well, that might be an interesting philosophical question. Maybe the glacier left one big boulder and my streamer went under it."

"Roy," I said and pointed to where his line entered the water. The breeze had died for a moment, and his line was moving.

"Uh oh," Roy said. "This is not good." He yanked on the line two more times, but it moved away into the depths of the lake as if he had done nothing at all. In a few more seconds the line bowed his rod, and since Roy always left his drag on lockdown so he could break off the tippet on bushes, the line pulled his rod tip beyond the bow of the canoe and began to tow us out into the lake.

"What did you hook?" I asked stupidly.

"Manatee. I think it's a manatee. It's too slow for a shark."

That's when it happened. We had been pulled midway across the bay and we neared two more craft, one was a motorboat of some kind with three people in red in it, and the other was a women's 8 rowing shell.

"What the hell are you doing?" the coach in the launch yelled at us over a bullhorn.

"We're just sitting here," Roy yelled back, "and a manatee is pulling us around. We have no control."

The athletes in the rowing shell raised their oars in salute and cheered. That made the coach angry enough to bellow out, "Loss of focus! That means two more laps!"

All eight women groaned. Something upset the manatee because it began to circle the coach's launch, which angered the coach even more. The words blaring over the bullhorn were no longer college level vocabulary.

That's when it happened. Another motorboat filled with college boys who had already started drinking and apparently knew some of the women rowers showed up, recognized the situation, and began to shout advice to Roy.

"Pull left!" they yelled. "Pull left. No! Starboard! Starboard. No, port! Port!"

We sat helplessly in the canoe while the college boys yelled at us, the women rowers lowered their oars, and the coach yelled at us, the manatee, and the college boys.

Then it happened. Attracted by the hullabaloo, another launch zoomed in with a wash that nearly swamped us, and an officer of the lake patrol shouted, "What's going on? I want to see your license!"

"We're being towed by something," I shouted. "We're probably doing something illegal, but I don't know what it is, and we'll gladly show you our fishing licenses if we ever get back to shore."

"Why don't you just reel it in?" the officer yelled at Roy.

"I can't. I'm using a five weight fly rod."

"Who uses a fly rod on a 10,00 acre glacial lake eighty feet deep?"

"I do," Roy said. "I'm a plumber and I underestimated the challenge."

At that point the coach gained control over the team of eight women rowers, and they shot off toward the nearest line of buoys, followed by the drunken college boys in their speedboat who shouted unnecessary encouragement to the women.

Then it happened. Three more motorboats full of drunk older men zoomed in on us to join the party, circling like sharks until one noticed we were being followed by the lake patrol and zoomed through the circle to get away. At that moment, the manatee came up near the surface to see what all the disturbance was about and Roy's line was cut by the prop of the zooming motorboat, which sped away, followed by the lake patrol who realized they were doing something illegal, who was followed by the other two boats to see what would happen to the first. In a minute we were alone in the middle of the bay, bobbing like flotsam in the choppy autumn gray water.

Roy reeled in his limp line, turned around to look at me and said, "Not to be philosophical, but that was the most fun I've had all year. I've hooked many an oak, willow, maple, wild rose, thistle, and even wild parsnip, but that was my first manatee."

"There are no manatees in a fresh water lake," I said.

"You can't prove that. If I think it was a manatee, and a trophy manatee at that, then it could have been a manatee. Neither one of us actually saw it."

"It's illegal to fish for manatees in Lake Mendota," I said.

"Maybe that's why it was so much fun."

It was. I had to admit it was.

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