

Celebrating
31 Years of
Lateral Lines

Lateral Lines

Monthly Magazine of Winchester Trout Unlimited
Chapter #638

“... All the rivers run to the sea; yet the sea is not full...” Eccl 1:7 (RSV)

January-February 2026

Volume 31, Numbers 1 & 2

Winchester TU Meeting

Thursday, 5 February 2026, 7:00 PM
Shenandoah Lodge, Lake Frederick, VA

Winchester TU Priority Waters Meeting

Thursday, 5 February 2026, 6:00 PM
Shenandoah Lodge, Lake Frederick, VA

Project Healing Waters Monthly meeting

Wednesday, 11 February 2026, 6:00 PM
Shenandoah Lodge, Lake Frederick, VA

BarFly

The next Winchester TU BarFly
Wednesday, 18 February 2026
7:00 PM at Escutcheon Brewing Co.
142 W. Commercial Street, Winchester

For complete calendars, please see
Page 5 for Winchester Project Healing Waters
Page 7 & 19 for Winchester Priority Waters
Page 19 for Winchester Trout Unlimited



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WINCHESTER HEALING WATERS

Chapter Begins Fourth Year with Growing Membership

by Wayne White



Winchester PHW had a large turnout of first-time fly tyers for the first PHW monthly meeting of the new year. Everyone was immediately engaged in tying the Pheasant-Tail Nymph.

photo by Mike Smith

The Winchester Project Healing Waters (PHW) Chapter kicked off the new year with more than 30 Veteran participants and volunteers attending the first monthly meeting on 14 January for the initial fly-tying classes, a review of events scheduled through June, and plans for the first rod-building class.

This was the largest turnout for an evening meeting in the four years of the Winchester PHW Chapter. Winchester, established in February 2020, now has 52 participants and 55 volunteers registered.

“Winchester Healing Waters” continues on the next page.





WINCHESTER HEALING WATERS

Fourth Year -- continued

Seventeen new participants joined in the last year, and nine attended their first monthly meeting in January. We welcomed new participants Michael Atkins, Andrew Lewis, Lewis McElfresh, Brian Johnson, Josh Kline, Stuart Harrison, Kim Tolbert, Kevin Jenkins, and Norman Marriott, as well as two new volunteers, Own Perry and John Ramiccio.



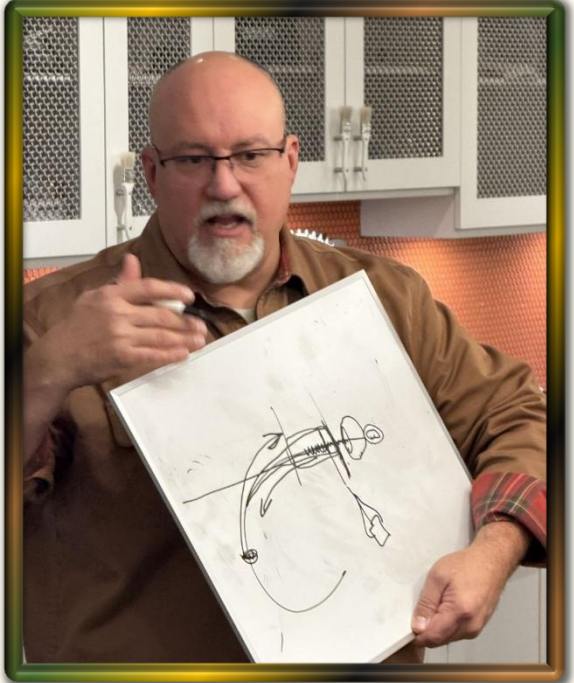
Clockwise from upper left:
Jim White (far right) describes his finishing technique for the Pheasant-Tail Nymph as Jeb Stewart (standing) watches the group adjust their ties.
photo by Wayne White



The intermediate and advanced class listens as Jim White (back left) makes a point about the pattern of the evening, a bead-head, Pheasant-Tail Nymph.
photo by Mike Smith

Dan Soper uses his whiteboard “Sign Language” to illustrate key areas of the hook and how to start thread wraps.
photo by Mike Smith

Kurt Koller wraps thread on his fly.
photo by Mike Smith



Jim White and Dan Soper led the intermediate and beginner fly-tying sessions, respectively, at the monthly meeting, tying the Pheasant Tail Nymph and Zebra Midge flies. With Jim’s smaller group well-versed in fly-tying basics, his instruction focused on finer details of the creations.

Meanwhile, Dan used his “trusty whiteboard” to walk the larger group through the fundamentals of aquatic insects and to illustrate the components of the hook and the proper positioning of the thread to achieve good thread wraps. Dan later commented that he was surprised at the quality of flies tied by the new students, and that most actually understood his “Sign Language” for fly tying.

The Chapter primarily schedules fly-tying sessions in the winter months; however, classes will also be held throughout the year at regular monthly meetings and cover seasonal fishing opportunities. Prior to each month’s tying session, the lead instructor will email a fly pattern guide to all Chapter members. In addition to a materials list, the guide will outline the key steps of the tie. When possible, a link to an instructional YouTube video will also be included. Dry flies will be the focus of the session beginning in March, particularly the Adams and Elk Hair Caddis.

**“Winchester Healing Waters”
continues on the next page.**

WINCHESTER HEALING WATERS

Fourth Year -- continued



Additional fly-tying sessions will also be scheduled at Jake's Bait and Tackle in Winchester, usually on Saturday. These sessions are more focused and will reinforce tying techniques or introduce advanced techniques for more experienced tyers; however, new tyers are welcome to attend. Techniques such as articulated flies, extended bodies, dry-fly posts, and poppers are usually covered in those classes. Certain patterns and specific techniques requested by attendees are also addressed at those sessions.

Following the success of last year's first rod-building classes, Luke Robins and Jim White led a group of seasoned and new rod builders through the preparation and initial steps of building new rods at Jake's Bait and Tackle on Saturday, 17 January. Doc Smith, Heather Wright, Erwin Casto, and Cole Bradshaw are building their second rod this year. Joining the group are first-timers Warren Dudenbostel, Mike Hyams, and Eric Bradley.

According to Luke, the first session went extremely well. "We're dealing with a couple of 'parts' issues, but everyone got their rods spined, and most got grips and reel seats epoxied. All guides were prepped, and guide spaces were marked." Beyond that, Luke said students taped on guides, and there was time to demonstrate the wrapping jigs. Everyone went home to wrap in anticipation of the next class. The group will continue building rods over three sessions held on the remaining Saturdays in January. An additional Saturday on the first weekend in February will be available to complete the projects if necessary.

