

The Cutthroat Chronicles

Official Newsletter of the Snake River Cutthroats

February, 2016

A Message from the President *by Paul Patterson*

The turnout was great last month to hear Buck Goodrich's talk on fishing the Cascade corner of Yellowstone Park. I would expect to see an equally good turnout to hear Ken Bitton's talk at the February meeting – details on the next page. See the calendar on page 7 for the list of speakers for future meetings.

If you are willing to tie up a bunch of flies for the Expo, stop by Jimmy's to pick up an Expo fly box. The fly boxes are available in several sizes, so pick the one that best fits the flies you will be tying. The fly boxes are used in the raffles and silent auctions that are held during the day on Friday and Saturday, and during the banquet on Saturday night. If you are interested in helping at the Expo, contact Arn Berglund. His phone number is 569-2243 and his email address is fishvik@aol.com

The East Idaho Fly Tying and Fly Fishing Expo is the Snake River Cutthroat's big funding raising event. The money is used to run the club and also to fund conservation and education projects and programs. Since 2004, Expo dollars spent on conservation and education have totaled approximately \$290,500! Funds for conservation account for the biggest share of these funds and currently stands at \$274,000. The largest recipient of conservation funds over these twelve years has been Trout Unlimited's projects on the South Fork (and tributaries) and Blackfoot Rivers managed by Matt Woodard, which have received \$201,000 over this period of time.

During the 2015 fall grant cycle the Snake River Cutthroats funded the following projects from 2015 Expo funds:

Trout Unlimited - South Fork Bank Stabilization and Fish Restoration: \$25,000

Southeast Idaho Fly Fishers - Conservation Program: \$1,500

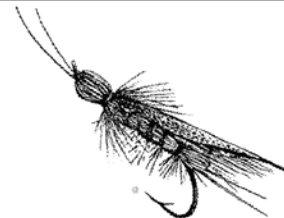
Idaho Master Naturalists -Fishing Line Recycling Containers: \$508

The Expo Committee, all the volunteers, donors/sponsors and those who attend deserve a lot of thanks for making all this possible. It's an incredible record and one that the Snake River Cutthroats can be proud of. So help us make the 2016 Expo another successful year. It takes the efforts of a lot of people.

If you have experience with building/maintaining a website, and would like to help out the Cutthroats, please contact me. My phone number is on the back page and my email address is patternsn@gold.uidaho.edu

UPCOMING EVENTS

Ken Bitton on
Fly-Fishing for Clearwater Sheelhead
Wednesday February 10th, 6:30 PM
Shilo Inn, Idaho Falls



**Wednesday, February 10th
6:30 PM
Ken Bitton
Fly-Fishing for Clearwater
Steelhead**



Ken is our most renowned steelheader. He has pursued them, since the 1960s, to the point that he has guided for these fabled fish on the Clearwater River via Clearwater River Company for years. He does this during the Fall season but takes time to enjoy “steelies” on his own then returns to our neck of the woods. Here he is in a consulting mode for anyone considering a visit to encounter Clearwater steelhead. He catches up on fly tying, not only for capturing effective patterns from the past steelhead season but for our upcoming trout season, especially on the South Fork. Here he is employed by Natural Retreats working in the shop and guiding at times. All this experience gives Ken a broad range of fly-fishing strategy as well as fly tying capability. Here’s why: he is a member of an increasingly rare fly-fishing group. His fly-fishing days began on the family property in Swan Valley. From here he remembers fishing, as a youngster, the river in Grand Valley, now submerged under Palisades Reservoir since the late 1950’s.

No that is not a Gamakatsu T10-6H tattoo’d in red on Ken’s cheek in the pic below. It is the result of a Clearwater River client’s errant cast!



**Keep “em Wet!
An Idaho Falls Post Register Item Garnered from
IDF&G**

The January 15, 2016 Idaho Falls Post Register Outdoor Page featured an item on a new IDF&G policy that is something to cheer about. Here it is. Beginning January first of this year, IDF&G opened its record books to catch and release angling.

In the past any fish being submitted as a state record candidate had to be killed, measured and officially weighed. Now there is a specific catch and release category. For years anglers in the sport for more than sustenance have asked for a catch and release category, according to Dan Garren, our regional fisheries manager. In addition this regulation allows for records on non-harvestable fish such as salmon, wild steelhead and white sturgeon. Thus if you do not harvesting fish, you have an opportunity to take part in the records program which allows more very large fish to stay in the water rather than being killed as record candidates. The flip side of this is that these very large fish remain in the gene pool to sustain better chances of producing future lunkers.

