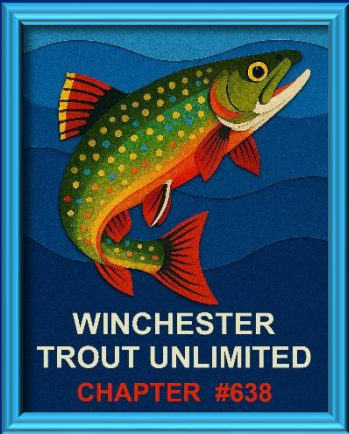




Celebrating
31 Years of
Lateral Lines

Lateral Lines

Monthly Magazine of Winchester Trout Unlimited
Chapter #638

“Furious activity is no substitute for understanding.” H. H. Williams, Bishop of Carlisle

June - July 2026
Volume 31, Numbers 6 & 7

Next Winchester TU Meeting

Thursday, 6 August 2026, 7:00 PM
Shenandoah Lodge, Lake Frederick, VA

Winchester TU Priority Waters Meeting

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

Project Healing Waters Monthly meeting

Wednesday, 8 July 2026, 6:00 PM
Shenandoah Lodge, Lake Frederick, VA

BarFly

The next Winchester TU BarFly
Wednesday, 15 July 2026
7:00 PM at Escutcheon Brewing Co.
142 W. Commercial Street, Winchester

For complete calendars, please see

Page 17 for Winchester Project Healing Waters

Pages 10 & 26 for Winchester Priority Waters

Page 26 for Winchester Trout Unlimited



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Bill Prokopchak, Newsletter Editor
wilpro@comcast.net



photo courtesy of Virginia DNR

**Winchester TU &
Northern Shenandoah
Valley Audubon
Announce the Speaker
for our Annual Joint Meeting
at Laurel Ridge Community College**

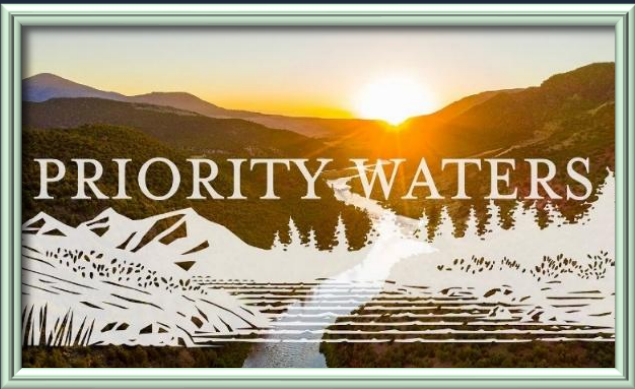
Mark your calendar for the Annual Joint meeting
on 1 October 2026 at Laurel Ridge Community
College.

Brad Fink is a Coldwater Fisheries Biologist with
the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources.



Winchester Priority Waters: Part 1 of 4

May, a Merry Month, Indeed



Mill Run at Veach's Gap

by the Winchester TU Priority Waters Team
photos by Mike Smith



Above: Seth Coffman, TU's Program Manager for the Shenandoah Headwaters, explains the basics of electroshocking gear and essential safety guidelines. Seth fielded scores of questions throughout the day from the Priority Waters team.

Wednesday, 6 May 2026, did not quite match the poetic image of May – warm sun, birds chirping, glades abloom with new flowers. No. It was grey. Fairly gloomy. And rainy. But the spirits of the Priority Waters crew could not be dampened. This was the day for some long-awaited “ground truthing”: does Mill Run at Veach's Gap truly still host a population of brook trout?

Gathering at The Target parking lot in Riverton Plaza for an 8:00 AM departure were Ben Coffman, Dave Juth, team leader Mike Makufka, John Prescott, Luke Robins and Mike Smith. Their three-vehicle convoy had an appointment to keep with Seth Coffman, TU's Program Manager for the Shenandoah Headwaters. Seth is the “man on the ground” for the Commonwealth.

The team met up with Seth at the Veach's Gap trailhead parking area. The first order of business for the day was safety training. Seth explained the function of the electroshocking backpack unit he would wear, how its probe and capture nets function, and how to work the stream safely when the unit was activated to briefly stun fish. He further explained how the unit's charge could be adjusted to compensate for low conductivity of the water. Roles were assigned the crew – note taker, fish bin keeper, netter, etc. Soon, the entourage was off to sample its first test reach, approximately 100 meters upstream from the lower data logger site on Mill Run.



Left: Luke Robins (l) anchors the tape measure as Mike Makufka prepares to pull it taut to measure stream width, an important procedure in electroshocking stream surveys.

**“Priority Waters”
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Winchester Priority Waters: Part 1

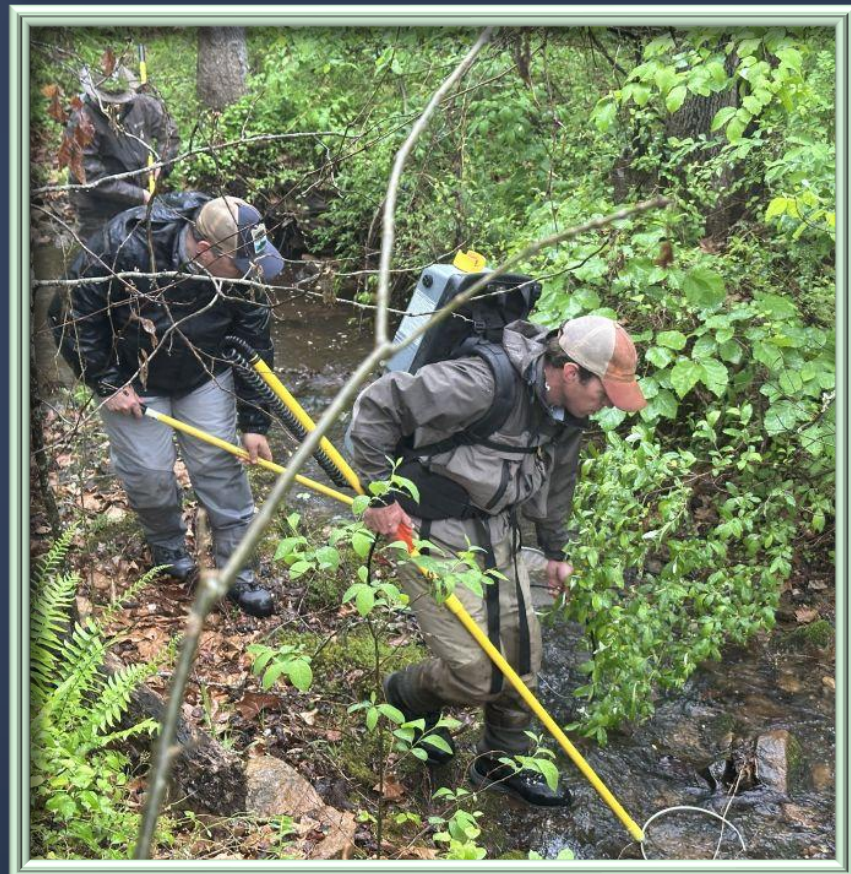
Mill Run at Veach's Gap -- Continued



Anticipation ran high. But the early results tested the crew's collective optimism. There were indeed fish in the little creek – as prior visits had visually affirmed. But the stream critters being pulled to the electronic probe early on were not the sought-after beloved brook trout (actually a species of char). Instead, impressive numbers accrued for another upland native, the Eastern blacknose dace (*Rhinichthys atratulus*).

Still, the early phase of the session proved fascinating – in significant measure due to Seth's extraordinary knowledge and experience in brook trout conservation. As this writer once heard long ago, the very best teacher is the one who never seems like he's teaching. Seth fielded every query patiently and provided responses that left the crew not only better informed but more deeply appreciative of the home and habits of the native trout.