Clockwise from upper left:

Rich Brooks (r) watches carefully as Norman Marriott makes some initial wraps on his first-ever fly tie – the Pheasant-Tail Nymph.

photo by Wayne White

Jackson (r) demonstrates the use of a whip-finish tool to Eric.

photo by Mike Smith

Dan Soper (r) demonstrates techniques for applying proper tension to the tying thread to Mike Hyams.

photo by Mike Smith



"Winchester Healing Waters" continues on the next page.

WINCHESTER HEALING WATERS END OF YEAR EVENTS

by Wayne White

Additional rod-building classes will be held during the year, depending on demand. Participants and volunteers are encouraged to inquire about having the opportunity to build their own rod. The Chapter does not maintain an inventory of rod kits. The Winchester PHW Chapter will purchase rod kits for participants, and volunteers can buy their own rod kits with the instructors' guidance. In the meantime, anyone interested in building a rod can attend these sessions to observe and learn about the process as the students complete their rods.

Following the monthly meeting, all Chapter members received an updated schedule of activities and events, including local, regional, and National fishing outings beginning in March. The Chapter leadership manages a selection criterion for these outings, which have different angler technical skill requirements. Everyone is encouraged to inquire about these trips and if they would like to attend. Please note that the schedule for National Destination trips to Freedom Ranch and Oak Heart Lodge will be released in February.

Everyone is invited to attend any of the Winchester Chapter's activities and events to observe and appreciate the core services offered and the benefits they provide to our Veterans. If you are interested in visiting with us, please contact the Chapter Leadership.

Clockwise from upper right:

Charles Doc Smith (r) drills out the rod grip in preparation for mounting to the rod blank, as Mike Hyams takes notes.

photo by Heather Wright

Luke Robins (l) lays out the guide spacing for Eric Bradley's (r) rod build as Jim White checks the process steps.

photo by Warren Dudenbostel

Luke Robins (r) wraps the first guide wrap for Mike Hyams' rod blank.

photo by Warren Dudenbostel

Dan Soper (r) presents PHW's Wayne White with a gift certificate to Anglers Lane that the chapter may use as it deems appropriate. Soper had promised to share half his proceeds from the recent Virginia Fly Fishing & Wine Festival with Winchester PHW. He also presented the chapter a certificate for Bass Pro.

photo by Mike Smith





WINCHESTER CHAPTER UPDATE – JANUARY 2026

by Wayne White

PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS JANUARY – JUNE 2026

January

17, 24, 31, and 7 Feb (If needed) -- Rod Building at Jake's Bait and Tackle
31 -- Fly-Tying at Jake's (JBT)

February

11 – Monthly Meeting. Rachel's Kitchen, Shenandoah Lodge, Lake Frederick
14 -- Rapidan TU Chapter Fly-Fishing Show, Warrenton, Virginia.
Winchester and Fredericksburg PHW are sharing space for tying flies
21 and 28 – Fly Tying at JBT

March

11 – Monthly Meeting. Rachel's Kitchen, Shenandoah Lodge, Lake Frederick,
14 – Fly-Tying at JBT
21 – (T) Winchester Day Outing at Lake Neff Izaak Walton
28 – PHW Fly-Tying Marathon at the USMC Museum, Quantico, Virginia. Annual PHW event to tie flies with Veterans from other chapters. All flies will be distributed to local Chapters around the country.

April

8 – Monthly Meeting. Rachel's Kitchen, Shenandoah Lodge, Lake Frederick
17-19 -- Trip One and 19-21 Trip Two — Virginia Regional Wild Trout Trips
Shenandoah National Park. Winchester has one participant and one volunteer guide slot for each trip.
22 – Double Spur Outfitters. Winchester Fishing Outing at Cedar Creek, Star Tanery. Limited to six participants and six guides
22 - 24 River Bound. Virginia Regional Fishing Outing, Lebanon, Virginia. Winchester has slots for one participant and one guide.
24 - 26 – Virginia Elks Youth Camp (VEYC) Overnight Fishing Outing, Millboro, VA, with PHW Fredericksburg. Winchester has slots for three participants and three guides.
30 – 2 May -- Back Creek. Virginia Regional Fishing Outing, Bath County. Winchester: one participant and one guide.

May

2 -- (T) – Lake Neff, Winchester Day Fishing Outing, Izaak Walton, Winchester.
3 – (T) -- Beaver Creek, Winchester Day Fishing Outing – Limited to four participants and four volunteer guides.
13 – Monthly Meeting. Rachel's Kitchen, Shenandoah Lodge, Lake Frederick
27 – Rose River, Winchester Day Fishing Outing, Rose River Farm, Syria, VA – Six participants and six volunteer guides.
30 – Leetown Fish Hatchery, Winchester Fishing Outing, at USGS Science Center, Kearneysville, WVA. Open to all participants and volunteers.

June

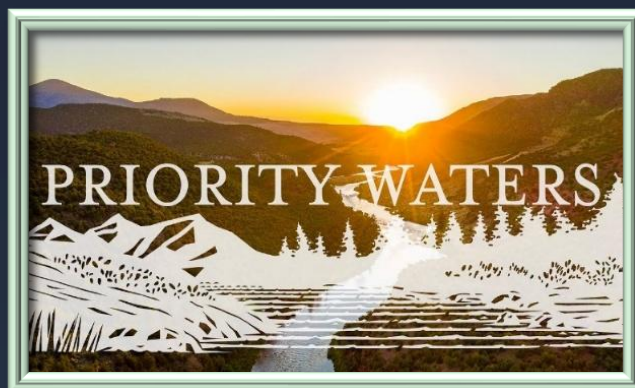
6 – Thornton River, Winchester Day Outing, Sponsored by Turkey Mountain Fly-Fishing Club (TMFFC), Sperryville, Virginia. Limited to six participants and six guides
10 – Monthly Meeting, Rachel's Kitchen, Shenandoah Lodge, Lake Frederick
(T) 27 – Annual Smallie Challenge, Cool Spring, Shenandoah University, Parker Lane, Bluemont, Virginia.