To submit a candidate under this new system, an angler must take a photo of the fish next to a ruler, or another item of verifiable length, a photo of them with the fish, and have a witness to the measurement of the fish (easily done with today’s smart phones). Salmon, steelhead and sturgeon (bull trout, too?) must be measured in the water. For more information, go to the IDF&G web site.

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.



Buffalo River Fish Ladder Update
by
Henry's Fork Foundation

Many thousands of rainbow trout have migrated from the Henry's Fork upstream through the fish ladder at the Buffalo River Hydroelectric Project Dam. A large number of brook trout, whitefish, and non-game fish species also use the ladder. There has been a generally increasing trend in use of the fish ladder since it was installed, and monitoring there allows the quantification of the Buffalo River contributions to the wild trout population in the Henry's Fork. Historically, the Buffalo River was an important spawning stream for cutthroat trout when they were the major trout species in the Henry's Fork. By the late 1930s when rainbow trout had begun to populate the river through hybridizing with the native cutthroat, Island Park Dam and the Buffalo River Dam, also built to provide power for dam construction, blocked spawning runs of these trout. The Buffalo River hydroelectric project was relicensed in 2004 and several fish passage improvements have been made at the facility since then.

Upstream-migrating fish benefit from the state-of-the-art, 270-foot-long fish ladder designed to allow young rainbow trout to pass over the twelve-foot-high dam. The Henry's Fork Foundation monitors fish moving upstream and downstream through the project. The turbine intake has been screened with a smaller opening, and the upstream face of the dam was resurfaced. These changes should prevent fish migrating downstream at the dam from being injured or killed when entering the turbines, or being trapped in holes in the dam.

These fish passage improvements allow juvenile rainbow trout from the Henry's Fork to access crucial winter habitat. Offspring from spawning rainbow trout in the Buffalo River and juvenile trout migrating from the Henry's Fork are able to spend their first winter in the Buffalo River watershed upstream of the dam. After their first winter, these juvenile trout move to the Henry's Fork where they can grow and contribute to the fishery from Box Canyon through Harriman State Park.

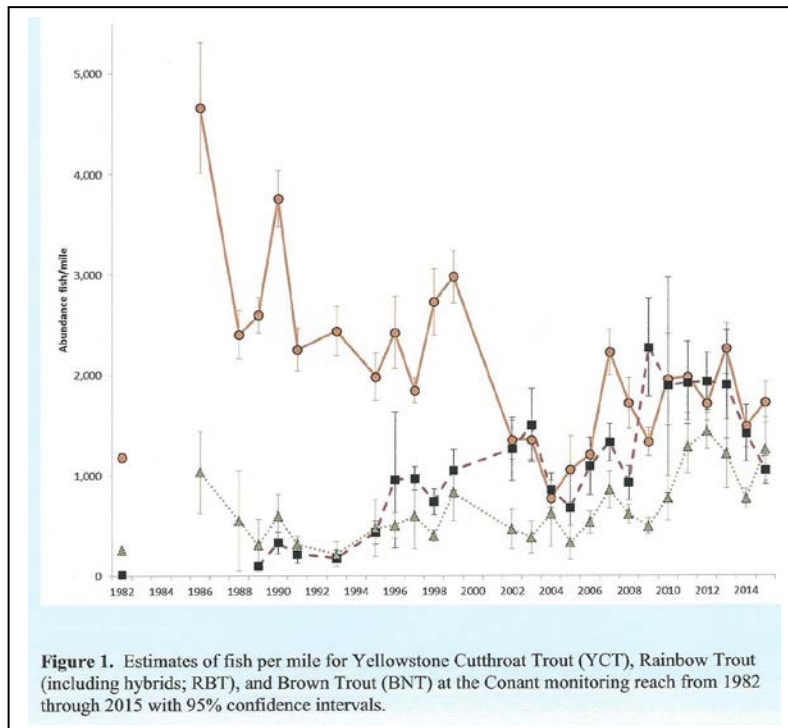
After seven years of providing useful trout migration data past the Buffalo River Hydroelectric Project Dam, the aging downstream fish trap has been removed. The decision to do so was made jointly by the Henry's Fork Foundation, Fall River Rural Electric, IDF&G, and USFS after reviewing collected data. The trap collected data on springtime downstream migrating rainbow trout, many of which had spawned in the Buffalo River. However the trap was inefficient at capturing fish and was also degrading physically making it unsuited as a monitoring tool. By spring of 2015 significant monitoring data was lost because of the trap's failing status. Cost of its operation and maintenance was no longer justified by the data collected from it by the Henry's Fork Foundation. Thus the Foundation has disassembled and removed the trap. They now depend on more efficient data collection methods such as genetics and PIT-tagging to study the dependence of Henry's Fork rainbow trout population on the Buffalo River. The foundation will continue to monitor the upstream migration of fish through the fish ladder, especially through the spring spawning run.