The first electroshocked reach of stream, less than 150 meters, had shown some appealing habitat. But almost all of it had been claimed by blacknose dace. The sample bucket also contained a few small creek chub and a couple crayfish of impressive dimensions.



Top left: The red light indicates that an active electric pulse is moving through the water.

Left: Mill Run is a very small stream. Its tight quarters sometimes required the crew to proceed in single file. Ben Coffman waits at the ready to serve as backup netter, should Seth Coffman miss a fish — that didn't happen often.

Below: How is the water quality in Mill Run? This very particular resident found it to his liking.



**“Priority Waters”
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on the next page.**

Winchester Priority Waters: Part 1

Mill Run at Veach's Gap -- Continued



Left: The most numerous species in the Mill Run sampling was the blacknose dace, a common neighbor for brook trout in upland streams of the Commonwealth.

Below: Dave Juth tallies up the number of blacknose dace encountered in the stream survey.

Bottom right: At long last! The electroshocking of the initial stream reach, near the lower Priority Waters testing site, offered a fleeting glimpse of a trout — but none netted for the sample. The shorter upstream reach made up for it. Here, one of the first captures.



Seth and the crew decided to try a sample site farther upstream, closer to the upper data logger site and within the reach where one of the group had caught/released brook trout in years past -- prior to the devastating drought years of 2024 and 2025. Success at last! The new section offered a trout that was "turned" but not netted; and then a decent fish of similar size was captured and placed in the fish bucket for later measuring.

Near the upper end of the second shocking reach, the electroshocking brought up the largest trout of the day, a very plump brookie (see photo on page 5) that appeared to have just dined on a crayfish.

The crew opted for one last shocking site, one that included the lowermost plunge pools downstream of the first data logger / water quality test site. These two pools are among the largest and deepest along Mill Run. Each is fed by a high waterfall – the kind which fish could pass over downstream in high flow events, but likely could never negotiate upstream.

Here the results were not too surprising: no brook trout, but some substantial adult creek chubs. At this reach of stream, it is possible that these were adults from nearby Passage Creek accessing lower Mill Run as a potential spawning site.

"Priority Waters"
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on the next page.



Winchester Priority Waters: Part 1

Mill Run at Veach's Gap -- Continued

At the parking area the crew thanked Seth for his time and talents and briefly reviewed the results of the day. The most heartening finding, of course, were three healthy brook trout. But also impressive was the health of the stream and its water quality as indicated by species such as golden stonefly and various mayfly species. The presence of robust crayfish suggested acidic flow was not a concerning issue, and it was abundantly clear that the brook trout's common cohort in upland streams, the blacknose dace, were enjoying banner times.

At the Priority Waters meeting the following evening the participants in the electroshocking still savored the rewards of the day and commenced plans for June's activities, which would include further water quality testing – plus electroshocking of Little Passage Creek. At the subsequent regular chapter meeting the Priority Waters team was able to convey highlights of its activities to TU's president and chief executive officer Chris Wood – and to offer special praise for Seth Coffman for his efforts.



Above: The trophy of the outing. Seth Coffman was impressed by the excellent condition of the fish and added that he thought this one may have just eaten a crawfish from the size and feel of its belly. The whole crew arrived at the realization that this fish was indeed a survivor, the seasoned veteran of two severe drought summers. The adaptive capacities of native trout are remarkable. Would that they could be assured a less fraught future!

Below: The 6 May 2026 Priority Waters crew at Mill Run, left to right, Dave Juth, Mike Makufka, Ben Coffman, TU's Seth Coffman, John Prescott, and Luke Robins, with Mike Smith snapping the photo.



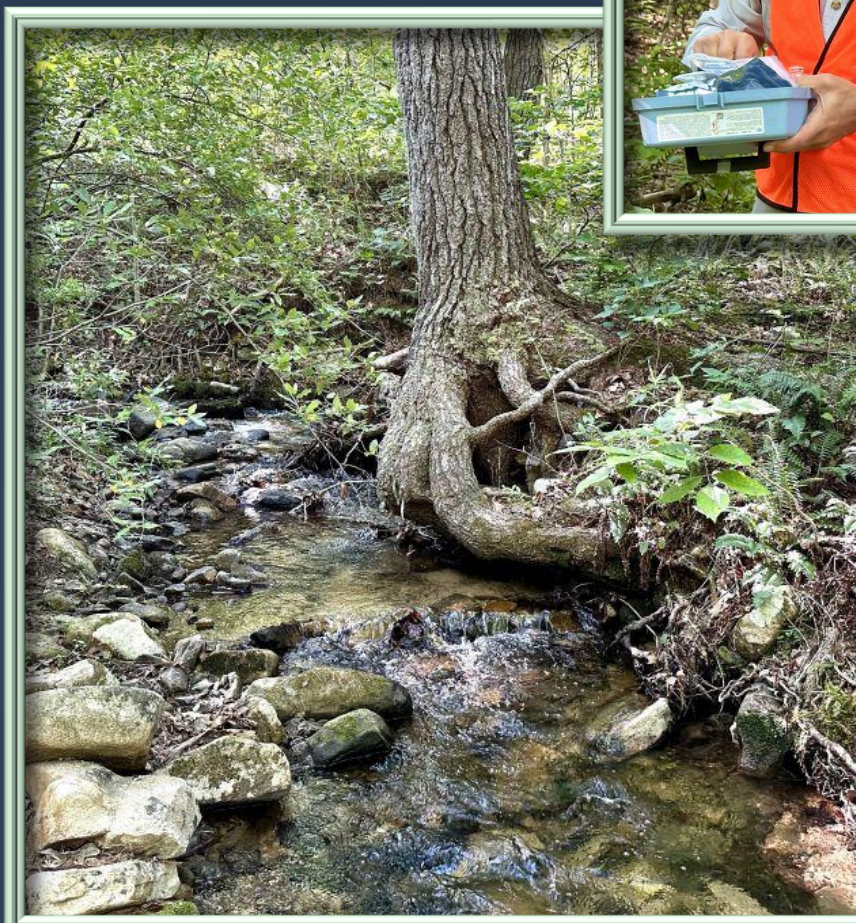
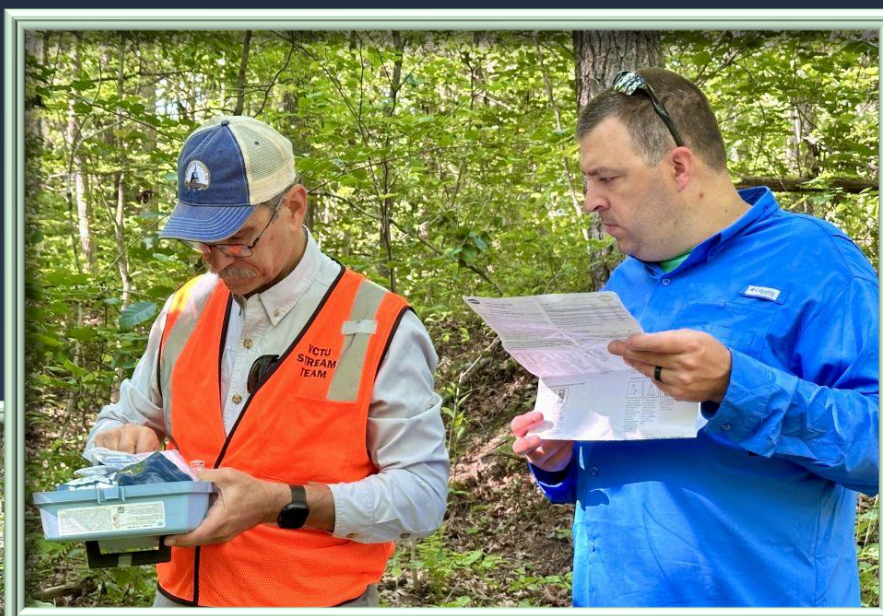
“Priority Waters” continues on the next page.

