



TU Western Driftless

Hotline

Editorial by Carl Berberich

Volunteer Activities

Winter weather can be a disappointing feature when one would like to go out and fish in our streams. With so many days that are below zero, it makes it very difficult. However, there are other things we can do. Whereas the project work on Bullard Creek (which is a brook trout stream in the SE), had to be pushed back into March because of bad weather. It sounds like from Robert Luck (TCTU president) that we no longer need any more volunteers to sign up. This is a TCTU and HTU chapter project. It looks like there is only so much equipment, I'm guessing, which is why they don't need any more volunteers to help. They planned on 15 volunteers. The project is about cutting, pulling and hauling old fence from around the AMA area to help facilitate the planting of native vegetation. However, there will be an additional future project of pulling the fence posts out, which will happen later.



Bullard Creek on Flower Valley Rd

There is another volunteer project which is the Goodhue Trout Fishing outings which will be held on March 29 and April 21. The March 29 date will be held at Goodhue High School from 9-Noon and will be about fly tying and also fly castings lessons for students. The second day's activity will be on Monday, April 21 (this a no school day for Goodhue students). This will be fishing on Rush Creek in Rushford and will be held from 8:30-Noon. Students will have the opportunity to go stream trout fishing at the city park there. If you are available for either or both of these dates, please contact Dusty Hoffman at 507-459-9851.

I have helped out on the Goodhue event a number of times. It was fun!

Hiawatha TU February Meeting

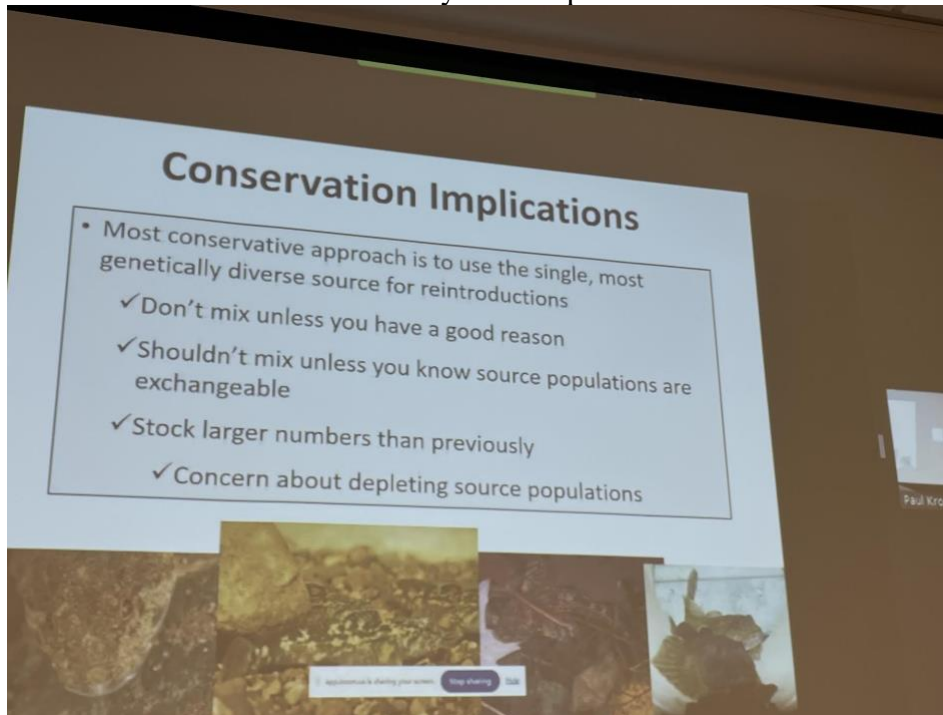
By John Weiss, HTU Board member

DOUG DIETERMAN TALK FEB. 3, live at 125Live in Rochester

About two dozen anglers heard Doug Dieterman, a fisheries researcher for the MNDNR in Lake City, talk about sculpins. They are a reclusive, seldom seen fish that once probably lived in all our trout streams but pollution etc. wiped them out of many streams. They are kind of funny looking and might grow to 7 inches at best, but they are important because:

1. they are incredibly pollution sensitive so having them in a stream is a solid indication it's in very good shape. It's right up there with brook trout as bioindicators.
2. They can be an important food fish for trout.

They are becoming more important now because about 40 years ago, many trout streams had many warmer-water fish such as minnows. Now, with climate change, we're getting more precipitation and therefore, springs are pumping out more cold water so many of the warm-water fish, important as trout food, are gone. That leaves sculpins as one of the best food fish. But not all streams have them because they were wiped out.



Also, we don't know which sculpin species were seen in surveys many decades ago because the slimy and the mottled look much alike. They usually have different numbers of rays on one particular fin but that's not a perfect system either, he said. Generally, slimy sculpins live in cleaner water. This, incidentally, is on the far south of their range; they go well

up into the Arctic Circle. Even with the two species in one stream, they usually don't mix.

