

Catskill Mountains Trout Unlimited

To conserve, protect and restore New York's Trout and Salmon Fisheries and their watersheds



Mark the Dates: Winter 2017 Fly Fishing School and Fly Tying Classes

CMTU will be hosting a Fly Fishing and Fly Tying classes again this year. The dates have been set.

The Fly Fishing School is scheduled each Tuesday evening, March 7th through April 4th (with a night on the stream) from 7– 9PM at Ulster County Community College.

The Fly Tying school is scheduled each Thursday evening, February 9th through March 9th from 7-9PM, Location tbd

Registration details will be posted on the web site once they are final. Email catskillmountaintu@gmail.com for more info.

January Meeting Cancelled

Due to the recent change of ownership at the Hudson Valley Mall we were unable to confirm our meeting room reservation with the new ownership prior to this month's scheduled meeting date.

Calendar

- January Chapter Meeting**
Cancelled.
- February Chapter Meeting**
Wednesday February 15th, 2017, Community Room Hudson Valley Mall, Kingston NY, 6:30 PM
Speaker: Tracy Brown / Northeastern Restoration Coordinator, Trout Unlimited
- March Chapter Meeting**
Wednesday March 15th, 2017, Community Room, Hudson Valley Mall, Kingston NY, 6:30 PM
Tie One On Event
Thursday March 30th, 2017, Keegan Ales Brewery, Kingston NY 6:30PM
Pre-season: Fly tying Event

A Tough Year for Catskill Creeks

By Andrew Higgins

Maybe it was a coincidence, but on the same week that my fall issue of *Trout* arrived with its series of articles on climate change and trout, Leslie Zucker and Adam Doan of the Ashokan Watershed Stream Management Program came to our November meeting to talk about their recent efforts in the Esopus Creek watershed, and one of the things that Leslie stressed was the impact that climate change is having on us locally. Or maybe it wasn't a coincidence. This past year was a tough one for Esopus Creek. High temperatures combined with low rainfall to turn Esopus Creek into a skinny, turbid mess from August through October.

During September, *low* temperatures in Esopus Creek were in the mid 70s. As late as September 20th, night time temperatures at Coldbrook were still 65 degrees. About this time, flows from the portal were restricted because they had become too turbid. While lower temperatures in October provided some relief, the extreme low flows posed a dramatic threat to spawning brown trout. On October 7th, Esopus Creek at Coldbrook was running at 118 cfs. Before we finally had rain in late October, the flow at Coldbrook was below 30 cfs! The normal flow for that time of year is between 300 and 400 cfs.

Because of these extreme conditions, on October 14th DEC asked anglers not to fish below the portal. (Temperatures over 70 degrees can be fatal to trout due to low oxygen levels. Turbidity, which makes it harder for trout to find food, is an added stressor.) Then on November 2nd, in response to a petition circulated by TU member Todd Spire, DEC officially closed the Esopus below the portal to fishing for the remainder of

Photo of Esopus Creek Below Five Arch Bridge on October 11, 2016.



the season.

Due to some questionable management practices on the part of DEP, the Schoharie was left nearly dry by the fall. (It was as low as 7% in October.) In August, the water coming out of the portal was so warm and turbid that it was actually warming the stream. As a result, DEP shut it down in late October. The drought didn't break until November.

What Leslie's presentation made clear is that these extreme weather effects are becoming more common and more extreme. If the term "climate change" bothers you, then at least we can agree that the old statistics on normal extreme events are no longer accurate.

As Leslie showed, we're seeing more frequent droughts and more frequent floods. Stream ecosystems evolved to handle these kinds of extreme events—there were floods and droughts in the Catskills long before there were people—but they didn't evolve to

handle them with this frequency, and certainly not while also handling the pressures of human development. What this all means is that it's vital that Catskill streams are managed with sufficient safety buffer to handle these kinds of extreme events. Our old notions of 10, 50, and 100 year floods—the measures that planners use to manage floodplain development—are outdated. The streams are losing a measure of their resiliency. So it's more important than ever that we take steps to give them as much help as possible.