Winchester Priority Waters: Part 2 of 4

June Brings Evolving Tasks and Rewarding Discoveries

Little Passage Creek

by the Winchester TU Priority Waters Team
photos by Mike Smith



Four weeks to the day after the Priority Waters team happily witnessed palpable proof of brook trout in Mill Run at Veach's Gap, they again went afield. This effort, however, focused on water testing and included a trip to Little Passage Creek, as well.

The 3 June 2026 field crew comprised Tedd Gimber, Luke Robins, Nick Skorup, and Mike Smith. The group departed the Target parking lot shortly after 8:00 AM and arrived on site at Mill Run at 8:45, greeted by an unseasonably chilly 55-degree air temperature. Over the intervening weeks, increasing summer foliage gave the little stream valley a lusher and more jungle-like demeanor. But the crew was encouraged to note that stream flow remained very good.

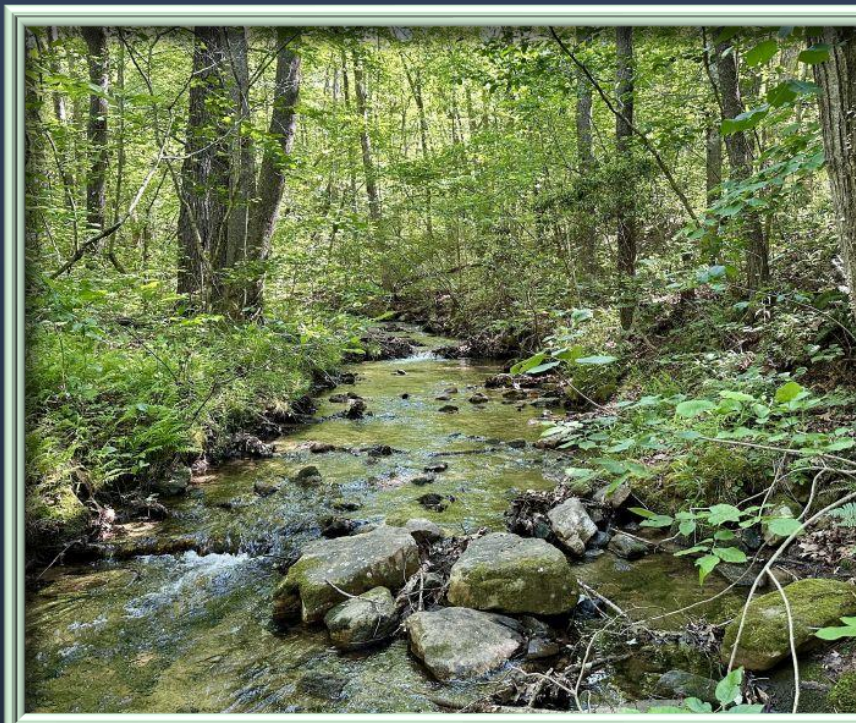
At the Mill Run #1 testing site, the pH measured 6.5, water temperature 12.1°C (53.8°F) and dissolved oxygen (DO) was 10 parts per million.

At the Mill Run #2 testing site, comparable numbers were recorded: 6.8 pH, 12.5°C (54.5°F) and a DO reading of 10.0 parts per million.

Top: Tedd Gimber (l) and Nick Skorup refresh their familiarity with the Hach dissolved oxygen titration kit.

Upper Left: The once 'elusive' upper testing site on Mill Run on 3 June. Summer foliage was noticeably lusher than on the 6 May outing.

Left: Mill Run was resplendent that day.



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Winchester Priority Waters: Part 2

Little Passage Creek

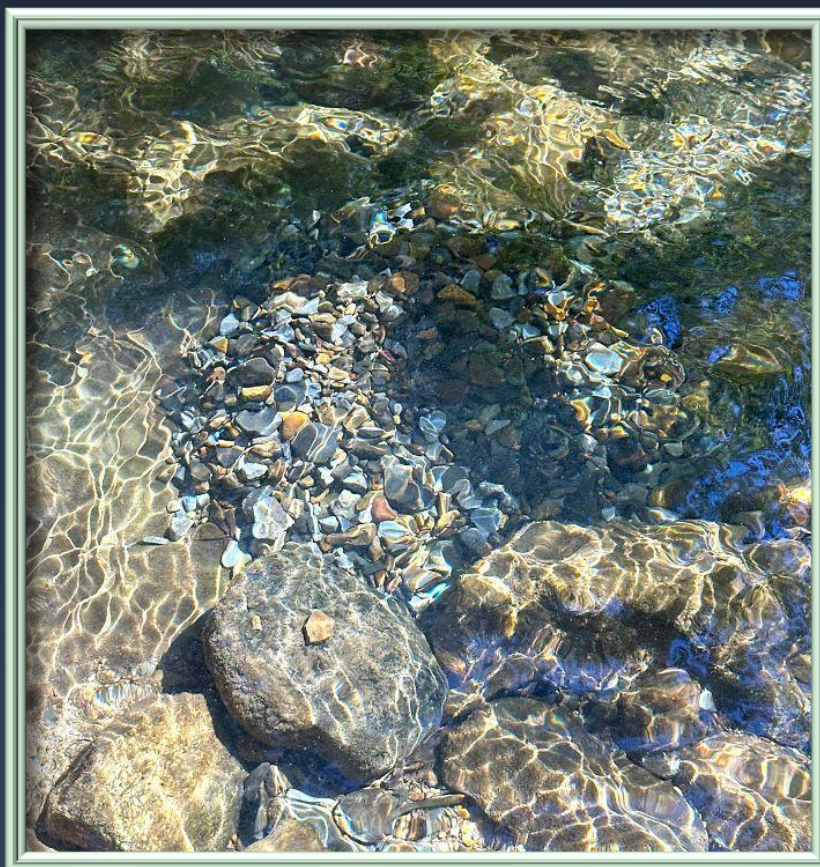
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Among other observations at Mill Run: one *possible* brook trout sighting was noted. Additionally, blacknose dace were seen in abundance. But perhaps the most exciting find (at least for one member of the crew) was a classic and active chub spawning mound. Indeed, a male chub – with spawning tubercles adorning his head – rushed to the scene to ward off the gaggle of interloping bipeds (our crew), but it beat a hasty retreat after assessing our size and numbers. Whether or not it was the bluehead chub (a species famous for the elaborate spawning mounds it can build) or a related species, the group could not agree at the time. Subsequent online research suggested the high probability that it was indeed the bluehead chub – the species is not native to the Passage Creek drainage but has established itself there post its introduction into the Shenandoah basin.

The visit to Little Passage Creek demonstrated anew just how spotty rainfall patterns can be in mountain country. As Mill Run retained a healthy flow from the preceding weekend rains, Little Passage showed a surprisingly reduced flow for the season.

The team hiked down to its lowest downstream site, Little Passage #4, where a pH reading of 7.7 was logged, along with a water temperature of 12.7°C (54.9°F), with a DO reading of 10.5 ppm.

The group then drove up to the headwater testing site Little Passage #1, upstream from the Strasburg Reservoir. No measurements were taken; but the group agreed that while flow was rather low, there seemed to be good seepage from ground springs.



Top: A spawning mound -- the architectural achievement of none other than the bluehead chub.

