

The Cutthroat Chronicles

Official Newsletter of the Snake River Cutthroats

February, 2015

A Message from the President *by Paul Patterson*

One thing that I failed to do in the January newsletter was to thank the businesses that had donated items for our Christmas gifts or for the participation raffle. I would like to offer a belated special thank you to **Jimmy's All Seasons Anglers, Kast Gear, Loop USA, and RIO Products**. Please help support the businesses that support us.

The fly boxes for the 2015 Expo are here. If you are interested in tying up one or more boxes of your favorite flies for the Expo, stop by Jimmy's. He has a signup sheet. There are several sizes to choose from based both on the number and the type of flies that you tie. These are used in both raffles and silent auctions during the day and also at the banquet on Saturday evening. The Expo provides us with the money needed to run the club as well as the money that we donate to conservation and education. At our fall grant cycle review in December we awarded two grants in the education area, a \$1,000 to the Compass Academy for their Rainey Creek Water Quality Study, and a \$1,000 to the Sunnyside Anglers Club at Sunnyside Elementary School for their trout in the classroom program. There was a special effort at last year's Expo to raise funds specifically for youth education programs. The Idaho Master Naturalists received funds to build and install fishing line/leader recycling containers at several popular fishing locations. The Southeastern Idaho Fly Fishers (the Pocatello club) received \$1,500 to use in their conservation efforts on the Portneuf River. SEIFFs are a major partner with us at the Expo, providing volunteers and fly boxes. The last and the biggest grant, \$25,000, went to Trout Unlimited's Blackfoot Home Rivers Initiative that Matt Woodard oversees.

Since 2004, the Cutthroats have donated just over \$253,000 for conservation projects and education programs, all spent here locally in eastern Idaho. Expo dollars have funded \$148,000 worth of Trout Unlimited's conservation efforts on South Fork Tributaries: Garden, Pritchard, Rainey and Palisades Creeks. These dollars are used to provide match on larger grants, which mean they double and even occasionally triple in value. Matt Woodard is an excellent steward of these dollars and maximizes their value. With the South Fork Home Rivers initiative largely complete, Matt is shifting his attention (and our dollars) to the Blackfoot where there are a number of opportunities to make much needed investments to help the native Cutthroat trout. Support these efforts by supporting the East Idaho Fly Typing and Fly Fishing Expo, April 17- 18 at the Shilo Inn. If you can't volunteer, come and spend some money. For more information, <http://www.srcexpo.com>

UPCOMING EVENT



Bill Schiess on Fishing Henry's Lake
Wednesday February 11th, 6:30 PM
Shilo Inn, Idaho Falls

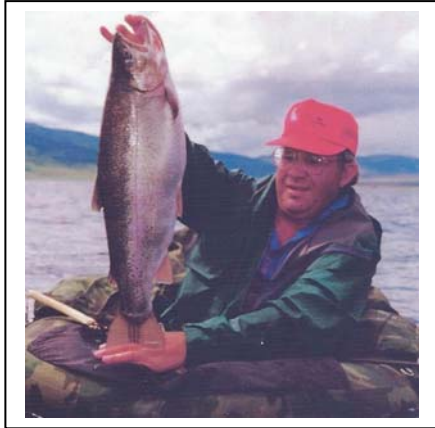


Snake River Cutthroats

www.snakerivercutthroats.com



**Wednesday, February 11th, 6:30
PM
Bill Schiess**



Fishing Henry's Lake

There are a lot of good Henry's Lake fly-fishers out there. Some claim to be experts. But if you dig into their experience in detail you will see a big reason why they became so accomplished. That is because the basis of their success comes from what they learned from Bill Schiess. There is a lot of this basis in Bill's book "Fishing Henry's Lake." Bill, an eastern Idaho native, has fished Henry's Lake since he was five years old. He began fishing it with intensity in his teen years, and took up fly tying to create flies for every occasion on the lake. We are talking about several decades of experience in both fishing and tying flies. Thus it is easy to see why Bill admits to a love affair with Henry's Lake. Nevertheless as well as he knows this lake, he admits that there have been times when even his lengthy experience cannot explain the occasional day with poor fishing results. Doesn't that happen to all of us! In any case, Bill is more than generous with his Henry's Lake fishing experience. Once again he will share that experience with us as well as tie some of his most effective flies for the lake. So bring your copies of Bill's book for a signature as well as notebooks to capture the info he will share.

**The Fungus Among Us
Dan Garren
IDF&G Regional Fisheries Manager**

Since the end of November, we have been fielding calls from concerned anglers on the South Fork Snake River who report seeing trout (both alive and dead), with white, cottony fuzz on them. These fish are infected with saprolegnia, or "cotton mold". This mold is common in fresh water environments, and is part of the natural ecosystem of our waters. Normally, this fungus feeds on fish waste and dead fish, but when a fish's immune systems is weakened, this fungus can affect live fish.