In the 1970s and 1980s, anglers were calling on the DNR to better establish brown trout throughout the region and they are now all over. Then anglers wanted bigger browns, but that only happens in certain streams. It was hard to figure out exploitation of food so the DNR looked at the size of the fish as an indicator.

About 20 years ago, the DNR did a lot of sampling and found there were three streams with good sculpin numbers. They were from Beaver in Whitewater, Cold Spring and Garvin. Nine streams received about 50 sculpins from each stream, and it turns out, the Beaver ones did much better. Some sculpins have parents from two streams, but they didn't grow as well.

But research also found some streams had young from only a few parents so there is fear that there could be a genetic bottleneck.

That is how things stood until some new researchers looked at the work and wondered how the sculpins are doing considering streams are getting colder in general. If a good stream didn't have sculpins, maybe it's time to stock them because they are not migratory (they might live their whole life in an area no bigger than a picnic table). But there are still questions such as do sculpins and young trout compete for the same food and do sculpins eat trout eggs?

Some conservation implications are that you shouldn't mix them without a good reason and know source populations are interchangeable and stock more sculpins. There are also concerns about depleting source populations.

Right now, the DNR is still working on figuring out where to stock and the best way as well as distribution of the two species.

Dieterman also got into another subject about what trout are really eating. The higher up the trophic level their food is, the better it is for growth. As it turns out, sculpins are a really energy-rich source of food so we could get bigger trout. Research has shown that trout are eating many snails and scuds. Snails are energy rich.

TCTU February News

By Bob Luck, President of TCTU

For the next couple of weeks, Twin Cities TU is going all-in on Southeast Minnesota. On February 24th, our chapter meeting will feature Lance Prado of the Root River Rod Company, talking about "Spring Hatches in the Southeast, and How to Fish Them". If you happen to be in the Twin Cities, you can attend in person, but if not, attend by Zoom. Signup link is [here](#).

On March 8, we will be conducting a collaborative habitat event with the Hiawatha Chapter near the Bullard Creek AMA. Bullard Creek is a great brook trout stream that we can make even better. Under the direction of 2 friends of coldwater resources, Kevin Reister (the landowner) & Dusty Hoffman (MN DNR) we will be cutting, pulling and hauling old fence from around the AMA to help facilitate the planting of native vegetation. We got an enthusiastic response from volunteers and have already filled out all 15 volunteer slots. But we will be doing more work on Bullard Creek, including fence post pulling. If you are interested in doing future work on Bullard Creek, send an email to habitat@twincitiestu.org.

Win-Cres Happenings

By Mark Reisetter Win-Cres Board member, Tom Stevens Secretary

John Weaver, Winona Middle School Science teacher, has invited Win-Cres members to assist his students on February 12, 19, and 26 at 3:30-5:00 p.m. for fly tying sessions in his classroom.

This year's Goodhue Trout Fishing outings will be March 29 and April 21. The March 29 date will be held at Goodhue High School from 9-Noon, there will fly tying and fly castings lessons. The second day's activity will be Monday, April 21 (this a no school day for Goodhue students). This "Fishing in Rushford" will be held from 8:30-Noon. Students will have the opportunity to go stream trout fishing. If you are available for either or both of these dates, please contact Dusty Hoffman at 507-459-9851.

President Shepard has been informed that Joe Lepley's sister and her husband will attend the Great Water's Fly Fishing Expo on March 22 at Hamline University to accept Joe's Distinguished Service Award from MNTU in honor of Joe's many years of service and philanthropic support of trout fishing and conservation initiatives.

The February 26 general meeting will be an opportunity to select and vote on Win-Cres Officers and Board of Directors for 2025. A slate of officers and board members will be presented to the Win-Cres members for their consideration.

The February 26 meeting will feature Carl Haensel speaking about fishing for Lake Superior Steelhead!

At the March 26 meeting, Dave Knoll will talk about trout fishing using a Tenkara rod. All of these meetings will be held at Sobieski Lodge, social hour at 6:00 p.m. with a meal provided, and the presentation at 7:00 p.m. The public is welcome and encouraged to attend.

Mark Reisetter, Win-Cres MNTU representative, updated the board on the lawsuit filed by environmental groups regarding nitrate pollution impairing drinking water in southeast Minnesota.

Dusty Hoffman said that willow whacking and spraying will begin once willows have leafed out. Neal Mundahl, MNTU Advisory Council, shared that TU will be seeking media consultants for outreach to support and share TU initiatives. President Shepard shared that Abbey Hoffman will be the new DNR person dealing with invasive plant issues.