One of the most important measures is to make sure that barriers to fish passage are removed. Another is to address man-made sources of erosion and turbidity. The Hudson River Estuary Program is currently working on a project to identify barriers to fish passage, as they explained to us at a chapter meeting last spring. And Adam Doan, of Ulster County Soil and Water, described several projects the AWSMP is working on to reduce turbidity in the system. (I'll have more on that in February's newsletter.) Trout Unlimited has been awarded a grant from the Arbor Day Foundation to plant 5200 native trees and shrubs in the Catskills. New plantings have lots of benefits. They reduce erosion and turbidity, the shade they provide keeps temperatures down, and the leaf matter helps hold on to rainwater, keeping the streams higher through the summer months.

It's also vital, though, that DEP manage reservoir levels with an eye on extreme events. At the August SPDES Permit meeting they admitted that they hadn't altered their models to account for climate change. The new modifications on the Gilboa Dam and the planned modifications on the Shandaken Tunnel Intake should make that possible. Soon DEP will have the tools to manage the Schoharie

more effectively. Let's hope they begin to factor these events into their planning.

Currently, Esopus Creek is running above average flow, and the water levels in the reservoirs are inching their way back up, but we're still facing low precipitation. According to DEP, November precipitation was half an inch below normal, and December's was over an inch below normal! So we still need more rain and snow. What effect this had on trout in the Esopus is hard to tell. Anglers report that the fall run of browns didn't take place because of the low flows. When this has happened in the past, we sometimes seen a winter or spring run. Let's hope that's going on now so that we don't lose a whole year of wild brown trout. Like the rest of you, I'll be eager to get out there on April 1st to see what things are like in our beloved Catskill creeks.

Photo upstream from the Five Arch Bridge on 11/13/16, when the creek was running at 33cfs.



New Rail Trail to Include Angler Parking

By Andrew Higgins

As many of you know, Ulster County and NYC DEP are collaborating to build a rail trail along the north shore of the Ashokan Reservoir. The trail will cross Esopus Creek at the site of the famed Trestle Pool. I'll admit, part of me isn't excited about the idea of crowds of people walking across a reconstructed bridge while I fish the pool. Solitude is big part of fishing for me. But I have to take the long view and recognize that if more people are getting out and enjoying the outdoors, that means more people will be advocating for its preservation. When I think of it that way, I'm excited about the project.

But Ed Ostapczuk, of the APW Chapter, raised concerns about the impact the rail trail will have on angler access at the Boiceville end. The proposed ending of the rail trail is the current location of the small lot where anglers with DEP Access Permits park to fish the Chimney Hole, the Trestle Pool, and the Big Bend Pool.

Following Ed's lead, I wrote to Ulster County Planning Board in December to express my hope that they would set aside parking spots for people with DEP Access Permits, thus effectively preserving angler access for that area. Chris White, Deputy Director of the Ulster County Planning Department assured me that both Ulster County and DEP are planning to include parking access for anglers. This is good news, as it means that the increased traffic in the area won't squeeze out anglers.

For more information on the proposed rail trail, including a map of the route, see <http://ulstercountyny.gov/planning/rail-trail-project>.



Conservation Corner:

By Ted Hoover

As we turn the page to a new year CMTU is working continue to advance TU's mission to conserve, protect and restore New York's Trout and Salmon Fisheries and their watersheds.

CMTU Conservation committee has been discussing a set of projects for 2017. As always, the success of our chapter is built on dedicated volunteers.

Here are some of the projects we are considering.

- Phase three of the Black Creek Brook trout study
- Stream side tree planting in April
- A fall stream cleanup

Please make your resolution to get involved in 2017. Contact catskillmountaintu@gmail.com

Thank You: CMTU Conservation Banquet 2016

The Catskill Mountains Chapter of Trout Unlimited invites held our 52nd Annual Conservation Banquet, Saturday, October 29th, at the Stonehedge Restaurant on Route 9W in West Park, NY.

Thank you to our speakers, noted author and former DEC Fisheries Principal Habitat Technician Ed Van Put and his wife Judy Van Put.

A special thank you to our sponsors. Without them we would not be able excellent assortment of items for our raffles.

