

Newscasts

Summer 2024 serving the Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited



Meicher Madness Auction returns September 10

Don't miss this legendary event

By Topf Wells

The Meicher Madness Auction was one of SWTU's most popular and profitable events for many years. Stopped by COVID, it returns at our **Tuesday, September 10 meeting** at Schwoegler's on Grand Canyon Drive. *(nevermind one reference to a different month at the end of a prior message)*

Good to get there early

You can order food and drinks at the Schwoegler's main bar it will be delivered to your table. We're hoping for and expecting a bigger crowd for the auction. If you plan on dinner, PLEASE arrive between 5:30 and 6 p.m. If the auction is your main interest, be there before 7 to peruse the items. If you're bringing items to donate, please also try to get there early so they can be set out and people have the chance to look everything over.



Amazing items already on hand and more to come

As noted below ("no junk") the chapter regularly receives donations of quality (sometimes extreme quality) items from generous donors and estates. This includes flies, rods, reels, fly tying material and even a large kit of spin casting lures. Fellow members will also show up with gear to donate to the auction ... one of the most popular being hand-tied fly patterns for our local waters. Also books, art, camping stuff and other quality outdoor-themed gear.

Wait, there's more! Win a hand-built rod just for showing up!!

From all attendees, we will do a drawing for a fly rod.

Here are some needs and changes for this year's auction:

Volunteer help. We need about a dozen folks to help at the auction itself: cashiers, folks to check in all the bidders, organizers of all the gear, and runners to make sure the bidders get the stuff they win. Contact Topf Wells at topfwells@gmail.com if you can lend a hand. It's not hard work, but more helpers makes it easier for everyone and the event can move along better ... volunteers may of course also pause to bid on items they want.

Bring the good stuff; No Junk. We'd love to auction off quality fishing and outdoor-related items you can part with (to make room for new stuff, of course). Traditionally members have brought in just about any gear (leaky waders, run down gear, etc.) they no longer had a use for. That was sort of fun. But not this year, please.

The reason is in the five years since the auction was last held we have had a mountain of really good gear donated to the Chapter. Much of it from the families of deceased members or those who cannot fish anymore. This auction will be focused on selling those excellent rods, reels and other gear. We just won't have the time this year to deal with junk.

Buyers. With all this gear, we need buyers who want or need fishing stuff. For those of our 800 members and friends who might be new to fishing, trout fishing or still gearing up, this auction is a golden opportunity to get some top notch fishing stuff at extremely reasonable prices. This will be a great meeting to invite a new member of the Chapter or a new angler.

TLDR*: SWTU's **Tuesday, September 10**, meeting at Schwoegler's Lanes is a fun auction fundraiser of fantastic outdoorsy goods, some of which the chapter has already and some of which members (maybe you?) will bring to donate. The auction starts at 7, but arrive early for food, conversation and to scope out goods to bid on. If you need another reason to be there, we'll be drawing for a wonderful fly rod.

Schwoegler's Lanes, 444 Grand Canyon Dr., Madison, WI 53719

* Too Long Didn't Read

Fall Workday Schedule and a Special Call for Assistance

Mark your calendars! Conservation Chair Jim Hess has once again worked with public officials and partner organizations to plan out a series of stream workdays.

September 28 – Hefty Creek (Green County)

Clearing woody invasives and installing a brush bundle. Vince Schmitz will be leading this project.

October 12 – Falk Wells Sugar River Wildlife Area or Davidson Wildlife Unit (Dane County)

Clearing box elders and invasive woodies. Meeting with County officials on Sept 4 to evaluate. We could also end up on Kittleson.

October 19 – Big Spring (Iowa County 5465 Big Spring Road, Highland)

Joint workday with the Nohr Chapter – clearing willows and box elders further upstream from our previous workdays.

Nov 9 (Bye week for UW Football) – Sawmill Creek (Green County)– Pokorny Easement

Clearing box elders and invasive woodies and possibly installing a brush bundle if it is possible to drive arrow points into the gravel stream bottom.

December 7 – Conley Lewis (Iowa County, Banner Road)

Joint Workday with the Nohr Chapter clearing boxelders.

