

Newscasts

February 2025 serving the Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited



A Winter Remedy

Mat Wagner heads a fishy, friendly and warm chapter gathering on February 11, 2025

Tired of winter? Contemplating a new adventure? Eager for reports and photos of a spectacular freshwater gamefish? SWTU is at your service!

Mat Wagner of the Driftless Angler will speak at our February 11 gathering. Mat led an expedition in search of South America's legendary golden dorado just a few weeks ago and has been chasing them for almost 8 years. Think of a fish that lives in big marshes and rivers and is about as big as a chinook salmon. They are toothier and meaner than chinook with a burnished golden color. Mat will share new stories, the latest info, and photos of the fish and fun.

Many of us are lucky to know Mat and Geri Meyer as the owners of the Driftless Angler. The shop is a superb source of gear and information. Mat and Geri are excellent guides on their home waters and some other great guides work out of the shop. They are ardent conservationists and dedicated to teaching folks the techniques and ethics of fishing the Driftless.



We gather, as always, at Schwoeglers on Grand Canyon Drive on Madison's West Side. Dinner and drinks will be available starting at 5:30 with Mat's presentation after some brief updates at 7.

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

So why are we using "gathering" instead of "meeting" in the notice above? Because the authors of this newsletter are vegan.

Not really. The Board wonders if "meeting" creates the wrong impression of our monthly assembly. Meeting might indicate we conduct a lot of business and that it's basically the same every month.

We try to limit business to a maximum of 15 minutes before the presentation and most of that are brief announcements of upcoming events or opportunities. We try to vary the presentations to include trout conservation and fishing. We've tried to include more variety this spring. "Gathering," we hope, better conveys what we're up to on the second Tuesday of every month.

If you think this was a good or dumb idea or, more importantly, have ideas to improve our gatherings, meetings, and assemblies, keep an eye out for the SWTU survey of our members, available in the next 4-6 weeks. We want to know what you think SWTU is doing well and how we can improve.

Thanks,

SWTU Board

A New Trout Stream in Dane County: The Yahara River!!!!????

By Topf Wells

Yes and SWTU hopes to help.

Dan Oele and Mitch Trow of the DNR surveyed the upper Yahara in and around Deforest about two years ago and found wild brown trout in enough numbers and age classes to classify this section of stream as a Class 2 trout stream. They noted that while the stream is not full of trout, it does support them in fishable numbers.

For anyone who needs some good and unexpected news about local trout streams, this is it. I ran into John Lyons the other day, DNR and UW fish researcher extraordinaire; when he surveyed that part of the Yahara in the 90s he did not find a trace of trout. He was on the river, searching for native species of small fish in the same time span as Dan, Mitch and their crew. Brown trout kept getting in the way of his search for other fish.

And the prospects for the Yahara brown trout and anglers are dramatically improving.

The Village of Deforest has acquired about 5 miles of stream frontage on the Yahara. They have launched a project to reduce sedimentation, improve habitat, and welcome anglers on several stretches of that stream.

SWTU was invited to a meeting of Village officials, their consulting firm, DNR staff from fisheries and water resources management, and the Dane County stream restoration specialist for suggestions for improving and supporting the plan.

The consultants, biologists and engineers, had surveyed every foot of the stream in public ownership and have targeted the sites with the most problems and opportunities. The Village has invested time and funds and raised several hundred thousand dollars in grants. They need more funds and can use volunteers to work on some sites where heavy equipment cannot be used.

We hope to schedule some work days on those sites in the fall and to assist the Village with some funds.

My response to this meeting: *Pinch me, I'm dreaming*. The Village's interest in a comprehensive improvement to the health and public enjoyment of the creek, the expertise and thoroughness of their consultants' work, and the willingness of the DNR and County staff to help were, to use a corny phrase, heart warming.

How did the Yahara improve so dramatically? Where did the trout come from? My speculation is that the combination of improved farm practices, better control of urban runoff, and increased baseflow of the past 25 years improved water quality and preserved enough habitat for trout to survive. While the Yahara had not been stocked with trout, Token Creek, part of the Upper Yahara watershed, has been stocked and has had some wild brown trout for years. Rumors of trout in this part of the Yahara have circulated for some years.

Among the lessons to be taken to heart are the value of DNR surveys and assessments and the resilience of our local streams. We can't care for or even enjoy what we don't know is there. And many of our streams will respond to more protection and better care.

We'll keep you posted on the progress in improving the Yahara River as Dane County's newest trout stream. The day is coming when you'll be able to polish off a lemon meringue pie at Deforest's Norske Nook and work off the calories fishing for wild brown trout a block or two away.

