

# The Backcast

Fall 2014



"If I'm not going to catch anything, then I'd rather not catch anything on flies."

- Bob Lawlers

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to Fall and the best fishing of the year in the Berkshires!

With the cool and wet Summer we've had, the trout stocking should be plentiful on top of the hold-over fish still in the streams and rivers. The Westfield River in the Chesterfield gorge has been amazing almost all year. Lots of water and low temperatures throughout the warm months - who can remember such a thing? Big fish and lots of them. Get out there and enjoy!

Now for the "not-so-great" news. Our TU chapter is on the ropes. Low meeting attendance, small clean-up and project participation and no one stepping up to run the show. Your chapter leadership, however, does not intend to take it lying down. If we go down, it will be swinging.

Your Board of Directors has revamped the meeting schedule for the year in such a way that we hope to increase it's appeal and enhance participation.

We are planning a new format combined with a reduced number of meetings. There will be three meetings this year, as well as our annual Christmas banquet. The first meeting will be on October 23rd at the Bass Water Grill in Cheshire. It will feature presentations and maybe some fly-tying by noted chapter members speaking in an informal atmosphere about the streams and rivers they know best - access, best rigs, tactics and "how to" advice to maximize success. No sit down dinner is planned. There will be a nice variety of appetizers for munching during the evening. No formal agenda is planned other than as required by our chapter by-laws to elect chapter leadership. We'll start at 5:30.

For those who provided their e-mail addresses to TU, personal announcements will be sent ahead of time. For everyone else, consider providing your e-mail address to TU National (we'll get it), checking the chapter website ([www.taconictroutunlimited.org](http://www.taconictroutunlimited.org)) or noting the place and time on your calendar now.

The next gathering will be our annual Christmas banquet also at the Bass Water Grill on December 11th. Invitations will be sent out with all the details. Be sure to save up bucket raffle items to donate. We'd really like to get some "big ticket" items for a silent auction. I'm building a new graphite rod to donate.

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE Continued

The next event is something special. Bill Travis has lined up some nationally-recognized fly fishing videos for an evening at the Berkshire Hills Country Club on March 11th. Details are still in the works and advertising will be throughout the county. This is a pay-at-the-door event and well worth attending. Stay tuned!

Our last gathering will be at the Cheshire Rod and Gun Club in May. We are looking at Saturday the 30th and current plans call for a family cook out, casting demos and other events. Details are forth-coming and will be sent out prior to the date. Keep checking our web site.

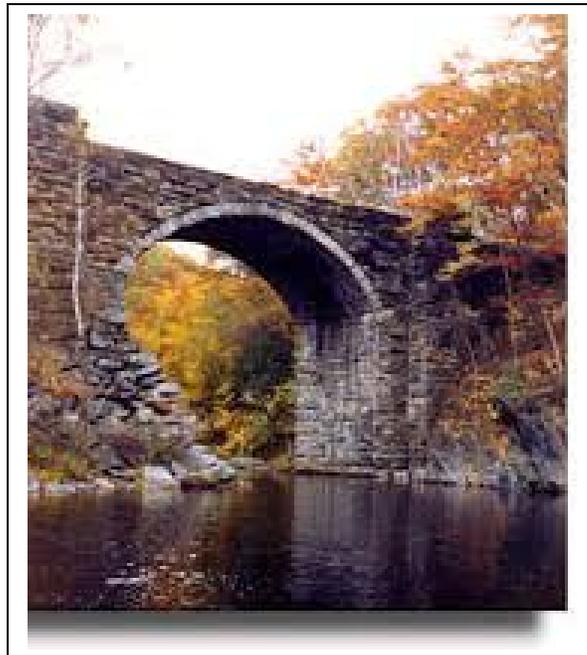
Also, don't forget Indian Hollow Weekend on May 16th. We're going to set aside an area at the campground just for our members and their families. This is the "not to miss" gathering of all Mass/Rhode Island Council chapters, with lots of good food and plenty of fish in the Westfield River stocked just for this event.

We hope these changes will engage our membership without challenging everyone's busy schedules. Please make the effort to join in and also let us know how you like the ideas.

## The Keystone Arches

I trust many of you have read Andrew Madden's excellent article in Massachusetts Wildlife magazine on the magnificent keystone arches in Middlefield's Walnut Hill Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The issue (No. 2, 2014) is well-worth getting and reading if you haven't.

The arches are a series of railroad bridges spanning the West Branch of the Westfield River and date back nearly two centuries. The Walnut Hill WMA contains two of the five remaining bridges over the free-flowing river. The two bridges, now abandoned, are some 70 feet tall and are marvelous examples of the builders' art.



