

TU Western Driftless Hotline

Editorial by Carl Berberich

Upcoming Driftless Symposium

You can register for the online 2024 Driftless Symposium which will be on Monday and Tuesday March 11 and 12. Each day presentations will begin at 9:00 AM central time and conclude no later than 1:05. Please note the registration process refers to "tickets", but the registration is free.

March 11 Day 1 Connect with and learn from the scientists and conservationists working in this region's incredible rivers - Mon, Mar 11, 2024 - Get tickets online.

March 12 Day 2 Connect with and learn from the scientists and conservationists working in this region's incredible rivers - Tue, Mar 12, 2024 - Get tickets online.

Root River Rod Co Video

Lance Prado of the Root River Rod Co in Lanesboro, MN has got a great Fishing video on his YouTube channel. It is on fly fishing a streamer in February. The video is called 'A Driftless Trout Stream #2'

You can find it here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJOzR3_ZIPE

Lance shows some great techniques whether he's fishing across the stream on a riffle, or if he's fishing the

streamer down and across the riffle.

This video is a great teaching tool showing multiple strategies. If you're not familiar with fishing streamers you need to watch this video and learn some techniques.



Hiawatha TU February Members Meeting

By John Weiss, HTU Board member

Hiawatha Trout Unlimited had a rather busy meeting at 125 Live Feb. 6, with about 20 people in attendance and seven more online.

It began with some announcements:

- HTU and Win-Cres are looking to have another rod raffle, this time a 2-weight bamboo donated by a Win-Cres man who has died. We might add another rod and maybe a guided trip as part of the raffle.
- Our next meetings will be March 4, guide Mike Toft will explain Euro nymphing; April 1, a DNR fisheries official and we hope someone from MPCA about fishing and monitoring; and May 6, Monta Hayner talking about women in fishing.
- Larry Haugen, who has coordinated the roadside cleanup along U.S. 52 south of Chatfield each spring is still looking for someone to take over the job he's been doing for about 30 years.
- John Weiss has some announcements not made at the meeting. We will again have a HTU table at the outdoors expo April 13 in Chatfield where we can talk about flytying, stream monitoring and casting. We did it last year too. And we will be at Preston Trout Days from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. May 18 to demonstrate casting. We'll be near the parking lot for the recreation trail a few hundred yards from the Root River. We will need volunteers for both events.

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- Now, on to the speakers.
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- Lance Prado from Root River Rod Co. in Lanesboro explained why people choose to hire a guide and also what to expect. He gave several reasons why people hire a guide:
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- 1) Because they are new to the sport and need someone to help them. They can use a driftboat or go on foot, but most prefer driftboats. People want to get a better view of the sport before investing in the gear.



- 2) Learn more about the fish and how they behave.
- 3) Make memories for their families.
- 4) Some have some goals, such as catching a personal best.
- 5) Fish for new species, such as carp, smallmouths; those being guided learn more about the fish and gear needed to take those fish.
- 6) Learn more about where and how to access land for the fishing because guides know many of the best places to fish.

Some prefer walking because it gives more time with nature but others want driftboats because they see more new water or because they have disabilities and can't walk as much.

Where to find a guide? That can be more complicated because Minnesota has no system for testing or certifying guides. Look on Google, Facebook and other online sources, ask friends or go to bait shops, such as his.

He mainly has one guide for two anglers but at times, will take three; he has half and full days and offers casting lessons.

The toughest customers are those who have been fishing for many years and think they know everything. The best are new to fishing, usually women who listen better.

Greg Goodnow continued his shorter talks, this time on something few people think about - what should you keep in your car at all times. Here are some of his favorites that he puts in a backpack: sunglasses because you can lose them, a heavy wire cutter for cutting off hooks or barbed wire, 2-way radios to keep in contact when fishing, extra gloves, electricians tape or duct tape, first-aid kit and hand warmers, benadryl, bug dope, hand sanitizer and water to rinse a wound.