Above: Nick Skorup (l) pours one of the testing powders into the sample of Mill Run water Luke Robins holds. This stream has usually posted very high dissolved oxygen numbers.

Left: Tedd Gimber, Luke Robins, and Nick Skorup discuss water quality findings on Little Passage Creek on 3 June. Little Passage was somewhat warmer that day than Mill Run.

**“Priority Waters”
continues
on the next page.**

Winchester Priority Waters: Part 3 of 4

Little Passage Creek in Mudhole Gap

by the Winchester TU Priority Waters Team
photos by Mike Smith

The Priority Waters team awaited its electroshocking session on Little Passage Creek with utmost anticipation. A longer stream and larger drainage basin, Little Passage had also been the site of greater angling success for those team members who had angled for its natives in the past.

Tedd Gimber, Luke Robins, Nick Skorup, and Mike Smith met at the Target parking lot for a 1:00 PM departure on Monday, 15 June 2026. Team member Ben Coffman would meet them on site later on. The team had a 2:00 PM appointment to meet TU's Seth Coffman at the Mudhole Gap parking area. On the drive along Forest Road 66, it was obvious that recent storms had left lasting effects – downed trees and recently sawn and moved timbers alongside the roadway.

Little Passage Creek itself in Mudhole Gap had a good flow. The air temperature was 67°F, the stream itself was running at 63° F., or approximately 17°C.

Seth again provided the team with a safety briefing and instructions for the various roles each crew member would play.



Top: Luke Robins, right, makes an adjustment for Seth Coffman as the group started their first sample stretch on lower Little Passage Creek 15 June.

Left: Tedd Gimber and Nick Skorup stand at the ready as Seth Coffman probes another small pool on lower Little Passage Creek.



The group decided to head down to the lowest sample site, known as LPC4, run a somewhat shortened sample route down there, and then return upstream to the first significant stream crossing downstream from the Mudhole Gap parking area. Here the group would work a standardized and marked 100-meter reach of stream.

The first site did not disappoint: several brook trout were stunned and netted, including two fish over 170 mm in length, or just a shade under 7 in. Equally exciting were the young of year brook trout that entered the sample. And, as expected, blacknose dace were well represented too.



Above: A fine example of an adult wild brook trout on Little Passage Creek. This fish was just over 170 mm in length. All trout captured and released that day were in excellent condition.

**“Priority Waters”
continues
on the next page.**

Winchester Priority Waters: Part 3

Little Passage Creek in Mudhole Gap

Right: Hey, what's he doing in a trout stream!?' Electroshocking yields some occasional surprises. Here is a pumpkinseed sunfish, likely an unwilling outmigrant from the old Strasburg Reservoir miles upstream.

Below: A male bluehead chub with spawning season tubercles on his head. They build large spawning mounds, often used by multiple minnow species. Blueheads are not native to the Passage Creek drainage but expanded to available habitats after their introduction into the Shenandoah basin. Both Mill Run and Little Passage Creek now have bluehead chub populations



But it was the upstream site that produced the greatest surprises of the day. Ben Coffman volunteered to run a literal measurement line upstream from the start of the test area. At length, Ben reemerged from the heavy undergrowth indicating a successful upstream trek and placement of a bright chartreuse marker indicating the upstream terminus of the test reach.

The upper test site offered up its brook trout almost instantly. And the stream's yield continued almost unabated for the longer-than-a-football-field test run. Not only were brook trout present in significant numbers (with three year classes represented according to Seth); but beyond the expected blacknose dace, not one but two very large bluehead chub were netted, along with a sculpin (not yet keyed out) and a pumpkinseed sunfish. The last species would have been an utter anomaly, except for the fact that a population has existed for quite some time in Strasburg Reservoir approximately three miles upstream (as attested by a crew member who had caught them there).

The two largest brook trout captured were over 200 mm, or about 8 in. The bluehead chubs were similarly sized. Over twenty brook trout were stunned, measured, and safely released overall – seven at the lower test site, 17 at the upper. Seth indicated that for a stream of this size, these were encouraging numbers. All the crew was very pleased by the results of the afternoon's electroshocking – and heartened by the reality that despite two severe drought summers, brook trout had hung on and successfully spawned in both of the project streams.

At the parking area, the team again thanked Seth for his efforts, his insight, and support of the chapter's priority waters endeavors.

As always, the Priority Waters team invites new members. If what we describe sounds interesting, feel free to join us at our next meeting or field trip!



Left: That's a rock in the middle of this makeshift "corral," and that seething mass of fish swirling about are Little Passage brook trout impatiently awaiting release. Yes, it was a very good day of electroshocking.

"Priority Waters" continues on the next page.

Winchester Priority Waters: Part 4 of 4

Monthly Meeting Summary

When the Priority Waters team convened for its monthly meeting 4 June 2026, prior to the regular Winchester Trout Unlimited chapter meeting, team leader Mike Makufka greeted members Bob Fish, Tedd Gimber, Drew Patterson, Bob Travis, and Mike Smith. Mike M. then shared highlights from the 6 May 2026 Mill Run electroshocking and noted the group’s gratitude to TU’s Seth Coffman for his time and efforts. The group discussed the next electroshocking slated for Little Passage Creek and agreed 15 June 2026 would be a workable date, and that an earlier departure (7:00 AM) might be indicated.

Mike M. noted that Seth Coffman had shared a list of property owners along the lower reaches of Little Passage so that the team could contact them regarding access to their properties in order to conduct stream barrier assessments.

Tedd Gimber noted that he had shared the list with Pete Dalke of “Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah.” Pete had previously offered to help approach property owners in the Fort Valley area. Pete advised via email that the best approach is in person. Tedd added that Pete is checking with family and friends to find someone who knows one of the landowners along Little Passage. He noted that using a trusted local contact for introductions has worked well in the past and that securing one landowner’s support can help bring others on board. Tedd also shared that Pete had suggested we craft an “elevator speech” (a very concise and to-the-point statement) to explain what the team is doing and why access to the land is desired.

Luke Robins noted that he has done similar outreach in the western U.S. when approaching legislators about conservation issues. He recommended both a short verbal introduction and a written overview that property owners can review after the visit.

Drew Patterson emphasized the need to clearly explain why access is requested. He also suggested noting that, while the group is part of TU National, the members involved are local volunteers working to preserve native brook trout habitat. Tedd said he would draft an initial elevator speech for the team to review and refine. Mike Smith offered to help.

Mike Makufka mentioned that our long-term work plans called for conducting woody debris surveys on the streams. The group agreed that fall would be the best time to do this work. The group also discussed completing stream barrier assessments in the National Forest. Luke suggested starting at the lower end of Little Passage Creek and working upstream toward the Mud Hole Gap area. Mike Makufka suggested the team could complete both stream barrier assessments and water quality monitoring during the next outing on 5 August 2026, provided enough volunteers are available to form two teams. Luke said three to four people is ideal for water testing, and the group agreed that four people would also be ideal for barrier assessments because photos must show both the barrier and a person holding the stadia rod.

Mike Smith suggested preparing a progress report to summarize what the team has accomplished over the past two years to highlight lessons learned and provide a model other chapters could use for similar projects. Mike Makufka pointed out that it would be ideal to complete the report by September for the TU annual meeting.

Mike Makufka summarized the key action items from the meeting:

That Tedd will prepare a first draft of the elevator speech; that Mike Smith will begin compiling information for the progress report due in September and that Mike Makufka will confirm with Seth Coffman that electroshocking is scheduled for 15 June 2026. Mike Makufka concluded the meeting shortly before 7:00 PM, just as attendees began arriving for the Winchester TU general meeting.