Cotton mold is usually a secondary pathogen, meaning it establishes itself on fish after an initial injury of some sort occurs. In the fall, it is not uncommon to see a few Brown Trout infected with the white fungus; as many trout sustain injuries because of the stress of spawning. Female Browns can become injured when digging redds (where eggs are deposited), and males can injure each other when fighting or defending territories.

It is not uncommon for a few injured and weak fish to succumb to mold outbreaks each year, but the level of infection we're seeing on the South Fork at this time is uncommon. We are investigating this situation, and recently had IDFG fish disease specialists from Boise collecting sick fish. These specialists will examine these fish to determine if the outbreak of sick fish is "normal", or if there is something else going on. We will report the results from these investigations once they become available and will track the effect of this fungus on the population during next year's population surveys.

Electronic Newsletters Available

For those still receiving hard copies of the newsletter via standard mail, but would prefer to receive it via email, please send your email address to Carol Staples, our membership chair at casbas@ida.net.

Fewer mailings mean more dollars for conservation projects. The fish will appreciate your cost saving efforts.

Snake River Fine Spotted Cutthroat Trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki behnkei*)

From Wikipedia on Dr. Robert Behnke

Dr. Robert J. Behnke, was a world authority on the classification of [salmonids](#). He was popularly known as "Dr. Trout." His *Trout and Salmon of North America*, was published in 2002 and he wrote a regular column for *Trout Magazine*, the quarterly publication of **TU**. Dr Behnke passed away in September, 2013. Below are some of his thoughts on a local cutthroat subspecies

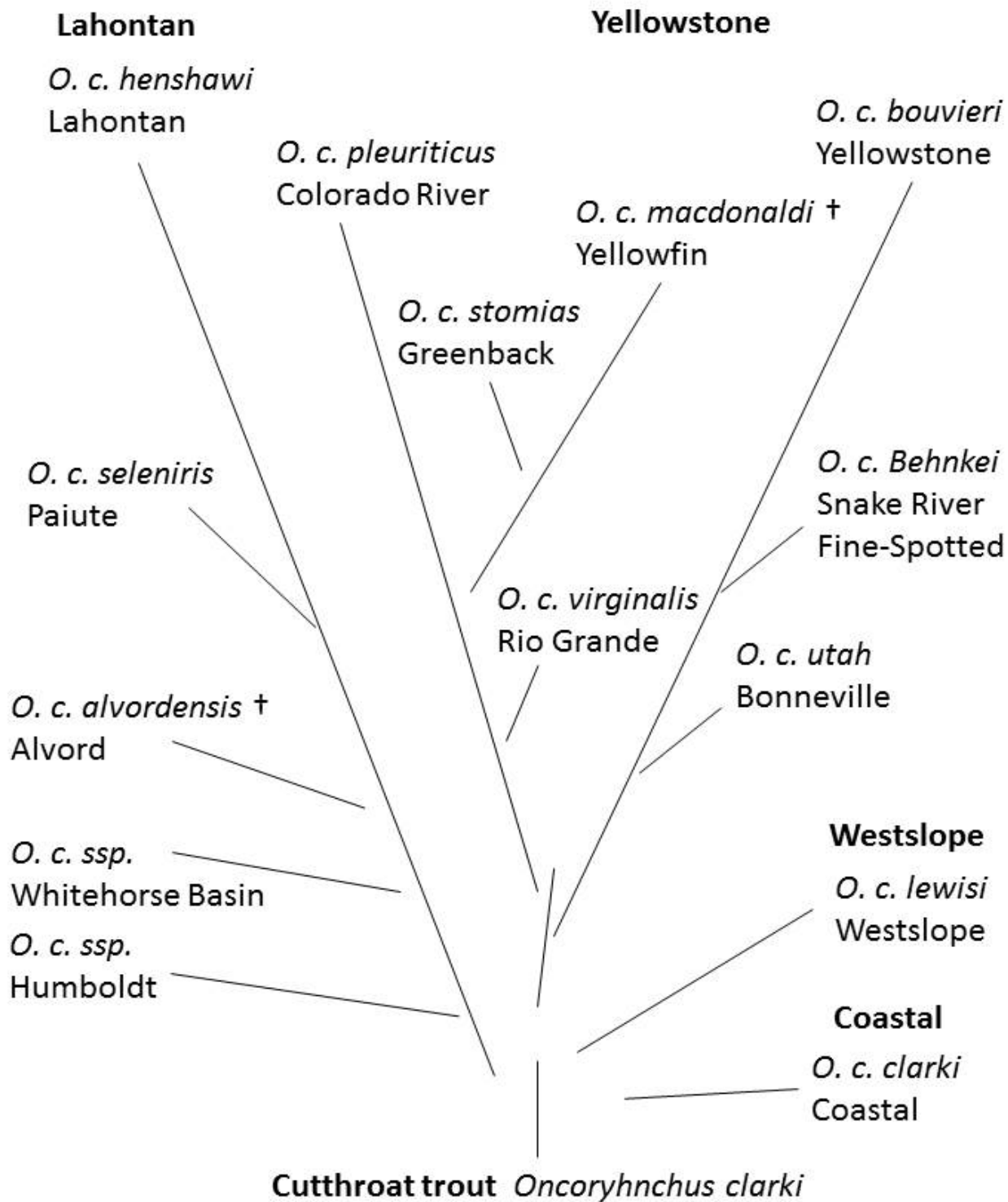
Early in my studies of western trout, I was baffled and fascinated by the situation found in the upper Snake River drainage above Shoshone Falls. Two distinct forms of cutthroat trout occurred: a large-spotted form, typical of the widespread Yellowstone subspecies, and a fine-spotted form restricted to certain parts of the drainage. With the assistance of graduate students, I initiated more intensive research on the fine-spotted cutthroat by examining growth, survival and diet. The fine-spotted cutthroat proved to be extremely adaptable to different environments with different forage. So adept is it at survival, it is the only cutthroat trout that maintained its dominance in its native range despite introductions of nonnative trout that commonly resulted in the elimination of other subspecies. I provided a description of the fine-spotted cutthroat in my 1992 American Fisheries Society monograph on western trout and referred to it as an undescribed subspecies. Three years later, M.R. Montgomery repeated my description but with a name—*Oncorhynchus clarki behnkei*—in his book “Many Rivers to Cross.” There is no doubt in my mind that the fine-spotted cutthroat is a biological reality. It has its own unique life history that allows it to maintain its identity while coexisting with populations of Yellowstone cutthroat trout. Although no consistent genetic differences have been found between the fine-spotted and Yellowstone cutthroat, there are similar examples where full species cannot be genetically differentiated from closely related species.