Paul Krolak showed what's needed to begin flytying: a good vise though you

can do it without them but it's hard, bobbins to hold thread, scissors, a sharp stabby thing, whip finisher, head cement and a magnet. Or you can buy a kit with everything in it.



Win-Cres Happenings

By Mark Reisetter Win-Cres Board member

As a part of Win-Cres' community outreach, Win-Cres will work with Scouts at Gamehaven Scout Camp on April 27. Win-Cres will also continue to work with the Goodhue Fishing Club. The two-part Goodhue events will be held April 6 at Goodhue Schools and April 26 at Rushford, MN. For both groups of students; Win-Cres will provide lessons on fly tying, casting, stream craft safety, and other information regarding trout fishing.

Dusty Hoffman coordinated two work sessions to remove barbed wire fencing along a half-mile stretch of Little Pickwick Creek that were well attended.

The plaque honoring Win-Cres' past president Joe Lepley has been reviewed and accepted by the Win-Cres Board. The city of Winona will attach the plaque to the cement slab beside the bench in Lake Park.

MNTU has implemented an annual Volunteer Award Program entitled "Distinguished Service Award." Each TU chapter is to submit one name to MNTU Chair Brent Notbohm, and Win-Cres has done that.

Neal Mundahl reported on his first Zoom meeting with the MNTU Advocacy Council.

MNTU has also established a statewide Habitat Committee. Dave Shaffer has volunteered to be on this committee.

Hiawatha and Win-Cres will be putting on a statewide raffle for a 2wt. bamboo fly rod made by Harry Boyd. Funds generated by the raffle will be split evenly between the two chapters and will be dedicated to the support of Education.

Thank you to Lanesboro's MDNR Assistant Fisheries Supervisor, Vaughn Snook, for his very informative annual fisheries update at our January 24 general meeting. Programs for future membership meetings include February 28, featuring Klaus Friedli talking about his two Alaskan fisheries research trips; and March 27 with the presenter TBD.

These meetings will be held at Sobieski Lodge, East 7 th St., Winona. Social hour is at 6:00 p.m. and presentations at 7:00 p.m. The public is welcome and encouraged to attend.

TCTU February News

By Bob Luck, President of TCTU

Twin Cities Trout Unlimited has a group of volunteers known as the Streamkeepers. Their mission is to serve as stewards for area streams by being the "eyes and ears" to help protect and restore cold-water streams. They do this through regular stream walks, water chemistry and temperature monitoring, trash pickups and regular communication. Below is a recent report from Streamkeepers Coordinator and TCTU Board Member Jim Sauter. Please contact Jim at jim.sauter@twincitiestu.org if you are interested in learning more about the Streamkeepers.

There is only one way to describe the winter of 2023-24 so far- WEIRD. According to some local meteorologists, this is not a "real" Minnesota winter. This is going down as the mildest winter on record. The big question will be how this warm weather and lack of moisture carries over to the summer months and how it impacts streams and trout.

This past week I decided to visit some local streams during the early catch and release season. The temperatures were in the mid- 50-degree range, and I recorded stream temperatures ranging from the 39 to 48-degrees. There was very little snow or ice on the streams. I noticed some other brave souls out trout fishing. One gentleman reported catching some a couple brookies using Copper Johns. Many people fishing reported having mixed success with a few fish being caught.

During the outing I noticed a pair of Mallard ducks, a Kingfisher, and three deer right next to a deer stand. There were also occasional sightings of rising trout in some spots. This Kingfisher must have forgotten to migrate this year or was back early to find some nesting territory.

I decided to break out my Izaak Walton League Salt strips to take NaCl. This was the first time I have tested for salt, and the process was straight forward. First you rinse a small cup 5 times, and then place about one inch of stream water in the cup. Place the Quantab strip in the cup making sure the strip is not emersed more than halfway and wait about ten minutes for the bar on the top of the strip to turn from orange to blue or black. Then take a picture of the strip and get a longitude and latitude reading.