A special plea from Topf Wells

Please, please, please attend our September 28 workday on Hefty Creek. We have a wonderful problem with our work days. We get so much done we're in demand. We need to finish all the brush cutting and in stream bundling in one work day (the 28th) so we can honor Dane County's request for an October project. We're getting help from the DNR. Mitch Trow, our acting fish biologist, who will mow work paths for us and Vince Schmitz, another great DNR biologist and the brush bundle pro, will join us on Saturday. If we have enough folks that we can start bundling as soon as we start cutting brush, we'll do this. So, please help. BTW, this marks our third and probably final year of working on this restoration. Our work has completed the project in areas the DNR could not reach with heavy equipment.



Our Workday Efforts are Growing

Those oak trees we planted at the Willow Creek restoration downstream of the confluence with Smith Hollow are flourishing. Here are photos of the same swamp white oak from last and this year. We may have tired of the rain this year but not the oaks. Thanks to Lloyd Meng and Justin Haglund of the DNR who led the restoration and the tree planting. BTW, all aspects of the restoration are in great shape. – Topf Wells

Help Dell Creek and the Aldo Leopold Chapter ...

... and see 20 professionally operated chainsaws in action.

On September 19 at 8 AM the Aldo Leopold Chapter will host a work day at the 40 acres on Dell Creek that the Leopold Chapter, SWTU, the Badger Fly Fishers, the State Council Access Fund and Groundswell Conservancy helped purchase. The property is lovely with a long stretch of the stream, a brook trout tributary, and some extremely healthy oak uplands. It's also almost impossible to fish because of the streamside tag alders.

That's about to change big time. The Leopold Chapter has won the services of the 20 person Stihl Chainsaw Crew for a half day of work. 20 professionally trained sawyers with the latest and best of Stihl chainsaws -- that will be a most impressive and instructive sight. To utilize such an amazing workforce, the Leopold Chapter needs folks to haul the brush. They asking nearby chapters for help.

Dell Creek is about an hour drive from Madison and 9/19 falls on a Thursday and 8 AM is an early start time. But, if you can find the time to help, please do so. The Leopold Chapter will provide a nice lunch, you'll meet some really nice and committed fellow TU members, and you'll see a beautiful stream and landscape that we helped preserve.

If you can help: Here is [a map to the site](#), and please email dtendres9@gmail.com so they have a rough headcount.

The Accidental River Buddy

By Dave Fowler

As many of you know, SWTU sponsors the Wisconsin Women's Fly Fishing Clinic which was held this year on June 12-18. The Clinic first started in 2010 and, for many years, was held at the West Fork Sports Club in Avalanche. For the last two years it's been held at the Tree Top, a state-of-the-art facility in Westby.

There is a "By Women For Women" Basic Clinic and an "On the Water Skills" Intermediate Clinic for more experienced anglers. The Intermediate Clinic is held first, followed by the Basic Clinic. Over the years most of the guides for the Intermediate Clinic have been men. For the Basic Clinic, the only male that is allowed to do any sort of instruction is Mike Miller, "the bug guy." Any in-stream instruction was done strictly by women River Buddies – until this year. More on that below.



I've volunteered to help guide for many of the Intermediate Clinics over the years and have made friends with many fellow guides as well as Clinic participants. I always look forward to it. And, for the last several years, while I was guiding, my wife Kim has volunteered to help in the kitchen preparing and serving meals to Intermediate Clinic participants. However, this year she agreed to help out with the meals for both the Intermediate and Basic Clinics – which meant I would have a little time to fish on my own while the Basic Clinic was going on.

On the second day of the Basic Clinic, I was hanging around the dining room waiting for lunch (a privilege of having a wife helping in the kitchen), Lisa Wilson, who was the head "guide wrangler" for both the Intermediate and Basic Clinics, approached me and said that they were short of River Buddies for the guiding that evening because two had unexpectedly dropped out. So they were in dire need of someone to fill in as a River Buddy. When she asked me if I would be a River Buddy, I had to ask – "Isn't this against the rules." "No guys, right?" I guess it was one of those instances where "desperate times called for desperate measures." Lisa made an executive decision to bend the rules a bit. I was to be the first ever male River Buddy!

So, off I went with "Beth From Pewaukee" to fish a stretch of the West Fork along with Katie, a fellow River Buddy, and her student. We had a great time. I'm hopeful that Beth will stay interested in fly fishing and maybe I'll get a chance to see her at next year's Intermediate Clinic.