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Winchester Priority Waters: An Exciting, but Demanding, Year Ahead



Prepared by the Winchester Priority Waters Team
Photos by Michael Lawler Smith

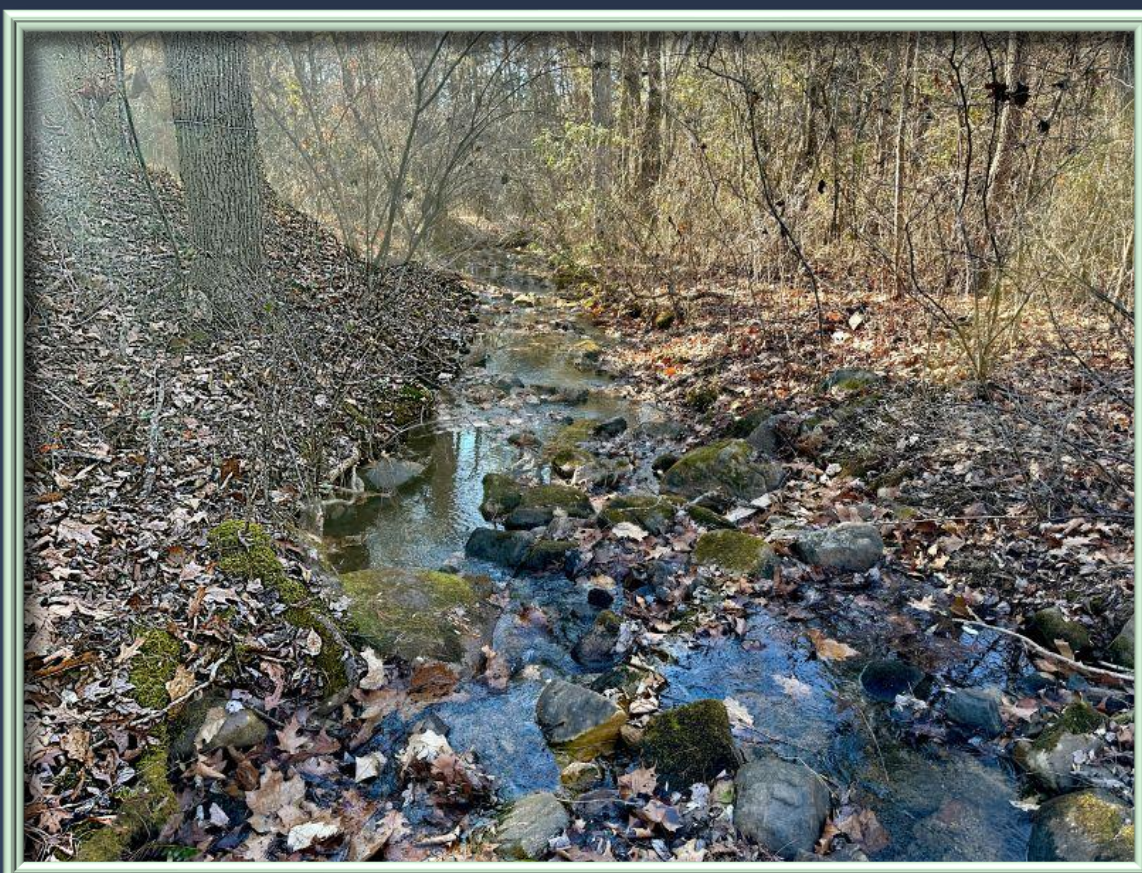


Photo: A view downstream along Mill Run.

While drought conditions still prevail in much of the region, Mill Run's flows have been somewhat better than expected.

When the Priority Waters Team met on 8 January 2026, they knew from the length of the agenda and substance of the items that time would be at a premium. Team members present were Ben Coffman, Bob Fish, Tedd Gimber, Mike Hart, Dave Juth, Drew Patterson, and Luke Robbins. Team leader Mike Makufka chaired the meeting.

The ambitious agenda began with a brief review of the last meeting's minutes (Nov. 2025), and then Mike Makufka shared the extensive input he had received from Seth Coffman, the team's Priority Waters liaison with TU's national staff: Seth has both the equipment and licensing to conduct electroshocking for the team. The suggested time will be late May or early June. Seth had also indicated his willingness to work with landowners downstream from Mudhole Gap to allow barrier assessments and possibly to install data loggers and access for water quality monitoring.

Mike Makufka relayed that Seth will look into the status of the old USGS gauging station and what procedures might be needed for its removal. Seth has recommended the team conduct large woody debris assessments upstream and down from our established monitoring sites. He added that he will work with Peter Dalke, of Friends of the North Fork, in reaching out to landowners.

Seth Coffman shared with Mike Makufka that there might be future opportunities for Priority Waters efforts in portions of the Cedar Creek drainage, notably Duck Run. Coffman noted the need for culvert assessment on Shenandoah National Park's west-flowing streams and is currently working on obtaining permissions from the Park Service.

Mike Makufka previously emailed all the team members a copy of the Strategic Plan guiding the efforts at Little Passage and Mill Run, and the team began a detailed discussion about its current status and future steps. He noted that several items were already accomplished, notably the collection of historic water quality data, fish counts, and some macroinvertebrate assessments. The team successfully acquired and deployed testing apparatus and conducted stream barrier assessments in 2025. They will continue with site mapping, water quality monitoring, and stream barrier assessments in 2026.

“Priority Waters” continues on the next page.

Winchester Priority Waters – continues An Exciting, but Demanding, Year Ahead



Photo: A late December visit to Mill Run disclosed a better than anticipated flow.

Additional training in barrier assessment could benefit the team, and Mike M. noted training opportunities could be available in the months ahead. Tedd Gimber added anyone who had received barrier training could in fact teach others.

The strategic plan calls for signage to identify the streams as Priority Waters project sites. The group discussed the need and timeliness of signage. While some noted it need not be among the highest priorities, others countered that the costs were negligible and the potential public information and public relations values could be considerable. As one team member described the signage, it would be “low-hanging fruit.”

The team next addressed completion timelines for this project. Mike Makufka had noted in the strategic planning document that the “effective plan dates” spanned the period from October 2024 through October 2027. The question arose, “What do we do if we’re not done with our work?” Mike M. pointed out that it wouldn’t necessarily mean the end of the team’s work. Tasks would likely continue, but that three-year period would mark a good time to carefully evaluate the first phase, to assess both project strengths and weaknesses. That, he noted, could greatly assist and guide the team’s follow-up planning. Additionally, that review might offer the opportunity to produce a document highlighting the chapter’s Priority Waters initiative, perhaps one that could be useful to other chapters.

Mike Makufka wrapped up the meeting with a discussion of future outing dates and scheduling. He suggested the first Wednesday of every other month beginning in February. Each outing this year would undertake both water quality monitoring and barrier assessments. The macroinvertebrate survey will begin in April. He noted that we have enough team members now that we can effectively divide up tasks in the field and be more efficient.

We close with this reminder: New team members are ***always*** welcome.