2025 Tentative Spring Workday Sites

By Jim Hess, Conservation Chair

Still working on dates and sites, but here is an update as of 2.02.25

The first workday will be April 5 and the last one on June 7. April 26 will be at Conley Lewis. Trying to avoid Easter weekend, Sat. April 19, and Memorial Day weekend (May 24).

Here are the locations so far:

Earth Day Event - April 22 or a workday on Saturday, April 19th. Plant 26 swamp white oak trees – 16 on Gordon Creek upstream from the bridge on Cty Rd A. This is a DNR easement and Justin Haglund has made contact with landowner, who is very excited about it and will work off the calories fishing for wild brown trout a block or two away from the trees. The trees will be about 6-foot tall. The DNR will pre-drill the holes. We will also plant 10 trees on Kittleson Creek easements along Cty Rd H. Replacing dead trees that we previously planted. Will need to dig these holes. This is being funded by the Community Foundation of Southern Wisconsin. Topf and I applied for the grant.

- **2 work days will be at Kittleson Creek** along Cty Rd H, just south of the intersection of Cty Rd A and H. Removing willows at the first site and clearing a large stand of honeysuckles downstream. Dane County is working with us on these locations.
- **May ? - Big Spring tree planting.** Not sure of the date as it needs to follow a DNR burn. This will be a joint workday with the Nohr Chapter, led by Justin and his crew. They will predrill the holes and provide the fencing and t-posts.
- **April 26, Conley Lewis** – again this is a joint workday with the Nohr Chapter removing large box elders. Same location as last fall. Working with Justin Haglund and his crew.
- **Duerst property (7309 Riverside Rd) on the Sugar River.** The county recently purchased this 625-acre property. We are applying for a Stihl grant through TUDARE to remove large box elders and honeysuckles that are encroaching the river. Have met with Sara Strassman and her TUDARE staff. Our workday will be near the bridge on Riverside Road, clearing out honeysuckles and smaller box elders to gain access to the river.

Watch Newscasts for more details and locked-in event logistics as we get closer to spring.

Fly Tying Classes Spin Up Good Flies and Fun

A few photos of students hard at work courtesy **Henry Nehls-Lowe**, chapter Secretary and longtime fly tying class instructor. [See larger and more photos here on swtu.org](http://swtu.org).



Awards and Honors at State Council Banquet

It was another wonderful event that we're proud to recap!

First, Steve Born was acknowledged for all his work with the Council and being the MC at the Banquet. He stepped down during Covid and didn't get a chance to be recognized.

Andy Morton and Michael Williamson received the Reel Partner Award for their leadership and many hours of work in creating the first Wisconsin Neonicotinoid Forum. Below are some pics, including their spouses Karon Morton and Mary Ann Doll.

Justin Haglund received the Hunt-Vetrano Award, a well rec'd award. We are lucky to have him as our Fish Biologist and look forward to working with him in the future.

And last but very much not least, Dick Berge, a longtime member of our chapter, received the Lifetime Achievement Award.

SWTU and the Nohr Chapter nominated Justin and we strongly supported the awards to Andy, Michael and Dick and provided supporting information for all three. Justin will help to organize and attend two of our Spring work days as he often does.

Photos courtesy Jim Hess. [Find more photos in the article on swtu.org.](#)



Andy Mortonson and Michael Williamson holding their awards with wives Karon Mortonson and Mary Ann Doll.



Justin Haglund (black vest) with his well-earned award.



Registration Open for the 2025 Women's Fly Fishing Clinics

Please register now or share this with someone who may be interested. These fill up and we want our members to have an opportunity to take part in these groundbreaking clinics. (Check out the article just below and [this one from October](#) about this year's successful clinics.)

There are two types of clinics detailed below with links and QR codes for more information. Both are set in Westby, WI (near Viroqua, in Wisconsin's Driftless Area) and the cost is \$355 until April 1, 2025, and \$375 after that.

Basics Clinic By Women For Women: June 13-15, 2025

Learn how to choose proper equipment, tie knots, cast, read water, select the proper fly and time on the water. You will learn new tactics, regardless of your level of ability. Equipment available for use.

Register at: <https://bit.ly/WWFFCBasics>



On the Water Skills Clinic – Intermediate: June 11-13, 2025

Personalized instruction streamside. Tune up workshops by women instructors to refresh skills in casting, matching the hatch & reading the water. Fish WI finest trout streams with experienced anglers.

Register at: <https://bit.ly/WOWSci>



[This flyer](#) has info on both events, and you can also learn more [here on swtu.org](http://www.swt.org).