As is the tradition at the Clinic, there is always a fire pit gathering at night to share thoughts about each participant's experiences during the Clinic. Since I had never been part of the By Women For Women Basic Clinic before, I felt like an honored guest at the fire pit. Sort of a fly on the wall. When it came time for Beth to recount her experience with Dave the River Buddy, she gave me the ultimate compliment – she described me as a "Zen Buddha" in the way I taught her to cast/fish. I never thought of my teaching style like that, but who am I to argue. I just hope her Buddha description wasn't a reference to my physique. For the rest of the Clinic, my moniker was Buddha Dave. Go figure.



Considering most of the women had never met prior to the Basic Clinic (there were two mother-daughter pairs), it was heartening for me to see the camaraderie among the group of 23 women who had made the pilgrimage to Westby for one reason – to learn how to fly fish. I didn't have the chance to partake in the other Basic Clinic activities such as the stream shocking and the Mike Miller bug show, but I heard those were hits with the participants. I can see why there's a waiting list to get into the Basic Clinic.

For some reason, this year many of the "regulars" who have guided at the Intermediate Clinic in the past were absent, and it was a challenge getting to a 1:1 guide-student ratio. The success of the Intermediate Clinic is very dependent on folks volunteering to be guides. It's a really fun time for both the guides and the women, and I know that they really appreciate the knowledge they gain during the Clinic. So please think about helping out next year. If you are interested in guiding, or know someone who might be, **contact Lisa Wilson at lawfinnee@gmail.com**. The 2025 Intermediate Clinic will be held on June 11-13, 2025. Save the date. For anyone interested in the 2025 Basic Clinic, it will be held June 13-15, 2025.

[See more and larger photos with the story on swtu.org.](#)

Vets on the Fly

By Dyan Lesnik

Vets on the Fly activities are free for all Vets and their family members. All equipment is provided so just show up for their events for socialization and fishing fun. [Learn more at their Facebook page.](#)

Learn What Your Board's Been Up To

Minutes from SWTU Board of Director meetings can be viewed [in this Google Drive](#). If you have questions on what you read in them, reach out to one of the Board members listed on the last page of each newsletter. (Note that you may need to click the "Last Modified" header at the top to sort the list with the latest minutes at the top.)

Progress and Mystery on Badger Mill Creek (and a New Threat)

By Topf Wells

Thanks in part to a strong and decisive public commentary, CARPC – Dane County's Regional Planning Commission – recommended rejection of the Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District's proposal to stop its contribution of water to Badger Mill Creek. The vote was 11-1 to recommend denial.

The CARPC recommendation now goes to the DNR, which has to decide by September 8. The DNR contracts with CARPC to analyze MMSD's request and to solicit and consider public comment. The DNR will consider all the analysis and all the public comment and discussion in its decision making. In addition, SWTU joined local officials and advocates for Badger Mill Creek in meeting with DNR leaders as CARPC made its recommendation. (I do not think that contacting DNR at this point in the process is necessary or even helpful.)

What remains incredibly frustrating about this experience is MMSD's refusal to consider Adaptive Management, a phosphorus reduction program that would enable them to meet their regulatory burden and maintain the water to Badger Mill Creek. Leaders of local government, advocates and neighbors of the creek, and conservation organizations such as SWTU have begged MMSD to do so and promised every possible help. The DNR has publicly stated that Adaptive Management is feasible for Badger Mill creek and CARPC has encouraged that MMSD revisit that approach.

Badger Mill Creek, whose motto could be "Why is Everyone Picking on Me?" faces a possible new threat via a quarry proposed just north of the creek and its confluence with the Sugar River. A critical question is whether that quarry will disrupt the groundwater vital to that part of the creek. Dane County called out this threat and SWTU has joined the County Land and Water Conservation Department in requesting a thorough groundwater study of this area and the quarry's possible effects. The proposal is locally controversial and will probably take months to resolve.

Quick links to cool content

- Do you have an eagle eye for eagles? Learn more about [Bald Eagle Nest Watch](#) and some simple, fun ways you can help these magnificent feathered friends.
- On September 14, the Iowa Driftless Chapter of Trout Unlimited asks you to join them "for the inaugural [Iowa Driftless Classic \(IDC\)](#), our state's premier fly-fishing tournament where you can win prizes while raising money and awareness for conservation." It's a catch and release contest – our chapter does not officially endorse fishing contests, but is sharing as a courtesy to a fellow TU chapter and for members who may be interested.
- The latest newsletter is out for [Lineworkers: Next generation fly fishers](#). It includes information on some of their activities and upcoming training sessions.