Dates Scheduled for Winchester Priority Waters 2026 Field Work

<u>Date</u>	<u>Activity</u>
4 Feb 2026	Water Quality Monitoring and/or Barrier Assessment
1 Apr 2026	Macroinvertebrate Survey and Water Quality Monitoring
6 May 2026	Tentative for electroshocking with Seth
3 Jun 2026	Water Quality Monitoring and/or Barrier Assessment
5 Aug 2026	Water Quality Monitoring and/or Barrier Assessment
7 Oct 2026	Water Quality Monitoring and/or Barrier Assessment
2 Dec 2026	Water Quality Monitoring and/or Barrier Assessment



Barbara's Books

Series created by Barbara Gamble

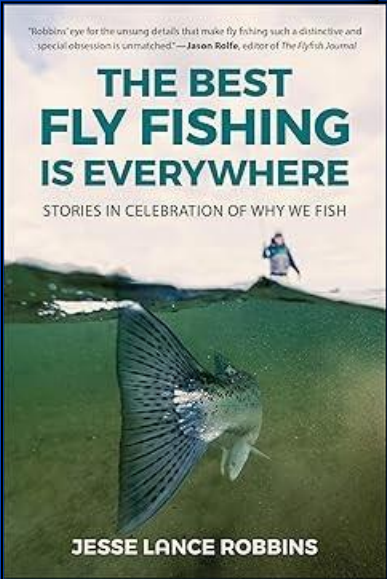
The Best Fly Fishing Is Everywhere: Stories in Celebration of Why We Fish

Author: Jesse Lance Robbins
Print Length: 192 pages
ISBN-10: 1961293528
ISBN-13: 979-1961293526
Publisher: Hatherleigh Press
Publication Date: 24 February 2026

In *The Best Fly Fishing Is Everywhere*, Jesse Lance Robbins invites readers into a contemplative journey through water and time. This collection of essays, stories, and meditations moves beyond the pursuit of the perfect cast or the biggest catch. Instead, it explores fly fishing as a dialogue between human and nature, solitude and connection, movement, and stillness.

From the misty rivers of Oregon to the urban waters of Tokyo, the windswept flats of Key West to the trout-laced waters of New Zealand, Robbins captures the essence of place and the spirit of the angler. Each chapter is a moment suspended -- sometimes triumphant, sometimes humbling, always honest.

Whether fishing alone or with companions, chasing trout or tarpon, steelhead or smallmouth, Robbins reminds us that the best fishing isn't found on a map. It's found in the way we show up -- in reverence, in curiosity, in love for the wild. Because the best fishing isn't about where you go. It's about what you find when you get there.



This is a book for any angler, for anyone moved by waters and the pursuit of what resides within. It's for anyone who has ever stood beside a river and felt something ancient stir. With prose that is both poetic and grounded in experience, *The Best Fly Fishing Is Everywhere* a meditation on nature, memory, and the quiet joy of being present.

Jesse Lance Robbins is an essayist, creative writer, and journalist whose work has appeared in *The Drake Magazine*, *The Flyfish Journal*, *Swing the Fly*, *Modern Huntsman*, *TROUT*, and *Atlantic Salmon Journal*, as well as online. Jesse has worked in and lived various facets of fly fishing since high school -- from fly shop staff, trout bum, guide, casting instructor, trip host, and writer to tackle design and development, marketing, travel, and sales; for over a decade, he worked in-house at Sage, Redington, RIO Products, and Fly Water Travel. A frequent reader and organizer of the Writers on the Fly event series, he now works in nonprofit fisheries, river, and water conservation, connecting people with the places they love, and the work being done to protect and restore them. Jesse and his partner live near the confluence of the McKenzie and Willamette Rivers in Oregon with their cache of old boats, timeless books, acoustic guitars, and always-strung fly rods.

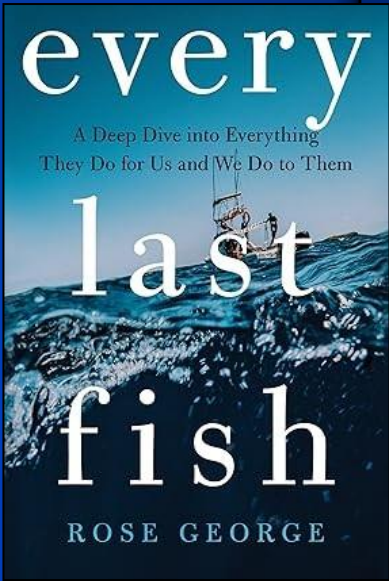
Sources: amazon.com and the publishers

Every Last Fish

Authors: Rose George
Print length: 304 pages
ISBN-10: 0393881474
ISBN-13: 978-0393881479
Publisher: W. W. Norton & Company
Publication Date: 4 November 2025

Slippery, wet, and strange: Fish can be easier to think of as food than as fellow animals. But what do we know about these creatures we meet on our dinner table and how they got there? For the first time in history, humans are eating more farmed fish than wild, and our fish consumption is predicted to increase. But with warming oceans, diminishing fish stocks, and questions about fish farming practices, where will the fish come from?

In *Every Last Fish*, Rose George dives into these questions by exploring the vast industries that support our appetite for fish sticks and salmon burgers, and the colossal illegal fishing trade whose practices and standards are unmonitored and often dangerous.



Journeying to the bottom of the ocean and back, she examines the machinations of this \$200 billion food system—one that's growing rapidly even as fish populations disappear.

Along the way, George introduces us to the people on the front lines of fishes and fishing: fishermen, divers, marine biologists, fish fryers, and fishwives. She presents minnows who shout; discovers the underwater soap operas of wolffish; and, despite her constant seasickness, boards trawlers to see firsthand the impact of fishing on our emptying oceans. Her journey ends at the fish counter, with guidance for readers looking to make better choices, both for the ocean's health and their own.

Ranging from Alaska to the United Kingdom to Senegal and beyond, *Every Last Fish* is an unforgettable trip through the ocean's inhabitants and workers. With irresistible wit and an eye for the unusual, George reveals the unseen and endangered world behind what you buy at the seafood counter, while also bringing to life that dead fish on your plate.

Rose George is the author of four previous books. She holds a BA in modern languages from Oxford and an MA in international politics from the University of Pennsylvania, where she was a Thouron Awardee and a Fulbright Fellow. She lives in Yorkshire, UK.

Sources: amazon.com and the publishers



My Trout Fly Box

The Flymph

article and photos
by Burr Tupper

Pheasant-Tail Flies

Hope all of our subscribers had a great Christmas and New Year. I am now able to tie flies again after shoulder replacement surgery. My wife gave me a great book as a Christmas present, and I would like to share some of the content with you. The book is **Pheasant Tail Simplicity** and is authored by Yvon Chouinard, Craig Mathews, and Mauro Mazzo.