After returning home, I entered the data on the Clean Water Hub sponsored by the Izaak Walton League.

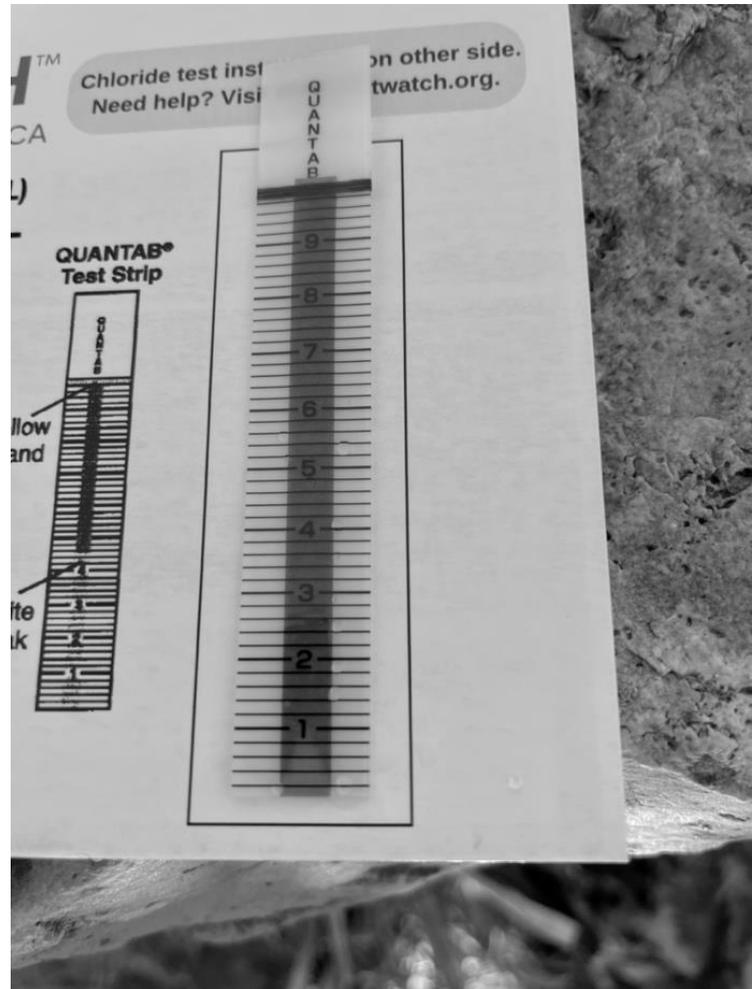
Please note that you may also request these free strips at this site:

<https://www.iwla.org/water/stream-monitoring/salt-watch>

Even though there has not been a lot of salt applied to area roads, there is some value in getting baseline data. The good news was that my readings were less than 1.4 Quantab units which is less than 30 parts per million. There was no salt issue in the streams.

Although the plows have not been very busy salting roads this year, I did notice some trucks out salting the roads earlier in the day due to the fog freezing effect.

There also seems to be a movement with the Department of Transportation to use brine which has a salt content of less than 25% to reduce the amount of salt used each year. Granular salt is still used but to a lesser extent depending on the road conditions. According to the DOT website, they apply about 445,00 tons of salt in a typical year to keep our roads safer. So far this winter that number is probably much less than that.



Iowa Driftless Chapter

By Mike Rogers, President



Next Chapter meeting will be **Thursday, March 7th, 7pm @ T-Bock's Sports Bar and Grill in Decorah, IA.** The guest speaker will be *Louis Mauldin from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.* Louis will speak about the USFWS stream restoration program and funding coming available in the near future to improve fish passage on streams.