It seems to me that fishing the pools below the arches this Fall would be a wonderful experience. While I have

walked the path to the arches, I have not fished below them. However, this Fall is going to find me out there. Andrew advises that the Westfield River through the WMA has deep pools sufficient to host a sustainable and reproducing trout population in addition to the thousands stocked by Mass Wildlife each year.

Access to the river and the arches is along Middlefield Road in Chester. The Keystone Arch Bridge Trail runs from the parking area. If you can't find a copy of the magazine, MassWildlife's excellent website has maps of all the WMA's in the state.

**Taconic Chapter of Trout Unlimited  
2015  
Proposed  
Officers and Board of Directors**

President	Allen Gray
Vice President	Ron Wojcik
Treasurer	Dick Bordeau
Secretary	Marc Hoechstetter
Newsletter Editor	Allen Gray

Board of Directors - including the chapter officers:

John Burns

Bill Travis

Paul Knauth

During our meeting on October 23rd, we will be asking the membership to vote on this slate of candidates as proposed or with any changes between then and now. It will constitute our chapter's annual meeting as required in the by-laws.

We are seeking additional candidates for officer and board positions to supplement those set forth above.

Please send expressions of interest to Allen Gray, e-mail: [free2fish2002@gmail.com](mailto:free2fish2002@gmail.com). All members are welcome to join us.

No experience required and we'd love to have you!

## **FISHING THE HENRY'S FORK**

or

How I Learned to Cross Off a "Bucket List" Item and Still Love Fly Fishing  
by Allen Gray

The Henry's Fork of the Snake River in Idaho has a checkered reputation. And it is well deserved. There are large, feeding trout along its stretches and the river is easily accessible and wadeable. The weather is pleasant and the scenery is spectacular. But that's where the fun seems to end. Here's how it went for some of us.

Paul Knauth and I joined two long time friends of mine from the Air Force on a 10-day trip to Idaho. Paul and I have been doing these trips for years and it's exciting to try different rivers in different parts of the country - almost always out West.

This year we ventured to Island Park, Idaho and the famous Henry's Fork. We rented a beautiful 4-bedroom cabin close to the river, stocked up on good food and drink and settled in to harass the local trout.

What we found was an extremely technical fishery that defied most of our attempts to learn its secrets. The key, as we learned, is to spot a rising fish, single it out from all the others, wade to within 9 or so feet up-stream, cast a short line with a long leader and let it drift down fly-first to the fish so it arrives just when the next rise is to occur. If your fly selection happens to be what that particular fish is eating that day, you'll get a strike. These are not always large, flashy strikes, mind you; sometimes, they are just sips. Big fish on the Fork don't need to expend much energy or draw attention to themselves when food is so plentiful.

The questionable rewards of hooking a large fish don't stop there. The river is shallow and heavily matted with vegetation on the bottom and floating on the top. A hooked fish immediately dives for the grass and tangles itself until something gives - usually your leader knot or tippet. You can increase leader strength, but then the fly loses its natural drift. Tough dilemma.

If you don't get any interest, and if the fish is still around after your cast, you change flies and try again. Any more than a few casts to a single fish are not rewarded. The fish has seen your offering and it's not what's on the menu.

The process is further complicated by the constant floating debris which drags under your line, leader and fly. Cleaning is necessary every two or three casts.

Despite all this, we tried the river on multiple occasions, in the meadows and in the canyons. A hike in and out of "cardiac canyon" was especially notable, but I've managed to black it out of my memory.

Paul did respectably well through all this and landed some nice fish during our stay. The rest of us; well, as we lawyers say, "asked and answered." The other three on the trip were/are lawyers. Catching more fish was probably Paul's compensation for THAT experience.

Fortunately, the Henry's Fork corner of Idaho is also home to any number of other fine streams and rivers. The Fall River, the Teton, the Warm and the Buffalo are all close by. Yellowstone NP is only minutes away and we hit the Madison, the Firehole, the Gibbon, the Gallatin, and the Yellowstone. None of these rivers fish with the same difficulty as their near-by famous cousin and all of us did reasonably well.

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## **FISHING THE HENRY'S FORK**

### Continued

Paul still caught more fish and bigger fish than the rest of us in all of rivers we tried. He not only unlocked their mysteries, but also learned a very effective new rig that none of us had ever seen before and used it to good effect. Be sure and ask him what it is and how to use it.

I was the Mountain Whitefish king this trip. It is an honor I would gladly cede to another even though they were quite large and fought nicely. Nasty fish. They make Carp look like cherished prizes.