The book contains numerous pheasant tail flies for trout, steelhead, salmon, smallmouth bass, and bonefish. The pheasant tail nymph (bead and non-bead) is one of my favorite flies.

The book not only gives detailed instruction on how to tie all the flies, but suggestions on how to fish the fly.

I have already tied some of the flies in previous articles, but I wanted to share some of the flies featured in the book.



The Flymph

The Flymph

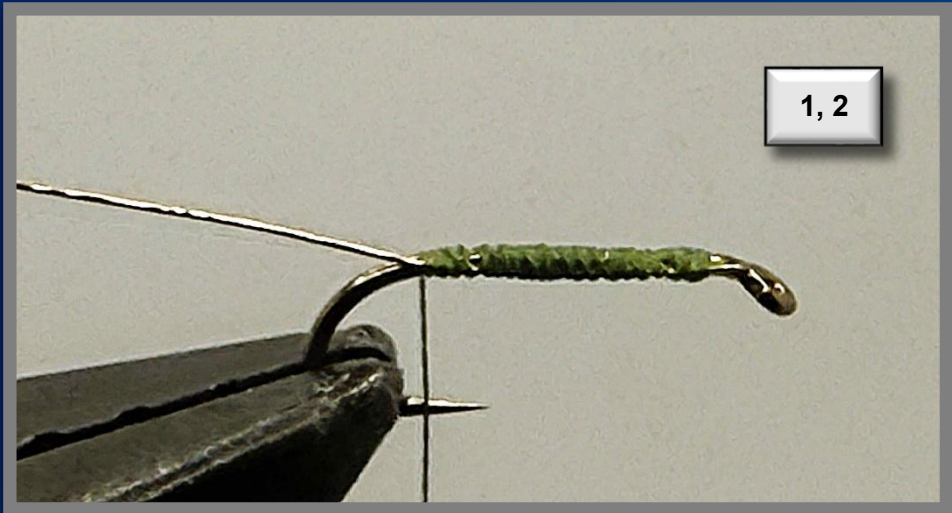
This soft hackle fly is tied on a heavy hook and is called a Flymph by Jame Leisenring and Pete Hidy as it is really a combination of a nymph and an emerger.

To fish it, cast it up and across the river or stream and let it sink.

When the line straightens, lift the fly to the surface. This technique is called the Leisenring Lift.

Most of the time the fish will take the fly on the lift. If this fly were tried with a light hook, it would drag on the surface, which usually results in a refusal.

The heavy hook keeps it from dragging on the surface.

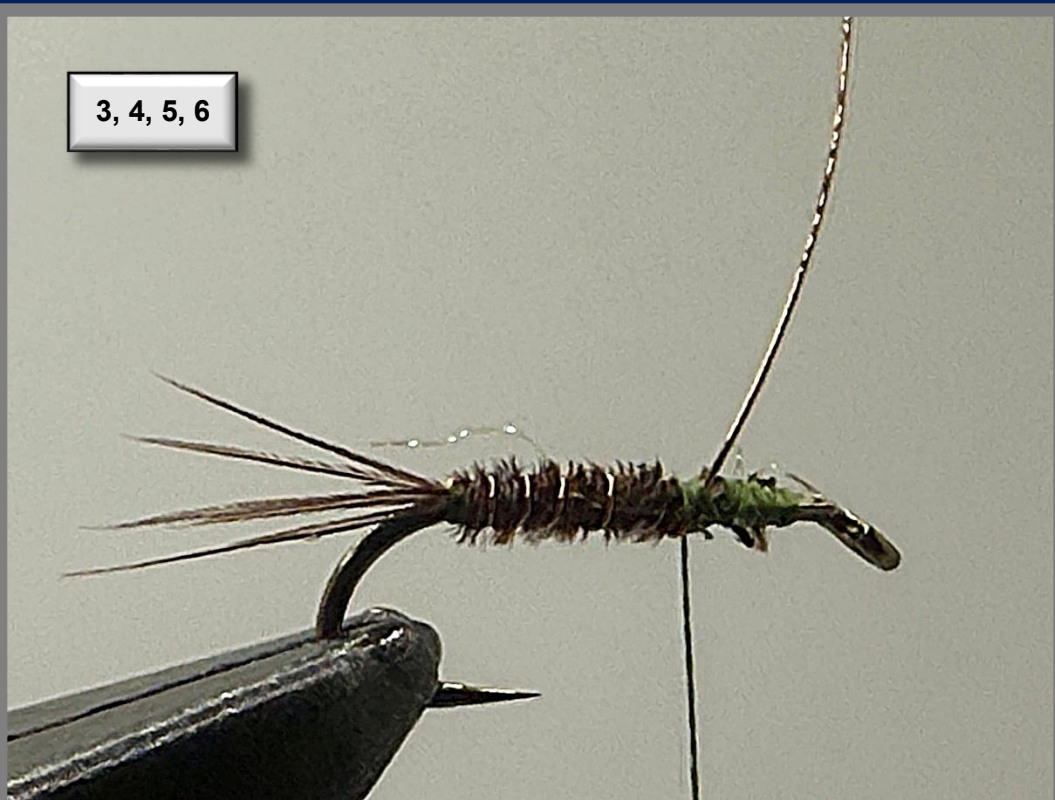


Materials List

- Hook: Umpqua UC610BL (or equivalent), 1X heavy wide gap, 8-20
- Thread: Olive
- Ribbing: Extra small to medium gold or copper wire
- Tail: 4-8 pheasant tail barbs
- Body: Wrap the pheasant tail barbs tied on for the tail
- Thorax: Peacock Ice Dub or other of your choice
- Hackle: Grey Hungarian Partridge

My Trout Fly Box -- continued

3, 4, 5, 6



7, 8



Instructions

1. Tie in thread just to rear of the eye of the hook.
2. Tie in the wire and wrap to the bend of the hook.
3. Tie in 4-8 pheasant tail barbs to form the tail. 1/8 – 1/4 inch length depending on hook size.
4. Wrap thread 2/3s up the hook.
5. Wrap pheasant tail barbs up the hook and tie off.
6. Wrap the wire forward 3-4 turns and tie off.
7. Dub a thorax of Ice Dub, leaving room to tie and wrap hackle. (The Ice Dub thorax creates air bubbles that imitate bubbles of emerging Caddis or Mayfly)
8. Select Hungarian partridge hackle with fibers just longer than the hook shank and tie in the tip with concave side facing the tyer.
9. Wrap the hackle twice and tie off, take a couple thread wraps through the hackle to strengthen.
10. Whip finish.