The fine spotted cutthroat trout is also called the Snake River fine spotted cutthroat. The native distribution is the Snake River. It is most sought after in the Jackson area by anglers, but is the most widely stocked subspecies outside of its native range. The Snake River cutthroat is the most widely adaptable subspecies of cutthroat trout.

The Snake River fine spotted cutthroat prefers large rivers, but is widely adaptable to streams and lakes. Cutthroat are spring spawners. The principal food of the cutthroat is plankton and aquatic insects in lakes, and aquatic insects in streams. Cutthroat over twelve inches, especially Snake River fine spotted cutthroat, often feed on small fish and crayfish.

In addition to their natural aversion to cross-breeding with other trout, fine-spotted cutthroats are unusual in their pursuit of a vertebrate diet, mainly other fish, but occasionally including small mammals. They are the only river cutthroat with a vertebrate diet, and as a result their territorial waters are almost devoid of whitefish. While the Snake River fine spotted cutthroats can be very selective feeders during a major hatch of aquatic invertebrates, they are not as focused as rainbow or brown trout, and can be diverted with small terrestrial imitations. In addition, when there is no obvious hatch, anglers can be very successful with large streamer flies that imitate small fish. Some of us may take cutthroat trout for granted, but there is potential trouble out there for their continued existence. In considering this situation remember that the only place on earth they sustain themselves naturally is in Rocky Mountain waters. Sure there is a lot of discussion on their vigor when hooked and played, but taking a look at how they have adapted as a result of geological changes is fascinating and bound to give them more respect.

Phylogentic Map of *Oncorhynchus clarki*



Source: Behnke, Robert J.; Tomelleri, Joseph R. (illustrator) (2002). "Cutthroat trout *Oncorhynchus clarki*". Trout and Salmon of North America. The Free Press. p. 138-139. ISBN 0-7432-2220-2.

Bug Club Offers Great Camaraderie

Bruce Staples



Buck's not being paid to tie. \$\$ on the table is a Bug Club bet on how fast he can tie it!