Local Businesses

- A Razor's Edge, Kingston, NY
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- Herzog's, Kingston, NY
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- Guido Restaurant Group, Kingston, NY
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- With You Lockets, Troy Haley, Rhinebeck, NY

Fly Fishing Companies

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- Umpqua Feather Merchants, Louisville, CO
- The Angler's Den, Pawling NY
- Douglas Outdoors, Phoenix, NY
- Doug Swisher, Hamilton, MT
- David Footer, Wildlife Artist Lewiston, ME
- The Folstaff Company, Charlotteville, NY
- Fish Pimp Boise, ID
- Harry Murray, Murray's Fly Shop Edinburg, VA
- Royal Wulff Products, Livingston Manor, NY

Individual Donations

- Bert Darrow, Mike Malloy, Ed Meyer, and Camille Fischer



Special Thanks to Banquet organizers:

Andrew Higgins, Ted Hoover, Ron Urban, William Strugatz

CMTU Winter Fly Tying Circle

Kenco Outfitters, Kingston NY

Looking for something to do to get you through the winter and prepare for opening day. CMTU is organizing a Fly Tiers Circle each Sunday from 1PM to 3PM, from Feb 12th through March 26th. Bring your tying gear to Kenco Outfitters just off in Route 28 west of the Thruway.



Articles for CMTU Monthly Newsletter

We are always looking for articles, photos or stories for our monthly newsletter. If you have an article, photos, news for the Catskill Mountain TU community please contact Ted Hoover at the chapter email. catskillmountaintu@gmail.com

Interested in becoming a Member of Catskill Mountain Trout Unlimited

Trout Unlimited is America's leading coldwater conservation organization. Our hope is that clean, cold, fishable water exists for generations to come, but we can't do it without the support of committed anglers and conservationists like you. Click here to [become a new TU member](#) and see all the great benefits of membership, or click here to [renew your existing membership](#).

Chapter Meeting Location

February's meeting will be held at the Community Room Hudson Valley Mall, Kingston NY (Located near the internal entrance of JCPenny) [map](#)



Photos: Trout T'Ales CMTU Event
at Keegan Ales, Kingston NY

From the President

Tom Emerick's Suitcase

Last fall I heard a knock at the door. When I got there, I saw this shifty guy hurrying down the walk and there, on my doorstep, was a battered old suitcase on top of which was a Post It note that read "This is not a bomb." And it wasn't. The shifty guy turned out to be Ed Meyer, and the suitcase was full of CMTU memorabilia collected by Tom Emerick, a long-time CMTU member and past president who retired and moved south about 10 years ago.

The suitcase contained all sort of cool stuff: chapter pins, patches, tie clips. Even \$8.50 in cash that never made it into the chapter coffers. But the real gems were the pieces of TU history. There's a stack of "Please Don't Litter" bookmarks prepared by the chapter to tell people how long it takes trash to decompose. (Orange peels take 6 months. Aluminum cans, 400 years!) There's a DEC fishing diary issued to CMTU from 1990 with the caption "Assisting DEC to form future policy." There are press clippings showing chapter members doing stream clean ups, about us helping DEC acquire fishing easements along Esopus Creek, founding the Jerry Bartlett Collection at the Phoenicia Library. There are documents from 1997 about chapter efforts to control erosion in Schoharie Creek. There are newspaper articles from 1999 about the beginning of our lawsuit against New York City over discharges into Esopus Creek. There are lots of familiar names in these pieces, including Bert Darrow, Ed Meyer, Bob Sills, Roy Hochberg, Bill Banks and Bill Banks Jr., and of course Ron Urban, who was Chapter President in the 1990s. And there are lots of names of former members, like Tom Emerick, who have moved on.

What really struck me about all these documents is the dedication chapter members displayed back in those days. At a stream cleanup in the 1990s CMTU had 20 members show up! In 1991 we had 30 members show up to hear then NYS



Assemblyman Maurice Hinchey speak about the importance of clean water.

CMTU has had a lot of successes, but there are still a lot of threats to area trout streams. As development continues in the Catskills and Hudson River Valley, and as the effects of climate change continue to impact the region, there's as much need as ever for people who care about our environment and know enough about it to take practical steps to make things better for trout and the watersheds they live in. So let's challenge ourselves to live up to the standard CMTU set in the past. I'm asking each member of the chapter to make a New Year's resolution to attend at least one TU volunteer event this year. Help us plant some trees, pick up some trash, introduce someone to fishing, or plan a chapter event. Together we can help conserve, protect, and restore coldwater fisheries in the Catskills and across America, and to keep alive the proud tradition of the Catskill Mountains Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

Tight lines,

Andrew

Chapter Information

President: Andrew Higgins

Vice President: Ted Hoover

Secretary: Ryan Williams

Treasurer: Ron Urban

Directors: Bert Darrow

Ron Urban

Russell Yess

Ed Meyers

Don Stauss

Bill Shaw



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