Neonicotinoid Forum on Wisconsin's Most Widely Used Pesticides

Sign up today – space is limited

Fellow SWTU Members,

We would like to invite you to attend the Neonicotinoid Forum scheduled for October 30 of this year and hosted by Trout Unlimited, Clean Wisconsin, Rivers Alliance of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council, the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, the Black Earth Creek Watershed Association, Wisconsin's Green Fire, UW-Extension, the WI Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection and the WI Department of Natural Resources.

Neonicotinoids, or neonics, are the most widely used insecticides in Wisconsin, applied to millions of acres of agricultural and urban land each year. What benefits do they provide and what risks do they pose? Funded by a grant from the WI DNR Surface Water Grant Program that the TU State Council applied for and that was awarded to us and supported by a donation from the SWTU chapter, we are able to bring you this educational and informative event. The agenda is finalized, the Forum site has been selected and the registration site is now open.

As you will see in the agenda, we are bringing in several national speakers as well as Wisconsin's own experts, all of whom are very familiar with Neonics, their use, and their potential impact on a wide range of species. The cost for the Forum is \$40 which is intended to cover the cost of lunch and breaks since the DNR grant will not cover these expenses.

Below is the link to the Neonics Forum website. Clean Wisconsin has graciously agreed to share their registration site on which you can register for the event. When purchasing a registration ticket, please select your ticket quantity and then click "Donate Via" using your preferred method. By clicking this option, paying \$40, and entering your information, you will be fully registered for the conference.

<https://www.cleanwisconsin.org/support/events/wisconsin-neonic-forum/>

In addition, [here is the flyer with information on the event as well as the same link to register.](#)

We are limited by the size of the venue to 300 attendees so I am urging folks to register early. I encourage you to share it with any other groups or individuals that you think might be interested in Neonicotinoids and impact they have on the insects that we so rely on as trout fishermen and fisherwomen.

Michael Williamson and Andy Morton – SWTU

Gordon Creek Creel Survey and Fishery Updates

By Topf Wells

More thanks to Justin and Lloyd for some pleasant reading and good news. You can find it at [the DNR Trout Stream Survey web page](#) and clicking on Dane or Iowa County. Lo and behold, [the creel survey report for Gordon Creek](#).

My summary is that lots of folks, mostly local fly fishers, fish and wholly enjoy it. Not as crowded as other good streams, such as the Big Green. Harvest is just not an issue – hardly anyone is harvesting fish or even wants to.

Personally, I'm incredibly grateful to Justin, Lloyd and the other DNR folks who have created such a great fishery on Gordon. And must also think back to impressive SWTU efforts led by Mike Schmidt, Jim Gentry and Jim Kanvik. And also for Justin's and Lloyd's great conclusion where they note that Gordon's fishery is due in large part to the DNR's easements and restorations. Let's hope the higher ups in the Fish Bureau read this creel survey and draw the right lessons from it. Just to be unnecessarily obvious: *More Easements; More Restorations*.

BTW1. Huge thanks to Mitch Trow, who might be the hardest working person in DNR's fish program. Mitch, the senior fish tech for Dane, Rock, and Green Counties was already filling in for Dan Oele, following Dan's promotion. Now he's also fulfilling some of David Rowe's duties, after David, the supervising fish biologist, accepted a job with Dane County. And the DNR Fish budget has cratered. Mitch needed to have some basic equipment to complete his summer surveys of trout streams. As a token of our gratitude to Mitch and to make sure those surveys are as accurate and as helpful as possible. SWTU donated funds for that gear.

BTW2. Mitch reports that some of those surveys showed strong trout numbers in some upper parts of Black Earth Creek.

Welcome New Members

We're pleased to announce the addition of the following new members to our ranks!

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|------------------|---------------|------------------|------------------------|
| Ben Loop | Steve Luebke | Steven Ugoretz | Al Drewno |
| Julie Mucilli | Mac McGilvray | Jeffrey Schimpff | Bonnie McMullin-Lawton |
| Caitlin Liddiard | Logan Beaton | | |

We are honored to have you among us. Please join our next meeting – whether virtual or in person – as we'd love to get to know you better. **If you will be attending your first meeting**, please contact [Topf Wells](#) so we can expect you.

Fountains of Youth

Classic trout flies that have withstood the test of time ... flies that remain "forever young"

by Rusty Dunn

Walk through late summer grasses on your way to a trout stream and – if you're lucky – you'll hear the buzzing and clicking of grasshoppers fleeing before you. Play your cards right, and you'll soon be hooked to an angry trout. Hopper season is the most enjoyable time of year for many fly anglers. It's nature's reward for suffering through the indignities of hatch matching, tiny flies, fussy fish, and foul weather earlier in the season. No need for delicacy when fishing Jiminy Cricket. Tie a pinkie-sized hunk of fur and feather to 3X tippet, splat it noisily into trout water, and be ready for famously indelicate strikes. Trout often take hoppers with violent eruptions of water, fly, and leader.