Our plans for next year are still fluid, but I think I can say with some confidence that Island Park is out. Other parts of the Snake River - especially in Wyoming - look promising and quartering in West Yellowstone or Livingston, MT may be good bets.

We'll see.

If you have any of your own fish stories for the newsletter, send them along to [free2fish2002@gmail.com](mailto:free2fish2002@gmail.com).

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## **Hoosic River Revival**

Congratulations to the HRR and to Judy Grinnell, the organization's president, on the project's inclusion as part of the Massachusetts Environmental Bond Bill.

Members will recall Ms. Grinnell was a past speaker at one of our chapter meetings. Her dedication and hard work is truly paying off.

The goal of the HRR is to reconnect the river to the City of North Adams for recreation, economic development and community building while still assuring adequate flood control is maintained.

This authorization of \$8.8 million for the first phase of the project does not make the funding a sure thing. Additional steps are necessary,

including giving the project priority within the state's capital improvement plan. Still, this is a great step forward.

Visit the project's web site ([www.hoosicriverrevival.org](http://www.hoosicriverrevival.org)) for information on plans, river walks and issues involved with making changes to the flood "chutes" through the town.

## Favorite Five Flies

Here's an interesting question: Which five flies can't you do without? All of us have favorites, of course, but to narrow it down to just five adds a new sense of "need" to the issue. If you could only take five flies to the river, which would they be?

The idea begs questions about time of year, the particular river, wind, temperature, water volume and such, but let's keep it theoretical. Name those five flies that go with you everywhere - regardless.

I asked a number of members and received a number of repeats - the venerable gold ribbed hare's ear nymph and the pheasant tail nymph were most common, as was the Adams dry fly. Gotta carry those. Regardless.

Paul Knauth added the rusty spinner and the sparkle dun emerger to his list along with the above three. I've seen him catch trout on a rusty spinner when nothing else seemed to work and that's proof enough for me that it's a keeper. It's one of his "go to" flies.

Ron Wojcik listed the wooly bugger as his first choice, also along with the hare's ear and the pheasant tail. He, of course, is the master of the wooly bugger so this was no surprise. Others of us struggle with the darn things and lose far too

many on the stream bottom, but he always catches fish. Big ones. Ron also mentioned, as an after-thought, using steelhead glo-bug eggs on early season rainbows. He says they are "killers on stockers." Hummm. Interesting choice.

I added the girdle bug to my list. It's the fly described in this issue's Tying Corner. I guess it could be thought of as something akin to a wooly bugger, but it doesn't need to be fished deep or with added weight to be effective. Just drifting it through the current on a tight line draws strikes and it can be tied so easily and cheaply that it's no big thing to lose a few if it gets caught up in shallower water. More than once, I've had strikes while holding the rod under my arm, with a girdle bug waving in the current, while lighting a cigar or fooling with some gear. Always fun.

In addition to the two nymphs and the Adams mentioned above, I added the Ausable Wulff to my list. It seems to work well on any number of streams and draw strikes even when tied in larger, easier to see, sizes. I've seen Gene Chague fish it down stream almost like a wet fly with great success.

I'll raise this subject with other members and report more findings next time.



Adams Dry Fly



Gold Rib Hare's Ear



Pheasant Tail Nymph

### Fly Tying Corner - The Girdle Bug

Now this is the fly every angler needs in his or her arsenal. The mighty Girdle Bug works when no other fly seems to get any attention. It is a large, weighted fly that is so simple to tie and fish, you'll wonder how you ever got along without it. Not sure what it represents to the trout, but it works.

#### Directions:

1. De-barb the hook and wrap with wire. Cover with zap-a-gap or head cement.
2. Tie in "forked" rubber leg tails sticking out the back. Leg length is up to you. Half the hook length is about right.
3. Tie in the chenille and wrap to about the half-way point.
4. Tie in two more sets of legs, one set on each side. Lots of "wiggle" is good.
5. Continue wrapping the chenille half way to the eye. Tie in another set of legs on each side the same way as the others.
6. Wrap the chenille up to the eye and add two more "legs" as antenna pointing forward. They need not be as long as the other "legs." Leave room for a smooth, tight head. Tie off and coat the head with cement.

#### Recipe:

- #6 wooly bugger hook, or smaller if you like
- Black thread - heavy
- Wire wrap - lead or non-toxic substitute
- Black chenille body
- White rubber legs

We've used this pattern here, in Montana, Alberta and in Idaho. It always seems to work when worked deep like a wooly bugger or drifted on a tight line in shallower water like any nymph. As the fly starts to swing in the current, hold on!

At right - Girdle Bug Fly

Below - Views of the Henry's Fork