9, 10



ANGLER REFLECTIONS



The Love of the Outdoors reflections by Nick Brognano



All that “chilly” weather never held me back from getting up early and rushing to the best spot on the Mohawk River. For me, Trout Day opened at 6:00 AM, and I was one of the first at the stream. That spot was directly across from the fish hatchery. Most of the hatchery trout didn’t know enough to escape and swim farther downstream where there would be fewer fishermen out to catch them. The trout paid no attention to the frigid weather while the crowded landlubbers holding fishing poles stood there insanely shivering.

I stood in that insane bunch without hat or gloves. In my youth the blood flowed stronger, and together with the excitement of the first opening day I could stand on the bank freezing with the best of them. Sure, it was cold, but my foolish young mind told me it was more exhilarating and challenging to “conquer the elements of nature.” Those who left the stream prematurely weren’t real Trout Men. They should wait for the sun to come out and fish for the warm water species like bass or carp I concluded. I humbly admit that was my mind set those many years ago. As you know, time has a way of changing people but not completely.

As I write this it is 21 degrees outside with ice covering my car. My wife just asked me to clear the ice off her car. I won’t share with you what the evil side of my brain wanted to say but I reluctantly did what I was asked. While I was hacking away at the ice, I thought of the last planned Steelhead trip to Erie. That was only a few weeks ago. Fred and Elmer and I were to fish for the last time in 2025. The weather forecast predicted freezing and snowy conditions. That was enough to scare us old fellows whose blood flow isn’t close to what it used to be. Nevertheless, I would have gone and that is the truth!



Top: “Ever get caught in a blizzard while fishing?”

watercolor by W.M. Prokopchak © 2026

Above: “...it was still cold enough to ice up the fishing pole eyelets....”

photo by Bill Prokopchak

**“Angler Reflections” continues
on the next page.**



ANGLER
REFLECTIONS

REFLECTIONS
REFLECTIONS

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-- CONTINUED

Left: “Polar vortex blankets Eastern United States....”

photo by Bill Prokopchak

Below: “Even with floating sheets of ice making fishing more difficult”

photo by Bill Prokopchak

Today's newspaper had the following weather report: “Polar vortex blankets Eastern United States blasting nearly two dozen states with arctic air.” As I read this, I first had to look up the word “vortex.” It is defined as a “whirl of a powerful eddy of air, whirlwind.” After reading the entire article I concluded that it was nothing more than like the opening day of Trout season in upstate New York! I would have loved to have at least tried Erie and felt the cold and possible hook up. It is in conditions like that when you know you are alive, when you are freezing and close to death. That is an old man talking who refuses to let go of what he considers excitement and thrill that only the great outdoors can grant. “Sounds like insanity,” my wife said, but then remember she doesn't fish.

When I was in college, we had a resident sculpturer who worked with wood and stone. His studio was open, and his work could be viewed as it progressed. The man was a naturalist who often walked alone in the woods regardless of the weather. He would see a stump or rock and bring it to his studio. From a simple wooden stump or piece of rock he would envision something entirely different and his inner vision would eventually become visible to everyone. I once saw an exquisite Brown Trout meticulously carved out of wood. I often think of that slightly bent over, bushy, white haired, old man and wish I had accompanied him in his outdoor walks. I know I would have enjoyed it and maybe would have learned something regardless of the weather. I don't know if he ever fished but he clearly appreciated and connected with the outdoors and knew what a Brown Trout looked like.



“Angler Reflections” continues on the next page.

ANGLER REFLECTIONS

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There is the connection, the love of the outdoors. Now, a little wiser than years passed, I have learned to wear a hat and gloves to better enjoy the outdoors when the weather demands it. The last time I did this was in Erie fishing for Steelhead with Elmer who has a wide mustache. As I wildly recollect, he stood on the opposite bank side. I could see him suffering and shaking all over. The ice buildup on his mustache got so heavy he couldn't hold his head up. But there were fish in the water and we could see them. What is a guy to do?

I yelled out, "Elmer, want to leave?" He was frozen, he couldn't speak. It was either that or I couldn't hear. It's possible my dual hearing aids may have frozen up. I am proud to say to my brother Trout guys that we stood our ground and did not stop flinging the rod even though we were all alone with no one cheering us on. How more noble can a Trout guy get? Even with floating sheets of ice making fishing more difficult we kept at it until a passerby called 911 and an emergency vehicle suddenly pulled up. Two strong looking fellows said something to us but neither of us responded. The next thing I think I saw (by this time my eyes were icing up clouding my vision or perhaps I was hallucinating) was Elmer, stiff as a board, laid out on a stretcher being taken away.

I was next to be carried off but I had a Steelhead on the line, and my blood began to flow again. Slowly my thumbs began to move, and I could fight the Steelie. I defrosted in minutes and the near-death experience departed. After a 10-minute struggle I released the Steelhead and thanked it for saving my life. Hearing the excitement, Elmer resurrected himself and jumped out of the emergency vehicle observing the battle from the bridge above. He recovered and I survived.

You must know there are those who believe Trout fishermen who fish in subzero conditions are foolish and sometimes go crazy with wild imaginations. That is not entirely true. Only a few rise to that level. Like the sculpturer mentioned above, they walk alone to see and feel things others miss. Fishing is and deserves to be an all-year-round sport. It is like a loving spousal relationship, hot and cold, up and down, close and sometimes far away, yet we are grateful and thankful for every minute. I know I am.

My observation is that those who disagree live alone in Miami Beach and sadly never saw or felt the beauty of a fallen snowflake. They are usually scantily dressed and fish for sunfish when it's not too hot. Drinking Margaritta's and listening to Caribbean music while fishing out of a boat is a must for them. Be that as it may, I have no issue with them or their fishing methods. It is those dressed like mountaineers who drive their cars out on the ice, park them there, dig wide holes in the ice and sit waiting long hours for a strike. Now that is taking it too far! Even I agree with my wife, it is unimaginative, crazy, and suicidal!!!

"The most completely lost of all days is that on which one has not laughed," Nicolas Chamfort.



Above: "I have learned to wear a hat and gloves to better enjoy the outdoors when the weather demands it."

photo by Bill Prokopchak



ANGLER REFLECTIONS



A Deep Dive into “Harrumph”

(or glimpses into my mottled and muddled view of hatcheries)

by Michael Lawler Smith

A wholesome project in my senior years is embracing this reality: I ain't so smart. Moreover, I've been seriously inquiring where and how *did* some of my views evolve? The origins of some are labyrinthine, albeit not necessarily interesting. And sometimes you wince along the way.