Hopper fishing has been popular in western states since the very beginning, but it wasn't fully embraced by the rest of the country until the 1950s or 60s. What took so long? Vince Marinaro's influential 1950 book *A Modern Dry Fly Code* educated eastern anglers on the importance of terrestrials. The book appeared at a time of rapid growth in fly fishing, when anglers of the East explored rivers of the West and discovered the thrills of grasshopper mania. Effective hopper patterns became widely available in the 1950s and grew to be a late summer staple for trout anglers nationwide.

Joe's Hopper is an excellent and historically influential grasshopper imitation. It was arguably the first to be popular nationally, having been made famous in the late 1950s by angling author Joe Brooks (*The Complete Book of Fly Fishing*, 1958). The pattern, however, was developed decades earlier as the Michigan Hopper by Art Winnie, a barber, custom fly tyer, and fly-fishing enthusiast of Traverse City, MI. Winnie's barber shop was a gathering place for fly anglers of the Boardman River. Its walls were lined with tree bark for that "outdoor feel", and Winnie updated a sign in the front window with a countdown of days remaining until the opening of trout season. On slow days in the shop, Winnie tied flies for his mail-order fly business.

Winnie's two most famous flies were the Michigan Hopper and the Michigan Caddis, which was terribly misnamed for a fly that imitated *Hexagenia* mayflies. The Michigan Hopper was first published in Harold Smedley's 1943 book *Fly Patterns and Their Origins*, but Winnie tied, fished, and sold it years before that.

Hopper fishing is especially effective in late summer when (i) naturals are abundant, (ii) the wind is brisk, and (iii) air temperatures are above ~70°F. Weather strongly influences grasshopper reproduction and survival, and their numbers vary greatly from year to year. In a hopper-poor year, you might do better with beetle and ant patterns, as they are always abundant in late summer. Wind is your friend when hopper fishing. Grassy banks on the leeward side (facing away from the wind) of meadow streams serve up the most hoppers instream, and that's a good place to concentrate. Air temperatures strongly influence grasshopper activity. Hoppers are lethargic on cool mornings, become active as temperatures approach 70°F, and stay active until the cool of the evening. Trout, on the other hand, are lethargic when water temperatures rise above ~70°F. Thus, hopper fishing is best when the air is warm or hot, but the water is not.

Cast your hoppers near or under streamside cover such as overhanging grasses, bushes, and trees. Pause a moment, then give the fly a little twitch. Dapping can be effective but be extra stealthy; touch the hopper seductively up and down on the surface. Rises are often explosive, so be ready. Trout take lots of grasshoppers underwater, so don't overlook using a sunken hopper pattern.

No matter how you fish it, Art Winnie's Michigan Hopper is excellent for those late summer and fall days when nothing larger than midges are on the wing. Most hopper flies today are tied of brightly colored foam and rubber legs. Are such patterns any more or less effective than Art Winnie's fur and feather original? You'll have to decide that for yourself. But remember, foam hoppers are gobs of petroleum, but Winnie's Michigan Hopper is a true "work of Art".

© Rusty Dunn, 2024

----- Michigan Hopper / Joe's Hopper -----

Most Wisconsin grasshoppers are light to medium brown with yellow, olive, or green bodies.

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- Hook:** Dry fly, 2X-long, #6-12
Thread: Yellow or olive
Tail: Scarlet red rooster hackle fibers
Body: Yellow, olive, or green dubbing, chenille, or wool.
Rib: Brown hackle, clipped short and palmered through the body
Wings: Slips of mottled turkey quill, one on each side of the body, tips pointing upward
Hackle: Brown and grizzly mixed (or cree) rooster hackle, tied as a bushy collar
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Stay Connected



Know what's happening by connecting to our [Chapter Calendar](#)!



[SWTU's Instagram account](#) is a great place for interesting news, facts and photos.



Check out [Southern Wisconsin Trout Unlimited on Facebook](#) to connect to activities, discussions and friends. (You should be able to view the page without a Facebook account.)

If you know of a member not receiving emails from SWTU, please have them email madkasel@gmail.com

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