Decline in Rainbow Trout on the South Fork
 by
Brett High, IDF&G Fish Biologist

Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) biologists spend several weeks each fall electrofishing the South Fork Snake River (South Fork) to check on trout abundance. Of particular concern in the South Fork is the number of rainbow trout in relation to native Yellowstone cutthroat trout. Results from this year’s survey show that, unlike recent years, cutthroat trout are more abundant than rainbow trout. This is good news for the river. The South Fork contains the most abundant population of cutthroat trout in Idaho, around 2,000 per mile. Most local anglers are familiar with the plight of cutthroat trout threatened by introduced rainbow trout, which hybridize with them to produce fertile offspring. If left unchecked, rainbow trout and fertile hybrids could functionally eliminate cutthroat trout in the South Fork. IDFG and its partners have worked for over two decades to keep this from happening with a three-pronged approach to management. We work with the Bureau of Reclamation to manage flows from Palisades Dam. This benefits cutthroat trout and reduces rainbow trout while ensuring that irrigation interests are not harmed. We also manage fish traps and weirs on the four main tributaries where cutthroat trout spawn, and only allow cutthroat trout above the traps. The third and most important component of the management program is engaging anglers in removing rainbow trout from the river. IDFG continues to operate the Angler Incentive Program with rewards ranging from \$50 to \$1,000 for turning in the heads from harvested rainbow trout from the South Fork. This program appears to be making a difference. Many hundreds of rainbow trout are turned in monthly, and reward money flows back to the anglers. The recent population survey on the South Fork suggests the three-pronged management efforts are impacting cutthroat trout and rainbow trout numbers on the river. Anglers are a key factor. With continued efforts by management agencies, water managers, and conscientious anglers, the cutthroat trout fishery we know and love on the South Fork will continue for a long time.

Figure 1 Conant monitoring reach cutthroat data are in red circles, rainbow in black squares, browns in grey triangles.



The Muddler Minnow

By
Bruce Staples



Although not created in the Rocky Mountain area, this pattern is immensely popular here. Don Gapen of Anoka, Minnesota created it in 1937 with the purpose of fooling the Nipigon brook trout strain renowned for producing huge individuals that preyed on baitfish. Its popularity quickly spread as mid-west fly-fishers learned it could be presented wet to also simulate a crawfish, a dragonfly nymph, and other submerged food forms. Popularity in the west began when Dan Bailey offered it in his shop and in his fly-fishing catalog during the 1940s. During these times Dan also created the marabou muddler beginning the long record of variation that is typical for any superbly effective pattern (note the discussion on the Humpy in the November, 2015 issue of this newsletter). Because of Bailey's promotion, the "Muddler" and the marabou version became staple items in fly shop offerings throughout the Rocky Mountain West. Variation of the wet version continued, but it was Joe Brook's Outdoor Life article in the 1960s about missing a huge brown trout on the surface of Montana's Big Hole River that opened another dimension for the "Muddler." He named this pattern the "Floating Muddler", and it appears to be obtained from his friend, Dan Bailey. Now the muddler could be used dry to simulate an even larger variety of floating food forms. These included such as various adult stonefly species, grasshoppers, large caddisflies (i.e., October caddis), even a vole or mouse, and, when tied with materials dyed black, a cricket. Only the size needed to be varied. Steelheaders soon discovered another effective use. Skittered on the surface it attracted steelhead on many coastal rivers to rise from the depths and strike.

I created a dry version back in the late 1970s after Stan Yamamura introduced me to his wet version. My dry version began with physical modifications for improving floating stability and creating better buoyancy. It has become my favorite pattern. I have landed more large trout from using this pattern than any other pattern, dry or wet (reflecting a personal preference to present dry flies!). I tie the underwing of this pattern with calf tail, tan on bottom, white on top. The purpose of the underwing is to keep the turkey quill outer wing segments on either side slightly extended to act as outriggers which keep the fly riding upright in the water. The white calf tail on top also acts as an indicator during low light conditions. The most difficult step in tying this pattern is building the deer hair head. Flaring the deer hair in two horizontal bunches, one on either side just behind the hook eye, is best because spinning a single bunch has potential to loosen adjacent and underlying materials. Flaring in this manner forms the head, clipped to shape, with the natural tips pointing rearward as a collar. Deer hair used must be of spinning quality, and my late friend Chris Helm offered where the best could be obtained. Luckily we have it in abundance: mule deer hair from the flanks of a doe or young male killed early in the season.