Dates Scheduled for Winchester Priority Waters 2026 Field Work

<u>Date</u>	<u>Activity</u>
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



WINCHESTER HEALING WATERS

Winchester Veterans Find Success in a Variety of Spring Angling Opportunities

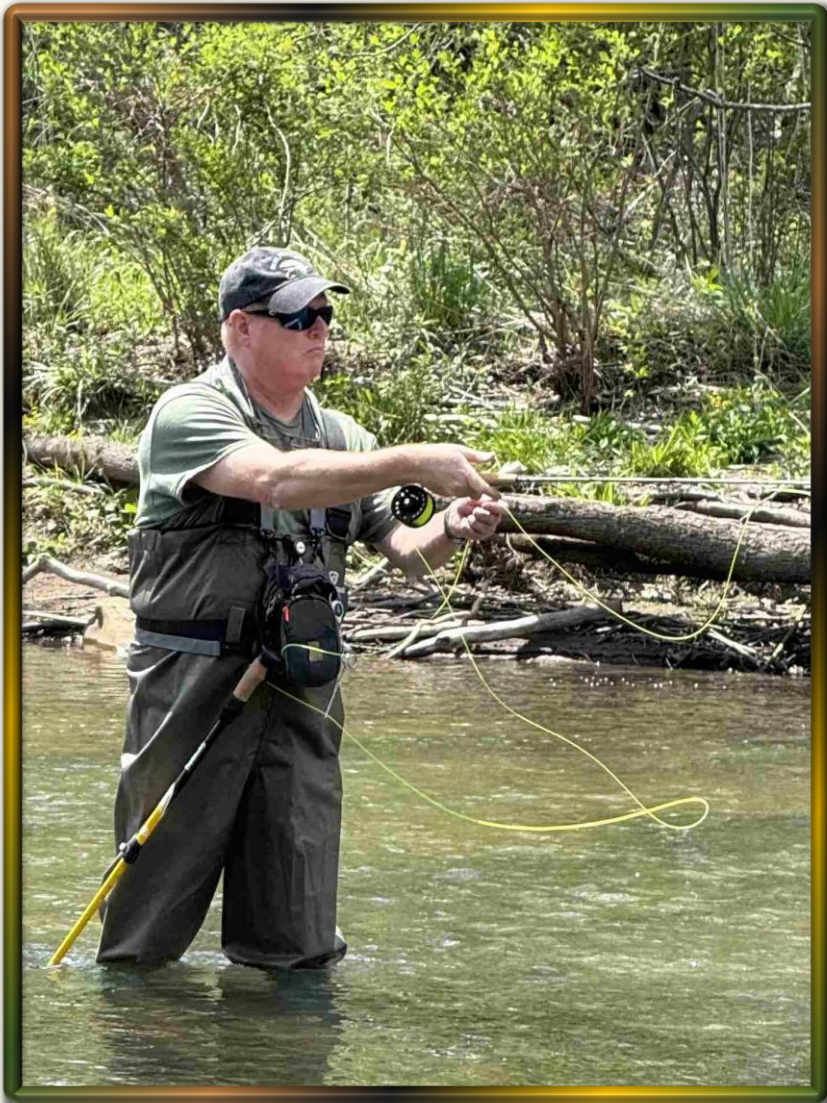


Winchester PHW Veterans took full advantage of a full slate of spring fishing opportunities that included a partnership outing, two regional trips, and a national destination trip.

all Project Healing waters articles by Wayne White

PHW PART 1 OF 5

VIRGINIA ELKS YOUTH CAMP OUTING



After making a roll cast, TAB mends his line to improve his drift.

photo by Jeb Stewart

At the invitation of the Fredericksburg PHW, Winchester participants Warren Dudenbostel and Tom A. Burton (TAB) and volunteer guides Jeb Stewart and Luke Robins fished the stocked waters of the Cowpasture and Bull Pasture Rivers, 24 to 26 April. This was the second time Fredericksburg Program Lead Dave Ward invited Winchester to this outing hosted at the Virginia Elks Youth Camp in Millboro, Virginia.

The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks has supported the U.S. military since 1917. In keeping with their creed, “So long as there are Veterans, the Elks will never forget them.” The Elks’ hospitality was outstanding. Gigi Jones, President of the VEYC, ensured the Elks went above and beyond to accommodate the PHW participants and volunteers by providing full use of the camp’s lodging at no cost, and by having two nearby Elks Lodges provide dinner on Friday and Saturday nights and breakfast for the anglers on Sunday morning.

“Winchester Healing Waters” Part 1 of 5 continues on the next page.



EST. PROJECT 2005
HEALING WATERS

WINCHESTER HEALING WATERS

VIRGINIA ELKS YOUTH CAMP OUTING – CONTINUED

Right: Warren Dudenbostel uses a water load to cast a nymph rig into a fast pool on the Bull Pasture River.

Below: Taking a break after some hard fishing are Luke Robins (l), Warren (c), and TAB.



According to Jeb and Luke, the fishing was challenging. Many of the local anglers had fished the two rivers hard after recent stockings, and fish were difficult to find. However, TAB and Warren did land some fish over the two days.

Beyond the challenges of finding fish, the trip proved educational for the novice fly fisherman. As Jeb noted, TAB improved his basic casting, learned to roll cast, and gained a better appreciation for organizing his equipment in his chest pack. He also learned that knot tying can be frustrating and realized it is a skill that must be practiced.

Luke and Jeb also had the chance to tie some flies with TAB and Warren over the weekend, which helped them build on those skills and create flies suited to the waters they fished.

Thanks to Dave Ward, Fredericksburg PHW Program Lead, and his volunteers for logistical support for the trip and for coordinating with the Elks for this outing.

“Winchester Healing Waters” continues on the next page.



EST. PROJECT 2005
HEALING WATERS

PHW PART 2 OF 5

VIRGINIA

REGIONAL TRIPS

RIVER BOUND

The annual Spring Virginia Region River Bound and Back Creek outings, held back-to-back this year, offered great fishing for Veterans from all Virginia PHW programs. The outings allowed for one participant and one guide from each program to attend the events.

Winchester volunteer Jessica Michie guided Kim Tolbert on Big Cedar Creek and Little River 27 to 29 April. River Bound is tailored for intermediate to advanced fly fishers and challenges anglers with some exceptionally large trout. The Roanoke New River Valley Healing Waters Program coordinates the event with the River Bound fishing club, which sponsors this event in Spring and Fall each year. Veterans fish the Club's private waters in the vicinity of Lebanon through arrangements with local landowners. Healing Waters covers the cost of the trip for volunteers and participants.



Above: Kim Tolbert (l) and Jessica Michie take a moment before heading out on the water at the River Bound outing.
all photos this page by B.J. Compton



Above: Kim prepares to release one of the many large rainbows she landed on Big Cedar Creek.
Right: It's a high-five moment for Jessica and Kim after landing another big fish!