Driftless Chapter's Annual Fundraiser



Flyfishing Women of Minnesota Update

By Marissa Merriman, Vice Chair FFWNMN

Fly Fishing Women of Minnesota (FFWMN) is hosting the Great Waters Expo Friday Night Social. Join us March 15th, 6:30-9pm, for a cash bar, raffle, silent auction, giveaways and more! Tickets are \$5 and can be purchased online at <http://greatwatersflyexpo.com> or at the door. All online ticket sales will be entered into a special prize drawing. Proceeds from this event help support the women's fly fishing community through beginner clinics, mentorship, fly-tying and entomology clinics, and organized fishing outings.

To learn more about FFWMN, and to become a member, visit our website at <https://flyfishingwomenmn.com/>. And be sure to stop by our booth at the Expo!

February Fishing Thoughts

By Jason Rieke



A SE MN stream during the late January cold snap



The reward of cold fingers and streamer

This winter has been funky. The classic driftless scenes of snow-covered banks and piercing blue/green water have seemingly been the exception rather than the rule this winter. We did get one solid cold snap towards the end of January though. I was able to fish for a few hours of it, and unlike most people, I was thankful for the time to be outside during the deep freeze. To me, the brutality of the natural world during these sub zero cold snaps is something to experience (a few hours is usually enough). Everything is much more intense out there; the stillness, the solitude, the frozen fingers, and the feeling of accomplishment when things work out. Even during the coldest of days there is still flowing water and trout eating somewhere in the driftless. It's a beautiful thing.

For the most part however, this winter has been warm and the scenes have been more brown than white. There is still a lot of beauty to it, and besides the low water, I don't think that the trout have been bothered much by it. One positive thing about our mild winter has been the ample amount of opportunities for anglers who like to fish when the air temps are on the positive side of freezing. This has made taking friends and family out much easier, and I have tried to take advantage of the opportunities. Early in February I took my wife Macy out fishing for the first time of the year. She was pumped to get out on the water, and to our excitement, she caught a trout on her first cast. It was quite a pretty one! A couple of weeks later I met up with my dad Al on a weekday after work and we fished a section of the root river. The fishing wasn't much to write home about but the quality time with my dad I won't soon forget.



Macy's first trout of 2024



My dad Al making a drift as the sun fades

Last weekend my friend Jack and I spent a couple of hours fishing one of our favorite creeks near our old stomping grounds of Winona. We had an absolute blast picking apart the small creek and enticing aggressive fish to chase and eat streamers. I often forget how much I enjoy fishing the little creeks in the deep valleys close to the Mississippi. Unlike the smaller valleys further west in the Minnesota driftless that I tend to frequent more due to proximity to home, these bigger valleys seem mountainous in comparison. Fishing here reminds me of what the Psalmist wrote in Psalm 23:2-3 “... he leads me beside peaceful streams, he refreshes my soul.”

Beyond, and more importantly than just having fun, spending an afternoon walking along a trout stream does indeed refresh our souls and bonds us closer with those we are with. I am thankful for the trips this past month and the quality time that I have been able to spend out in God’s creation with family and friends.



Jack with a winter beauty



A plunge pool dweller fooled by a small streamer

Fly of The Month:

By Lance Prado, HTU Board member



This is the Samurai Streamer developed in house at Root River Rod co fly shop. This is a great streamer pattern that can be tied in all of your favorite colors. The Samurai Streamer is a versatile fly that works well for catching big Trout as well as Bass and Pike. Watch until the end because that is where the magic happens. All materials are available at Root River Rod Co.

Samurai Streamer recipe:

Thread: Veevus 100d Thread

Hook: Gamugatsu B10s Hooks size 4 and 2

Olive marabou

Krystal flash

Copper wire

Olive flash chenille

Intruder wire

3d beads

Dumbbell eyes

Olive deer hair

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2Y14ftGJ88>

Monthly Fishing Reports

Lanesboro MN: [Root River Rod Co](#)

Water is very low and very clear but the fish still seem to be active during the day. We have been seeing a lot of midge activity afternoon. Also black winter stoneflies have been out and fish are taking them as a nymph pretty well. There have been a few BWO's spotted this week so that means they should start coming off heavy in the next week or two.