Recipe of the Month

TOTAL TIME: Prep/Total Time: 20 min.

MAKES: 6 servings

Ingredients

- 2/3 cup reduced sodium soy sauce
- 1/2 cup catsup
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 1 teaspoon dried rosemary, crushed
- 6 pan-dressed trout
- Lemon wedges (optional)

Directions

1. Combine the soy sauce, ketchup, lemon juice, oil and rosemary; pour two-thirds of marinade into a large re-sealable plastic bag; add fish. Seal bag and turn to coat; refrigerate bag for 1 hour, turning once. Cover and refrigerate remaining marinade for basting.
2. Drain and discard marinade. Place fish in a single layer in a well-greased hinged wire grill basket. Grill covered over medium heat for 8-10 minutes, or until fish is browned on the bottom. Turn and baste with reserved marinade; grill 5-7 minutes longer or until fish flakes easily with a fork. Serve with lemon if desired.

Fly of the Month

Dry Muddler (See pic on page 5)

It may not be the quickest fly to tie, but sure can be effective. Rather than lacquering a matched pair of turkey secondary quills, I cut segments from the left and right and lacquer them individually with nail polish. I allow these to dry while tying the fly up to the point of adding these to form the outer wing. I prefer to shape the head by clipping it into a cylindrical shape, but any other final shape works fine. Drifting it downstream to rising fish seems to be the most effective presentation.

- Hook: 3X long streamer hook, size 2-12
- Thread: 50 denier grey or yellow spun gel
- Tail: Paired Turkey quill segments
- Body: gold tinsel
- Underwing: White on top of tan calf tail
- Outer wing: Lacquered turkey quill segments
- Head and collar: Flaring quality deer hair clipped to shape



Iconic Wildlife Species of the Greater Yellowstone Area Presentations

Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the Nature Conservancy are hosting a series of presentations on iconic wildlife species of the Greater Yellowstone area. Special thanks to sponsors for the series –Heart of the Rockies Initiative, the Mule Deer Foundation, Trout Unlimited, and Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative.

This is your chance to interact with leading regional fish and wildlife experts as they describe the ecology of iconic Yellowstone area species and present results of ongoing research, management and conservation efforts. Presentations will be Thursday evenings during February and March at the ARTitorium on Broadway just west of Yellowstone Highway. *Doors open at 6pm with presentations starting at 7 pm. No-host refreshments will be available prior to the presentation. Presentations will be followed by a question and answer period. Here is one of particular interest to anglers:*

February 25th – Dan Garren - **“Range-Wide Approaches to Managing Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout – A Call to Arms for a Conservation-Reliant Species in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem”**. Dan is the Upper Snake Region Fisheries Manager for Idaho Department of Fish and Game and has worked with Idaho Department of Fish and Game for the past 15 years. Dan manages the wild trout fisheries within the Idaho portion of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, including Henry’s Lake, the Henry’s Fork River, and important waters for the native Yellowstone cutthroat trout.

Limited seating is available. Please reserve your space (and for obtaining further information) by emailing mmanguba@tnc.org or calling 208-221-5142, or calling IDF&G 208-522-7290.

 2015-2016 Calendar 	
Date	Activity
Saturday, February 6 th	Rod Building Workshop, 10:30 – 5:30 Location: TBA
Wednesday, February 10 th	General Membership Meeting, 6:30 Speaker: Ken Bitton
Wednesday, March 9 th	General Membership Meeting, 6:30 Speaker: Craig Mathews
Wednesday, April 13 th	General Membership Meeting, 6:30 Tyer: John Harder Speaker: Dave Dexter
Friday & Saturday, April 22 nd & 23 rd	East Idaho Fly Tying & Fly Fishing Expo Shilo Inn
Wednesday, May 11 th	Annual Business Meeting, 5:30 Papa Tom’s Pizza
Tuesday, May 17 th & Thursday, May 19 th	Free Casting Class, 6:30 PM Tautphaus Park
Note: all membership and board meetings are at the Shilo Inn.	



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