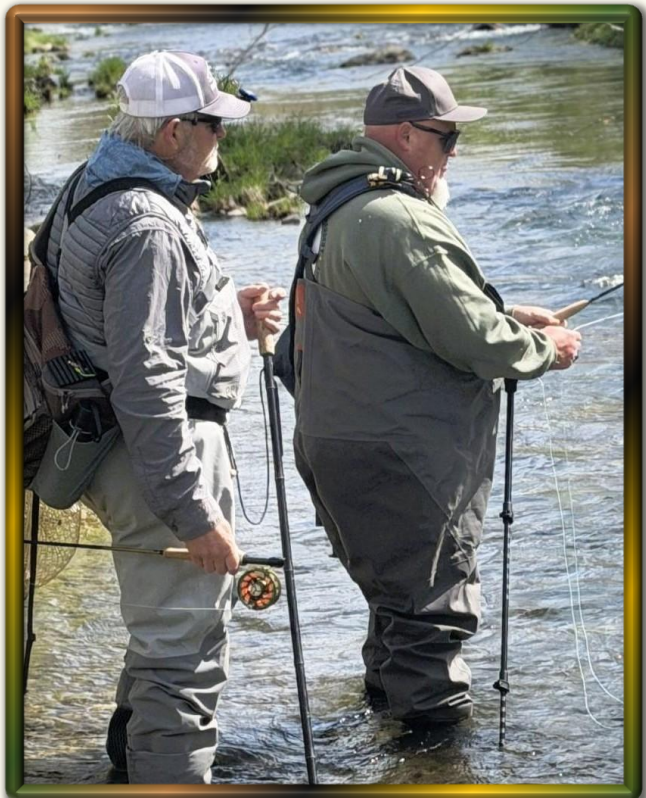
As an Army veteran, Kim was one of ten Virginia program participants to fish Virginia's Big Cedar Creek in Lebanon and the Little River in Claypool. The large fish in both streams are courtesy of Jake Music, who raises the trout from eggs in his hatchery and stocks no fish smaller than 16 inches. However, finding the fish, selecting the correct fly, and making an accurate presentation often prove tricky and extremely frustrating. According to volunteer guide B.J. Compton from the Southwest PHW Program, the ladies put on a nymphing clinic on Big Cedar Creek. It was one of those "catching days!"

"Winchester Healing Waters" continues on the next page.

PHW PART 3 OF 5

VIRGINIA REGIONAL TRIPS

BACK CREEK

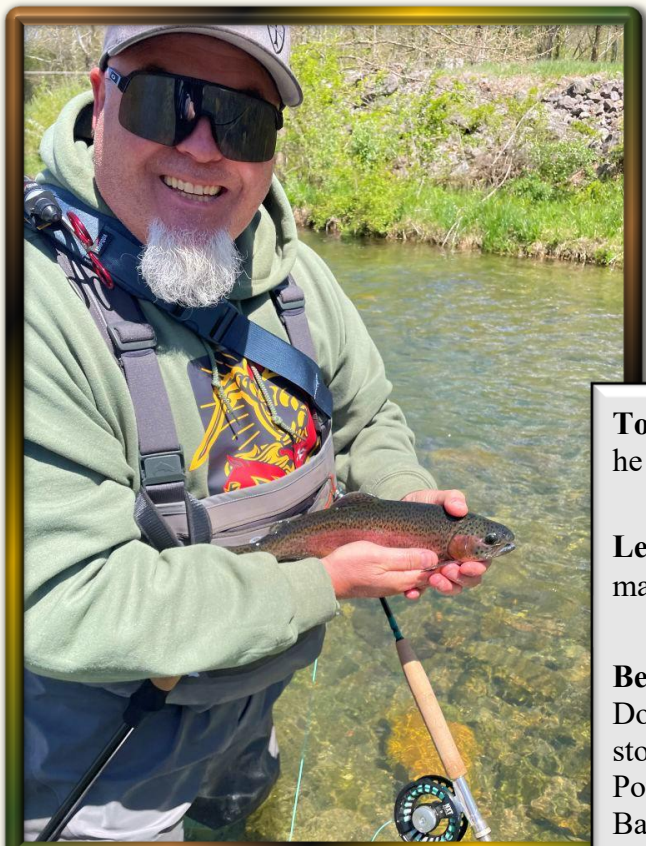


Winchester PHW Veteran Cole Bradshaw, along with volunteer guide Rich Brooks, fished the headwaters of Back Creek at the Dominion Power Bath County Pumped Storage Station at the annual Regional Spring outing, 30 April to 2 May.

Back Creek is a beautiful tailwater stream off the Dominion Energy dam, cradled in Virginia's rugged Allegheny Mountains in Bath County. The Back Creek outing is designed for beginner fly fishers to learn not only this art of angling but also to understand and appreciate the delicate balance of finding fish in some tricky holes while fishing on moving water.

A grant from Dominion Energy to Project Healing Waters covers all outing costs including lodging for the participants and volunteers at the Gristmill Inn in Warm Springs, meals for the group over the three days, and stocking of fish.

Cole and Rich found the fishing exceptional this year. The cooler temperatures, along with a consistent water flow from recent rain, kept the fish active and somewhat cooperative. All of the novice fly anglers landed fish and learned many lessons over the two-day event. The group enjoyed the camaraderie of the event, swapping service stories and fishing experiences on the Creek.



Top: Rich Brooks (l) keeps a watchful eye on Cole Bradshaw as he mends his line while drifting a long run on Back Creek.

photo by Wayne White

Left: Cole Bradshaw is all smiles as he gently cradles one of the many beautiful trout he caught on Back Creek.

photo by Rich Brooks

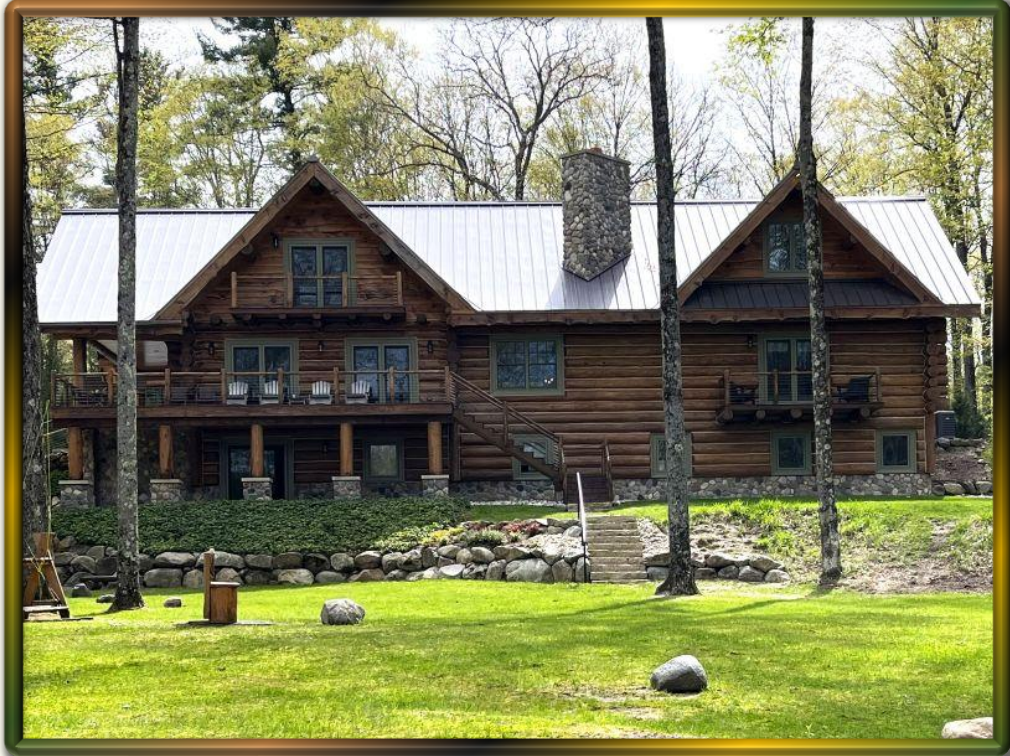
Below: Virginia Veterans and Guides, along with Susan Davis, Dominion Power event coordinator (center-right behind the stone), pose for the traditional end-of-event photo. Dominion Power installed the stone with the plaque to commemorate the Back Creek event, which began in 2015. photo by Charles Howdyshe



“Winchester Healing Waters” continues on the next page.