Upcoming events: TU Dare meeting will be February 22 and the March Board and officer's meeting will be March 12

Iowa Driftless Chapter

By Mike Rogers, President

Upcoming events for Iowa Cold Water Conservation

- Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association annual event, February 21st-23rd in Coralville, IA
- TUDARE Symposium, February 25th in La Crosse, WI
- Next Driftless Chapter meeting, April 1st @ 7pm, location TBD
- Driftless Chapter annual fundraiser banquet, April 26th in Decorah, IA
- Fly tying at Impact Coffee in Decorah, every Wednesday from 11am-2pm

Links for more info and tickets to the above events can be found at the chapter's website, www.iadriftless.org

Visit the website above to view past and current projects the Driftless Chapter has helped fund, as well as links to their social media accounts

Driftless Subzero

By Jason Rieke



Bucksnot dam on Trout Run creek after a -15°F morning | January 21,

It is amazing to reside in an area characterized by extreme temperatures. In the last month, our region has experienced two significant cold weather fronts with low temperatures plummeting to the mid-teens below zero. The first occurred at the end of January, followed by another in mid-February. I particularly enjoyed our most recent cold snap, as the brisk air mixed with a fresh snowfall contributed to some stunning sunrises and sunsets. These frigid temperatures also

highlighted another cool aspect of our area - our springflow. While much of our state locks up and freezes over, many local trout streams remain open and free-flowing thanks to our [karst topography](#) and the countless springs that dump ~40°F water from our aquifers into the streams. I made a point to venture out and witness the effect of the extreme cold during both of the cold spells.



On January 21st, during the first cold snap, my dashboard showed a chilling -15°F as I drove south from Rochester for work. Minnesota's winter was unquestionably making its presence felt with that icy cold. During my lunch break, when the temperatures had barely crept above 0°F, I decided to swing by Bucksnot to see what Trout Run looked like on such a frigid day. There was flowing water in places, but I was surprised to find many sections, both above and below the dam, completely frozen over.



A driftless trout stream at -2°F | February 17, 2025

During the second cold snap, on February 17th, we experienced another morning where the low temps reached into the negative teens. This time I chose to explore a different section of creek further upstream, reasoning that there would be more springflow higher up in the watershed, resulting in warmer water (a reversal of the logic applied to summer water temperatures, when headwaters typically contain colder water). As I approached the parking spot, I could see steam

hovering above the creek. Upon reaching the creek I noted that there was almost no shelf ice in sight, and the fresh, bright, untouched snow made for a stunning sight. Although it was -2°F, the still air and bright sun provided a welcome warmth. My primary intention was to capture a few photographs and appreciate the landscape. However, being a dedicated (or stubborn) angler, I had brought my rod and decided to make a few casts. In such low temperatures, one can only make a few casts before needing to clear the ice from the rod guides, so I carefully selected my casts and placed a couple into the most promising area of the hole I had walked up to. To my surprise, a small brown trout took the fly. With my camera around my neck, I snapped a quick picture then removed my gloves and landed, unhooked, and released the fish, careful to not remove it from the water. As my lunch break came to an end, I made my way back to work, feeling grateful for the opportunity to enjoy the cold and witness the beauty of the driftless landscape in all of its winter glory.

Fly of The Month: Tube Midge

By Lance Prado, HTU Board Member



This a great fly for all seasons and can be tied in black for midges and olive for BWOs. It is one fly that seems too simple to work but it Does!

Hook: Fulling Mill FM5045 sz 20
Slotted Tungsten Bead in copper sz 2.0
Thread: 70-denier black or olive
Body: Hareline Midge tubing black or olive

<https://youtu.be/0X7VQs3kiRY?si=YtmjkGZxJHO1Cmgg>

Monthly Fishing Report

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

We are seeing lots of hungry fish in the small spring creeks. Fish have been actively eating Midges, Scuds, Streamers and Stoneflies. A decent amount of shelf ice has formed from the recent cold snap, but warm weather is being predicted and will clear it up fast.

Decorah IA: [Bear Creek Anglers](#)

February hasn't produced many great days for trout fishing with the low water and low air temps. Warmer weather is forecasted, and the fishing opportunities should be promising.

Nymphs: midge patterns such as zebra midges (black, red, tan sizes 16-20), pheasant tail nymph (size 16-18), prince nymph (size 14-16), blowtorch (size 14-18), rainbow warrior (size 14-18). Using rainbow warrior, prince nymph, and the blowtorch can be a good attractor fly on a dropper rig, too.

Leech patterns and small jigs, such as the Mayer's Mini Leech on dead drifts and stripped can be effective, and look to work these jigs slower and deeper, especially on colder days.

As the days warm up, look for dry fly hatches of primarily midges, and potentially BWO's. Small Griffiths gnats and BWO, sizes 18-22.



Upcoming Events Schedule:

Driftless Area Symposium: Feb 25-27 [Tickets](#) in La Coss WI

WinCres TU Chapter Meeting: Feb 26, Carl Haensel with a presentation on Steelheading

Hiawatha TU Meeting: March 3, John Barry, MNDNR, Springs in the Driftless

Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo: March 21-23 at Hamline University. If you're interested in volunteering, [click here to fill it out](#) the application

WinCres TU Chapter Meeting: March 26, David Noll of Lake City with a Tenkara presentation

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>

Fly Fishing Women of Minnesota Website: <https://flyfishingwomenmn.com/>

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