Trip testimonials:

- [I attended the Wisconsin Women's "On the Water" Fly Fishing Clinic's ... it was FANTASTIC!](#)
- [The accidental River Buddy](#)

Wisconsin Trout Unlimited 2025 Youth Fishing Camp

As noted in the latest issue of *Wisconsin Trout*, registration opens February 1 for the annual WI TU Youth Camp, which will be held August 14-17 this year. The purpose of the camp is to provide the student with an introductory education of as many things possible related to trout fishing, sportsmanship, and conservation issue.

Each Wisconsin Trout Unlimited chapter can sponsor one applicant to the camp. If some chapters can't find an applicant, other chapters can sponsor a second applicant if space is available. Contact Steve Musser (contact info at the end of this newsletter) if you know of a youth between 12-16 who is interested.

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.)

Vets on the Fly Activities

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](#).

Welcome New Members

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

Brad Harkins	David Kruse
Mike Swita	Rodney Welch
Erick Cisneros	Reed Hall
Gordon Priegel	John Swain
Joshua Huddleston	John Mansavage

We are honored to have you among us. Please join our next meeting 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

No author has captured the artistry and allure of fishing with nymphs better than the great G.E.M. Skues:

"The indications which tell your dry-fly angler when to strike are clear and unmistakable, but those which bid a wet-fly man raise his rod point and draw in the steel are frequently so subtle, so evanescent and impalpable to the senses, that when the bending rod assures him that he has divined aright, he feels an ecstasy as though he had performed a miracle each time." (Minor Tactics of the Chalk Stream, 1910)

Many fly fishers spend their entire angling lives presenting flies on or near the surface. Dedicated nymph anglers, however, regularly prowl the inky depths where trout spend their leisure time. If you've not probed the hidden recesses of your favorite streams during non-hatch periods, you're missing out on the many miracles that Skues describes.

Oregonian Ernest "Polly" Rosborough (1902-1997) is one of history's finest nymph fishermen. He was a self-taught wizard of fur and feather, one who developed effective flies from scratch by trial and error. He tied flies, took them fishing, altered their design, and fished them again ... over and over until satisfied. With time, he learned that effective flies need not be detailed replicas of insect appearance, but rather impressionistic "suggestions" of size, profile, and underwater behavior. Imitating the underwater movements of insect gills, legs, wings, etc. is central to Rosborough's designs, which he accomplished with the quivering motions of soft hair and fur when wet. Rosborough was truly one of the great fly-tying innovators of the 20th century.

Rosborough spent a lifetime studying insects of his home waters in southern Oregon, where he developed

flies to match local species and taught others what he learned. His book *Tying and Fishing the Fuzzy Nymphs* (1965, 1978) summarize a lifetime of experiences. It is an angling classic and a landmark publication of the dark arts. Rosborough's "fuzzy nymphs" seem gangly and disheveled compared to their more manicured relatives, but the patterns evolved because trout responded well, not because they fit a classic mold or prevailing opinions of fly design.

What makes a nymph fuzzy? Rosborough tied simple impressionistic flies that resemble classes of insects by their suggestive, but not entirely imitative, form. He believed that fly materials should be feathery soft, with sodden fur fibers creating movement and an indistinct silhouette. The flies sometimes look like skewered roadkill but put them in moving water and they spring to life. The fibers pulse and breath with every little vagary of current, yielding a fuzzy haze that appears alive from any angle.

Rosborough's patterns are big, bushy, and durable. His midge imitations were tied on #14 hooks (!), and his fuzzy nymphs on #4 to #12 2X- or 3X-long heavy-wire hooks. Big flies ... big fish! Copious amounts of cement and at least five half-hitches went into every fly. You might wear out your quarry, but you won't wear out a Polly Rosborough nymph!

Most of Rosborough's fuzzy nymphs are keyed to specific hatches, but the Casual Dress, Muskrat Nymph, and Fledermouse are generic attractors that catch fish anytime anywhere, from the chalk streams of England to the turbulent coastal waters of Oregon. The Casual Dress is an all-purpose nymph for mid-depths and below. Rosborough described it as "*looking like a nice gob of food with the hazy outline of several insects in various forms*". Being a nymph for deeper water, weight added to the leader can help with presentation. Remember, the difference between a good nymph and a great nymph can be a couple of split shot.

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----- Casual Dress -----

Spin a tight dubbing rope on tying thread and then catch the rope in a dubbing loop. Twist tightly and wrap the body, which should show a distinct segmentation. Then, roughen the surface to create a fuzzy haze. All of Rosborough's fuzzy nymphs are unweighted and have a prominent "neck" and head behind the hook eye.

Hook: 2X-long nymph hook; #4-#16

Thread: Black, 8/0 or 6/0

Tail: Muskrat guard hairs mixed with a bit of underfur

Body: Muskrat underfur, dubbed tightly and then twisted in a dubbing loop

Collar: Muskrat fur

Head: Black ostrich herl



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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