PHW PART 4 OF 5

OAK HEART LODGE (OHL)



Looking at the Oak Heart Lodge from the River shows the exceptional accommodations offered to the Veterans staying there.

photo by Wayne White

Winchester PHW Veterans Christina Nelson and Erwin Casto were part of the Virginia Region group selected to participate in the National Destination Trip at the Oak Heart Lodge, Newago, MI, 5 to 9 May 2026.

Oak Heart Lodge offers one of Project Healing Waters' most unique and inspiring National Destination Outings—a fully supported, immersive experience designed exclusively for Veteran Participants.

Winchester Veterans Christina Nelson and Erwin Casto were among those chosen for this three-day fishing outing in Newago, MI, from 5 to 9 May.

The Oak Heart Lodge, located on the banks of the Muskegon River, was built to serve Veterans, providing them with a serene environment where they can connect with other Veterans, share camaraderie through fly fishing, and build lasting memories from shared experiences.

As a trip leader for this Virginia Region event, I had the privilege of supporting and coordinating the activities for the eight veterans from four Virginia programs. My duties varied from shuttling the anglers to meet their guides to coordinating logistics for their stay at the lodge.



Christina Nelson proudly shows off her first-ever Steelhead catch on the Muskegon River. She had three exceptional fishing days at Oak Heart.

photo by Brian Marcyjanik

“Winchester Healing Waters” Part 4 of 5 continues on the next page.



EST. PROJECT 2005
HEALING WATERS

OAK HEART LODGE – CONTNUED



Erwin Casto holds one of the beautiful Muskegon Brown trout he landed.
photo by the Fishing Guide

Over the three days, the Veterans fished for two days on the Muskegon from jet boats and one day on the Peirre Marquette (PM) River from drift boats. During that time, I also fished with one of the Veterans and a guide on the PM.

Although this Spring had a strange weather pattern – unusually warm weather in late April and a high-water event – followed by an unusually cold spell during the first week of May - it affected the Steelhead migration and spawning in the river. However, many Veterans caught some exceptionally large fish.

Christina had a banner day on her first outing, landing her very first Steelie, a Brown Trout, and a few large Fall Fish. Erwin, who is known for his catching abilities, extended his luck over the three days, netting a beautiful Brown and several small trout in addition to many Fall Fish.

Everyone caught fish and had many stories to share at the evening meals, where plans were made for the next day's fishing with a new fishing buddy.

The amazing fishing, coupled with the surrounding natural beauty and various wildlife, made Oak Heart a special experience for the Veterans. Many thanks to the Oak Heart staff for the hospitality and exceptional accommodations to help those who serve with their healing journey.



The Virginia Veterans pose for their end-of-outing photo at the Oak Heart welcome sign.

photo by Brian Marcyjanik

“Winchester Healing Waters” continues on the next page.

PHW PART 5 OF 5

WINCHESTER CHAPTER
JULY - SEPTEMBER 2026

by Wayne White



PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS
JULY – SEPTEMBER 2026

current as of 22 June 2026

July

- 8 – Monthly Meeting Wednesday, Rachel’s Kitchen, Shenandoah Lodge, Lake Frederick, from 6:00 to 8:00 PM.
- 18 – Fly Tying at Jake’s Bait and Tackle, Winchester, 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM
- 25 – (T) Wade Fishing Shenandoah River. Details TBD

August

- 3 – Vets Center, Falling Waters, WVA, Initial Monthly Meeting 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM
- 12 -- Monthly Meeting Wednesday, Rachel’s Kitchen, Shenandoah Lodge, Lake Frederick, from 6:00 to 8:00 PM.
- 15 -- Fly Tying at Jake’s Bait and Tackle, Winchester, 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM
- 22 -- (T) Wade Fishing Shenandoah River. Details TBD

September

- 4 -- 6 Winchester Fishing Outing at Ward Burton Wildlife Foundation, Halifax, VA
- 9 -- Monthly Meeting Wednesday, Rachel’s Kitchen, Shenandoah Lodge, Lake Frederick, from 6:00 to 8:00 PM.
- 12 – Winchester Fishing Outing at Leetown Hatchery, Kearneysville, WVA.
- 14 – Vets Center, Falling Waters, WVA, Monthly Meeting, 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM
- 19 – Capon Valley Bank 4th Annual Veterans Salute Celebration and Car Show at the new branch in Winchester across the street from Jake’s Bait and Tackle.

Wayne White
Program Lead
Wayne.White@projecthealingwaters.org
703-919-2952



Jim White
Assistant Program Lead
Jim.White@projecthealingwaters.org
703-650-8696

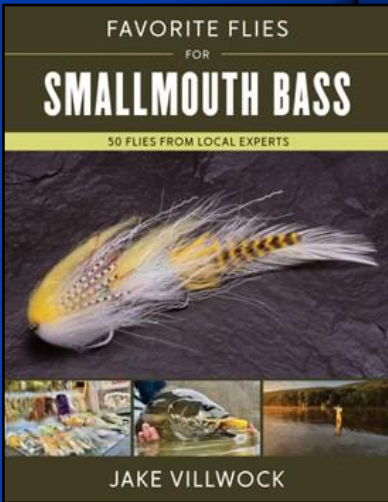
Barbara's Books
Series created by Barbara Gamble

Favorite Flies for Smallmouth Bass: 50 Flies from Local Experts

Author: Jake Villwock
Print Length: 156 pages
ISBN-10: 0811777049
ISBN-13: 978-0811777049
Publisher: Stackpole Books
Publication Date: 19 May 2026

Smallmouth bass swim in lakes and river across the United States and Canada and are a premier fly-rod game fish in almost every way -- they take flies readily, feed on diverse foods, tolerate warmer water temperatures than trout, and fight harder than any other North American freshwater fish their size.

As smallmouth bass fishing has grown in popularity, so too has the innovation behind fly design. From new materials -- both synthetic and natural -- to advanced tools and tying techniques, the evolution has been nonstop. Flies are now more lifelike and more durable than ever.



In this book, smallmouth guide and fly designer Jake Villwock breaks down smallmouth flies into three categories -- topwater, mid-column, and bottom -- and features 50 essential patterns from tiers such as Russ Maddin, Blane Chocklett, Chuck Kraft, Mike Schultz, and many more smallmouth experts.

In addition to detailed recipes and photos, Villwock covers insights into when and how to fish each fly. Many of the contributing tiers have included their own words explaining the design and tactics behind their patterns, so you're getting knowledge straight from the experts.

Jake Villwock is owner and head guide of Relentless Fly Fishing.

In addition to guiding, Jake is Fulling Mills Signature tier, blog-writer, author, contributor to *Eastern Fly Fishing* magazine, and serves on various pro-staffs of leading industry companies such as Hatch Reels, Scientific Anglers, Simms Fishing, Clacka Craft Drift Boats, Scott Fly Rods, and Regal Vise.

He is also the author of *Smallmouth Bass Flies, Top to Bottom*. He lives in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

Sources: amazon.com and the publishers

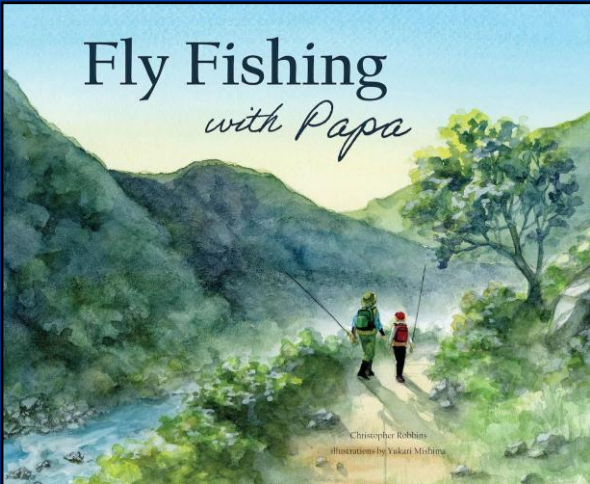
Fly Fishing with Papa

Author: Christopher Robbins
Print length: 32 pages
ISBN-13: 978-8893960082
Publisher: Familius
Publication Date: 14 April 2026
Reading Age: 5 – 11 years

For fly fishers who love to share their pastime with family, ***Fly Fishing with Papa*** is a sentimental picture book that honors the sport and celebrates the bond between adult and child.