Root River Rod Co is doing a giveaway starting March 1st. We will be giving away a brand new Sage Sonic 6wt. The SONIC family of rods provides uncompromised versatility, with a balance of power and feel. Delightfully crisp and lightweight, the SONIC has a level of performance that stands out from the crowd with a fast action taper designed to cover a wide range of fishing applications from dry fly, streamers, to nymphing - floating lines to sinking. This is Free for

anyone! All you will have to do is go to www.rootriverrodco.com and subscribe to our email list. Winner will be chosen from one of our email subscribers.

Recommended Flies:

Zebra Midge 18-20

Pheasant Tail 16-20

Copper John 16-20

Brassi 18-20

Orange Scud 14-18

Decorah IA: [Bear Creek Anglers](#)

Fishing has been solid, and the snow melt off seemed to help the streams a little, but more water is definitely needed. On warm days, look for midge and even BWO hatches.

For lower water conditions, throwing smaller flies or downsizing in beadhead weight has been a good option to avoid snagging bottom before hitting your pockets.

Nymphs--fishing pink squirrels (size 14-16), prince nymph (size 16-18), pheasant tail (size 16-18) have been effective. On warmer days, bites in the riffles are more effective, and go deep on colder days in the slower deep pockets.

Soft Hackle--on warmer days, fishing soft hackles and emergers has been effective, especially when paired with a good attractor fly.

Streamers--fishing streamers any day is a good bet, and especially on slower and colder days when fish might not be responsive to nymphs. Fishing small leech patterns such as Mayer's Mini Leech in size 12-16 is a good bet.

Dry Flies--Look for small midge patterns, BWO patterns, and even Adam's in sizes 16-20.

Upcoming Events Schedule:

TCTU Chapter Meeting: February 26 at 7 pm at the Wild Boar Bar & Grill. Kasey Yallaly of the Wisconsin DNR will explain work on one of Western Wisconsin's most beautiful streams.

Win-Cres Chapter Meeting: General meeting dates will be February 28. Klaus Friedli. 6pm at Sobieski Lodge

Hiawatha TU Members Meeting: Monday, March 4, 7pm 125Live - Chapter Meeting. Mike Toft on Euro nymphing

Driftless Symposium: March 11-12 Registration info on page 1

MNTU's Great Waters Expo: - March 15-17, Hamline University, St Paul

Win-Cres Chapter Meeting: General meeting dates will be March 27, 2024.

Hiawatha TU Members Meeting: Monday, April 1, 7pm 125Live - Chapter Meeting. Brian Nerbonne, MNDR

Hiawatha TU Members Meeting: Monday, May 6, 7pm 125Live - Chapter Meeting. Monta Hayner

Resources:

[SE Stream Conditions](#) (MN DNR)
[State Map Trout Streams](#) (MN DNR)
[Southeast Streams](#) (MN DNR)
[AMA](#) (MN DNR Aquatic Management Areas)
[WMA](#) (MN DNR Wildlife Management Areas)
[SNA](#) (MN DNR Scientific and Natural Areas)
[State Forest](#) (MN lands)
[Driftless Hatch Chart](#) (Driftless Region)
[MN DNR Fish Kills Reporting](#) (or call 651-649-5451 or 800-422-0798)
[Trout-In-the-Classroom Map](#) (School Locations in MN)
[Wisconsin DNR Trout Streams](#)
[Iowa DNR Driftless Trout Stream Maps](#)
[IA WMA](#) (IA DNR Wildlife Management Areas)
[HTU's Iowa Driftless Stream Map](#)
HTU Website: <https://hiawatha-tu.org>
TCTU Website: <https://www.twincitiestu.org/>
TCTU Events: <https://www.twincitiestu.org/events.html>
[2023 MN DNR Driftless Stream Projects Map](#)

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