I had a chance to revisit a whole can of canards just recently, courtesy of the latest issue of Virginia Wildlife. Among the newsy items in its back pages was a rather tiny blurb: “INCLUDING ANGLERS IN PLANNING” – DWR sent out a targeted survey to stocked-trout anglers, seeking input into the 10-year revision of the *Stocked Trout Management Plan* to help guide future stocked trout management.”

Something about the word “hatchery” lights up my neural network. In this instance the stunning fact that startled me was a full decade had passed since the last iteration. How did that happen so fast? Then, immediately, a wince. My comments ten years ago would never be mistaken for civil. Hasty, ill-considered, rash – those might be among the more charitable descriptors.



“The dull and nub-finned homeliness of stockers....”

photo by Mike Smith

Thus, when I read that the document would be “targeted,” sent only to participants in stocked trout fisheries, the urge to launch intrastate ballistic insults was almost overwhelming. But inexplicably, I demurred. And in that pause, this unsettling thought welled up: “Would I want to willingly subject myself to reading scores (or hundreds) of angry letters and emails from that stratum of so-called (pick one) sportsmen, fly anglers, catch-and-release only fishers, etc., who would not only assail my professional competence but castigate and abuse a small legion of license buyers who truly enjoy their sport?” My second wince: why didn't I think that way a decade ago? Public servants, especially those in hard pressed conservation agencies these days, do not need any further abuse.

So, I began an exploration of what I really think about hatcheries, put-and-take trout fisheries, and their suitability on the modern landscape. It was an interesting exercise. I will try to reassemble in briefest form just how tangled a tale it is.

The story starts in Ohio, coincidentally where I “started.” But back in 1853, a Cleveland doctor named Theodatus Garlick decided to try to replicate a method of artificial trout propagation he had read about, a process devised by monks in France allegedly in the far distant past. He succeeded, becoming if you will, the first coldwater hatchery pioneer in North America. I became an Ohioan in 1946 (the product of quite natural propagation, I must assume) and languished in the eminently trout-free Cincinnati area through the late 1950's, whereupon I discovered Dr. Milton B. Trautman's *Fishes of Ohio* and *Field & Stream's* A.J. McClane; the former induced in me a trance-like beguilement for all things salmonid, the latter fired my fantasies for exotic angling gear and fishing prowess. Yes, I turned bad early in life. (and I should add, Dr. Trautman “introduced” me to Dr. Garlick).

**“Angler Reflections” continues
on the next page.**

ANGLER REFLECTIONS

-- CONTINUED

Here's how my 1960's transpired: I caught my very first trout up in Michigan, in 1961, a rainbow in a pay pond; and then that same summer, a dizzying plurality of hatchery brook trout from a state-stocked pond near Suttons Bay, Michigan. First wild brook trout, Michigan, 1962; first wild brown, and first on a dry fly, Michigan, 1963.

And the 1970's were worse: Somehow, the University of Wisconsin-Madison granted me admission to a graduate program in conservation (Also Leopold's school, for goodness' sake! -- they slipped up and let me in).

Mishaps continued and I wound up on the payroll of the Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources, where I attached myself to the Fisheries division, earning the title "gadfly," and producing a small barrage of trout-related information offerings. The rule of Murphy's Law remained inviolate: the Fish & Wildlife Service in Washington got stuck with me in 1975, and so I got to fish the fabled Rapidan for the very first time, a misspent youth fulfilled.

I Have Always Celebrated Wild Trout

The truth is, while I've always celebrated wild trout, so much of my fishing has always somehow depended upon a hatchery. My former, long-lamented trout pond down in Lexington, VA? 100% hatchery supported (wonderful fish, too, from the old Casta-Line Trout Farm). Those freakish Leviathans I seek twice yearly from the Salmon River country in upstate NY? Virtually all hatchery babies grown vast.

(Editor's Note: For Mike's article on his personal Lexington fish pond, please see his article entitled, "That Time I Built a Tailwater, in LATERAL LINES, Vol.29, No.10, October 2024)

Despite my snarky stocked trout input a decade ago, I think DWR does its level best to achieve fairness in their allocation of fisheries resources. But I also fervently wish the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act allowed for research and management funds for **all** fish species, not just the "game" fish ... but that task will await a younger generation.

Gorgeous Rainbows with Full Flowing Fins

Perhaps this anecdote captures my longstanding ambivalence about hatcheries and put-and-take. Nearly twenty years ago I sold an article to one of the national fly-fishing magazines. It recounted what I had thought a bold and explosive innovation: the federal agency I had worked during the 1990's, had successfully produced "wild" trout in a hatchery raceway setting. More startling still? The dull and nub-finned homeliness of stockers wasn't due to the "abrasion of fins on concrete raceway walls" rationale that seemed to satisfy outdoor writers and their readership. Nope. Hatchery *diet* was the key. A nutrition researcher at the National Fish Technology Center in Montana had been granted use of a couple raceways in which he could test various trout diets. He crafted a proprietary formula that yielded gorgeous rainbows with full, flowing fins. Moreover, when he added instream cover to the raceways, significantly reduced the number of fish in each raceway, and restricted virtually all humans from the fish' "cone of vision" during the feeding process -- the result was a wily, wary, and **beautiful** fish. In effect, a wild trout.

Quantity Wins the Day for Most Anglers

So, that article turned the world of trout culture on its ear, right? Uh, no. And here I had thought all along that what those anglers longed for was a **beautiful** trout. The lesson I learned echoed a remark I heard a gruff old fisheries manager voice back in my earliest days in agency work regarding trout appearances: "I think it's a bunch of b.s. when anglers say they can tell wild trout from a stocked trout just by looking at 'em!" Looks don't matter. Quantity wins the day for most anglers, not esthetics.

An Old Man's Longing

If that's what DWR must manage to, I am now at peace with it. Will I try to sneak in a letter (a polite one this time, for sure) even though I received no invitation to do so? Maybe. Were I to do so, it would doubtless be more wistful than wrathful. It would feature an old man's longing for a litter-free stream-scape, for extravagant angler courtesy, for gratuitous catch-and-release and fishable stocks that remained available for weeks on end rather than mere hours. And I might invite DWR to "double down" its efforts in populous Loudoun, Fairfax, and Prince William Counties, to work with local jurisdictions to assess which of their beautiful stream corridor parks would lend themselves best to new recreational fisheries.

And, in total transparency, that very last wish is on behalf of that 14-year-old angler long ago in trout-less Cincinnati who longed for a trout stream he could walk or bike to. But as I said at the outset, I ain't so smart -- even I know you really can't go back in time.