Maybe or maybe not you have heard of this every-other-Saturday wintertime event. It takes place at Dad's Frontier Pies Restaurant off I-15, Exit 113, with festivities beginning with an 8 AM breakfast. This is the "Bug Club", and it has a history going back into the 1990s. In those days it was initiated by Gary Grant in order to further the art of dressing Atlantic salmon flies. It had the "high falutin" name Rocky Mountain Fly Tying Guild. "I've always wanted to belong to a fly tying guild!" Buck Goodrich said. Several local tiers took part, but levity was lacking particularly in that there was no social aspect such as a meal or even a pitcher of beer or two through which to grease the conversational skids. We met in conference rooms of various financial concerns. We had fun, learned much, and sustained the "Guild" for a number of years, but there was not the depth of interest as there would be with focusing on trout flies. This is, after all, trout country! So the "Guild" kinda faded out. But the social aspect of fly tying did not, and a bunch of us reconvened under the name "Bug Club," even though Fred Petersen was appalled by the new name. Through Bill Cathrae's financial connections we landed the current meeting location which included breakfast. We met upstairs in Dad's for some years, but carrying gear upstairs was inconvenient, heating was not always up to fly tying snuff, and sometimes hot breakfasts did not live up to the name through being brought upstairs. So we moved downstairs into Dad's excellent backside dining room. Here's how the Bug Club works. We begin each meeting with breakfast during which believable (Like South Fork cutts average 14-15 inches) and incredible (Montana browns spawn in the spring) stories are told. By 9 AM we are fueled up enough to lift those heavy feathers, furs, mylars, and threads for up to three hours of tying. Sometimes nearly everyone ties. Other times, only one person ties and is regaled by running commentaries. After that exhausting activity called fly tying, we comment on results and choose a tying topic for the next meeting. Currently Buck emails the notice for the next meeting and its topic. In fact, the next scheduled meetings are February 14th and February 28th, this year. We welcome new participants, so if you have interest in a good time, c'mon to the next meeting. Be sure to bring stories and to give Buck your email address so he can get to you meeting notices which include the tying subject.

Recipe of the Month

Smoked Whitefish Chowder

Smoked fish—already cooked and intensely flavorful—is an ideal addition to dishes when time is of the essence. This recipe uses whitefish here, but another flaky fish, such as walleye, yellow perch, or trout, would work just as well. Regardless of the fish you choose, this chowder recipe combined with a hearty salad and a good hot bread such as a sliced baguette makes for a great dinner on a cold winter evening.

1. 1 tablespoon butter
2. 2 ribs celery, chopped
3. 6 scallions, white bulbs and green tops chopped and reserved separately
4. 2 cloves garlic, minced
5. 1 pound baking potatoes (about 2), peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes
6. 1/4 cup dry white wine
7. 2 cups water
8. 1 quart canned low-sodium chicken broth or homemade stock
9. 1 teaspoon dried thyme
10. 1 bay leaf
11. 1 1/4 teaspoons salt
12. 1 cup half-and-half
13. 2 fillets peppered smoked whitefish, skin removed, fish flaked

1. In a large pot, melt the butter over moderately low heat. Add the celery, the chopped scallion bulbs, and the garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables start to soften, in about 10 minutes.
2. Add the potatoes, wine, water, broth, thyme, bay leaf, and salt to the pot. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer, partially covered, until the potatoes are tender, about 15 minutes.
3. Stir the half-and-half into the soup. Simmer until the soup starts to thicken, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove the pot from the heat and stir in the whitefish and the scallion tops. Remove the bay leaf from the soup.

Serves four

NOTES

If peppered smoked whitefish isn't available, use regular smoked whitefish and one teaspoon fresh-ground black pepper instead.

California Chardonnays can be overpowering, but this chowder provides a perfect showcase. Try a fruity chardonnay from Napa or the Sonoma Valley.

Calendar

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|---|---|
| Saturday, February 7 th | Rod Building Class (see January newsletter) |
| Wednesday, February 11 th | General Membership Meeting, Shilo Inn, Bill Schiess |
| Saturday, February 14 th | Bug Club meeting, 8 AM Dad's Frontier Pies |
| Saturday, February 28 th | Bug Club meeting, 8 AM Dad's Frontier Pies |
| Tuesday, March 3 rd | SRC Board Meeting, Shilo Inn, 6:30 |
| Wednesday, March 11 th | General Membership Meeting, Shilo Inn, Guest TBA |
| Tuesday, March 31 st | SRC Board Meeting, Shilo Inn, 6:30 |
| Wednesday, April 8 th | General Membership Meeting, Shilo Inn, Guest TBA |
| Friday.-Sat. April 17 th -18 th | Eastern Idaho Fly Tying & Fly Fishing Expo, Shilo Inn, Idaho Falls |

Fly of the Month

Biggs Pheasant

The Sheep Creek Special is George Bigg's fly of fame, but this stillwater fishing gentleman created other effective patterns, like this one. George tied in the same era as Clayne Baker, Bing Lempke, Ruel Stayner, Cliff Stringer, Marv Taylor, and Stan Yamamura, all famed Idaho tiers. He recommends presenting this easily tied fly in a moderate retrieve, then slowly raising it to simulate an emerging midge. Use it in one size larger than the emerging insect.

Hook: Daiichi 1170, or equiv., #18-22
Thread: Black 3/0
Body: A ringneck pheasant center tail fiber
Wing: 10-12 speckled mallard flank fibers



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