AMERICAN CONSERVATION FILM FESTIVAL

MARCH
13-15, 2026
SHEPHERDSTOWN, WV
CONSERVATIONFILMFEST.ORG

Please use the link
below for complete
information

[2025 American
Conservation Film
Festival | 2025 American
Conservation Film
Festival](#)

Winchester TU Monthly “BarFly” Events

Wednesday, 18 February 2026, 7:00 PM

Wednesday, 18 March 2026, 7:00 PM

Wednesday, 15 April 2026, 7:00 PM

Escutcheon Brewery

Commercial St., Winchester, VA



The Winchester Chapter of Trout Unlimited (WTU) will gather at Escutcheon Brewing in Winchester to offer anglers and **non-anglers** in our area the opportunity to learn about Trout Unlimited and to tie fishing flies.

No fly-tying or fly-fishing experience is necessary.

All participants under age 21 must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

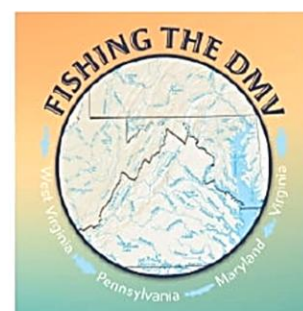
See you at the next
Winchester TU BarFly.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I enjoy reading the monthly newsletter. Thank you for all that you do for our community.

Zach Hillerson
Berryville, VA



4th Annual KAYAK FISHING EXPO

SATURDAY FEB 21 2026

10am – 2pm

Experience the world of Kayak Fishing!

Boat Show! Seminars!

Good time!

Good food!
(for purchase)



Facebook event
Scan me!

JAKES BAIT AND TACKLE / 234 Ezra Lane Winchester, VA

Please. Support businesses that Support Winchester Healing Waters.

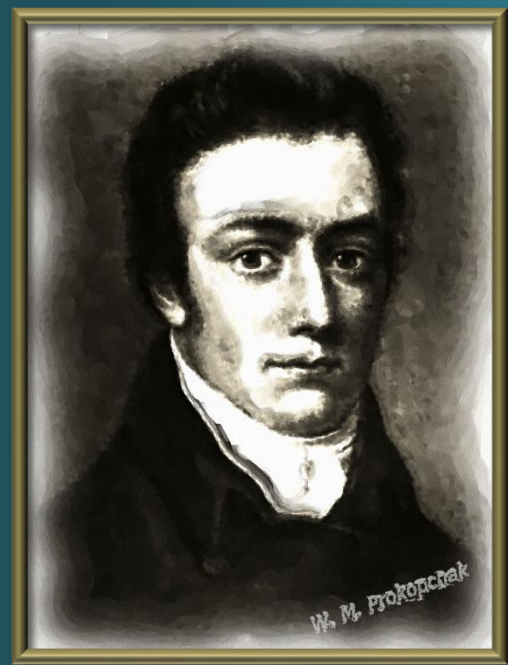


Poet’s Corner:

Poems selected
for the angler

Sonnet IV:
To The River Otter*

by Samuel Taylor Coleridge
1772-1834
England



SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE
Ink wash by W.M. Prokopchak © 2026
after a Wikipedia image by an unidentified artist

Dear native brook! wild streamlet of the West!
How many various-fated years have passed,
What happy and what mournful hours, since last
I skimmed the smooth thin stone along thy breast,
Numbering its light leaps! Yet so deep impressed
Sink the sweet scenes of childhood, that mine eyes
I never shut amid the sunny ray,
But straight with all their tints thy waters rise,
Thy crossing plank, thy marge with willows grey,
And bedded sand that, veined with various dyes,
Gleamed through thy bright transparence! On my way,
Visions of childhood! oft have ye beguiled
Lone manhood’s cares, yet waking fondest sighs:
Ah! that once more I were a careless child!

*Coleridge writes of his beloved Otter River.



“The Mikes” Recognized at WTU Annual Holiday Gathering



Above: In one of his last acts as President of the Winchester Chapter of TU, Gene Lewis displays the “Ugly Fish Award” before he makes the presentation.

Right: Mike Smith (l) and Mike Makufka – known as “The Mikes” accept the Ugly Fish Award for their work in establishing Winchester’s strong Priority Waters program, focusing on our native Brook Trout population.



The UGLY FISH AWARD, established in 2012, is presented to Winchester TU members who provide exceptional service and leadership to the Winchester Chapter of Trout Unlimited.



2025 - 2026 Calendar of Events Winchester Trout Unlimited

See also
<http://winchester.tu.org/>

(For the complete Winchester Project Healing Waters calendar, please see page 5 of this newsletter.)

February 2026

Wednesday, 4 February 2026

Winchester Priority Waters Field Day: Water quality monitoring and/or barrier assessment

Thursday, 5 February 2026

6:00 PM – Winchester Priority Waters monthly meeting

Thursday, 5 February 2026

7:00 PM – Winchester TU monthly meeting

Wednesday, 11 February 2026

6:00 PM – Winchester Project Healing Waters monthly meeting

Wednesday, 18 February 2026 – Winchester Trout Unlimited BarFly

7:00 – 9:00 PM – Escutcheon Brewery, Commercial Street, Winchester

March 2026

Thursday, 5 March 2026

6:00 PM – Winchester Priority Waters monthly meeting

Thursday, 5 March 2026

7:00 PM – Winchester TU monthly meeting

Wednesday, 11 March 2026

6:00 PM – Winchester Project Healing Waters monthly meeting

Wednesday, 18 March 2026 – Winchester Trout Unlimited BarFly

7:00 – 9:00 PM – Escutcheon Brewery, Commercial Street, Winchester

April 2026

Thursday, 2 April 2026

6:00 PM – Winchester Priority Waters monthly meeting

Thursday, 2 April 2026

7:00 PM – Winchester TU monthly meeting

Wednesday, 2 April 2026

6:00 PM – Winchester Project Healing Waters monthly meeting

Wednesday, 15 April 2026 – Winchester Trout Unlimited BarFly

7:00 – 9:00 PM – Escutcheon Brewery, Commercial Street, Winchester



The opinions expressed in *Lateral Lines* are those of the individual authors and are not necessarily those of Winchester Trout Unlimited or Trout Unlimited National.

All water sports, including fishing, and stream restoration activities have inherent dangers. Participation in all Winchester Trout Unlimited activities is at the participant's own risk and participants agree to hold harmless Winchester Trout Unlimited and its members. A responsible adult must accompany all minors.