Written by Familius' founder and fly fisherman, Christopher Robbins, the descriptive narration accurately captures the adventures of fly fishers while conveying the importance of conservation and bonding through shared experiences.

This adventure and the great outdoors come to life with soft but vibrant illustrations from Yukari Mishima, making every page feel like a glimpse into your own memories of fishing with your papa.



“A gentle demonstration of a close relationship between adult and child -- and the passing of knowledge from one generation to another. Captures the magic of nature.” —**Kirkus Reviews**

“This storybook pays homage to the upper Kings River, the precious memories of fishing with loved ones, and admiring the outdoors.... The vibrant colors of nostalgic-style artwork make for a cozy reading with children of all ages.” —**Kings River Conservancy**

Christopher Robbins is the founder and president of Familius and the cofounder of Hummingbird Digital Media.

Yukari Mishima was born and raised in Hiroshima, Japan. At the age of 35, she quit the corporate world and decided to pursue her passion and become a freelance illustrator.

Sources: amazon.com and the publishers



ANGLER REFLECTIONS



A Most Leisurely Trout Trip

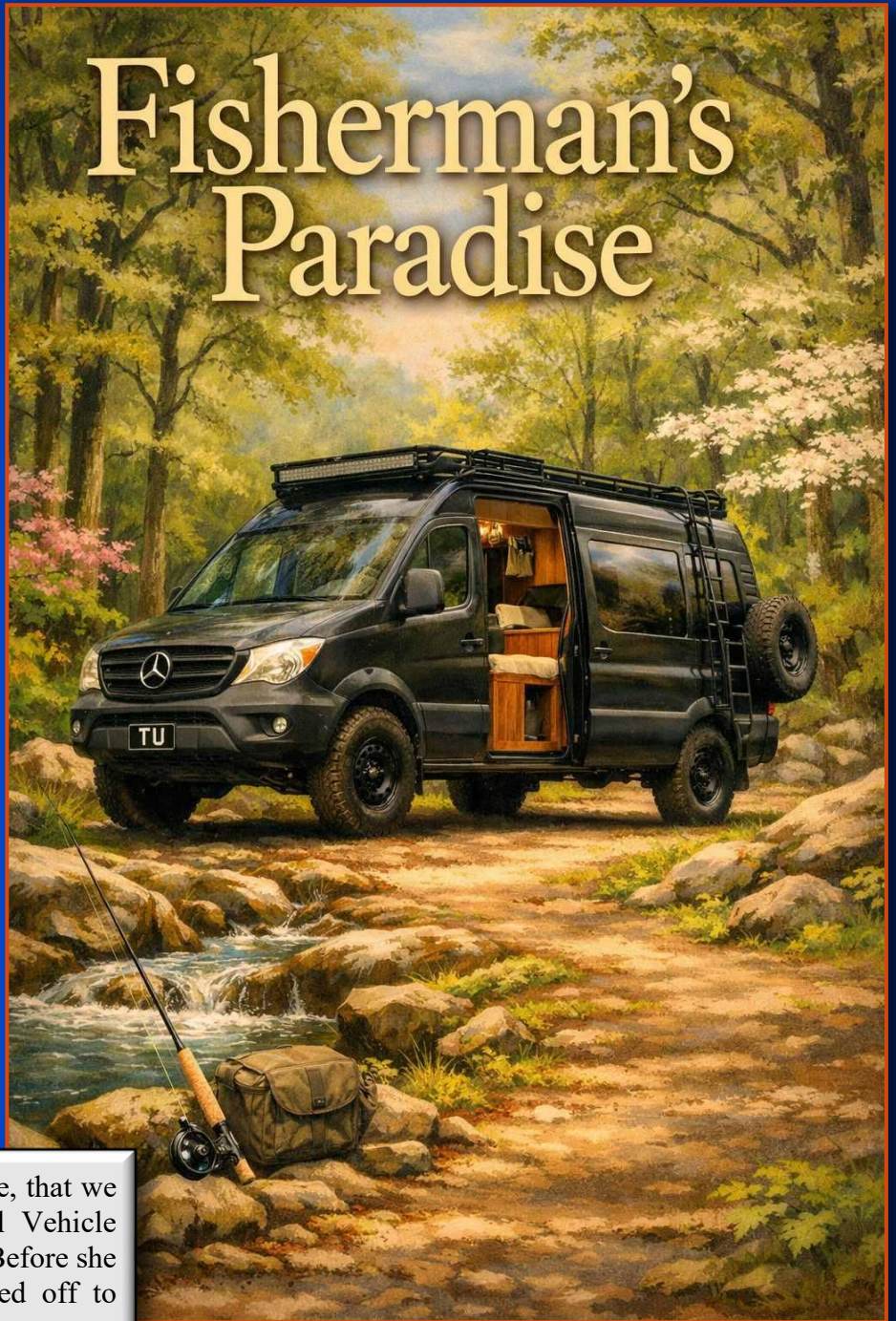
reflections

by Nick Brognano

We did it, correction, Fred did it. Somehow Fred convinced Karin, his wife, that we would return the Mercedes Recreational Vehicle (RV) in the same immaculate condition. Before she could change her mind we leisurely sped off to Spring Creek, PA, to fish for giant Trout. My bottom part never felt such comfort. I sat high in a muti-layered cushioned seat and saw much more than if I were in a road sniffing small sedan. My teeth didn't rattle, my back didn't ache and no coffee was spilled. The ride was suave. Two aged fly fishermen out to have fun and doing it in style and class for once.

Fred was the unpaid chauffeur as I sat back, relaxed and enjoyed the views. We arrived at the State College fly shop on schedule and confirmed the guided trip for the next day. Displayed were several colorful brochures showing pictures of fishermen holding giant 8-pound Browns and Rainbow Trout.

"Somehow Fred convinced Karin, his wife, that we would return the Mercedes Recreational Vehicle (RV) in the same immaculate condition. Before she could change her mind we leisurely sped off to Spring Creek, PA, to fish for giant Trout."



Reading the brochures and looking at the photos succeeded in triggering my excitement, but it was my visit to the small bathroom that I won't forget. Above the toilet was a strange vicious animal head with big, sharp teeth. If you had to stand up to pee the head stuck out just far enough for you to be nose to nose with the beast. It all reminded me of something I read long ago when shortly after the revolution some British officers placed a picture of GW above the men's latrine intending to insult a visiting American officer.

After visiting the latrine, the Brits asked the American officer what he thought of the GW picture. The patriot proudly replied he thought the picture was a clever and most convenient way to get a British soldier to quickly shit his pants. On that happy note we left the fly shop and drove to a spot on Spring Creek called "Fishermen's Paradise." We were on our own and fished for a couple of hours. The water and flow looked good, but the Trout were hiding.

"Angler Reflections" continues on the next page.

ANGLER REFLECTIONS -- CONTINUED

I don't keep track of the number of fish I hook onto and foolishly rely on my faulty memory. However, at this spot in paradise I can safely say I landed one Trout and missed a couple.

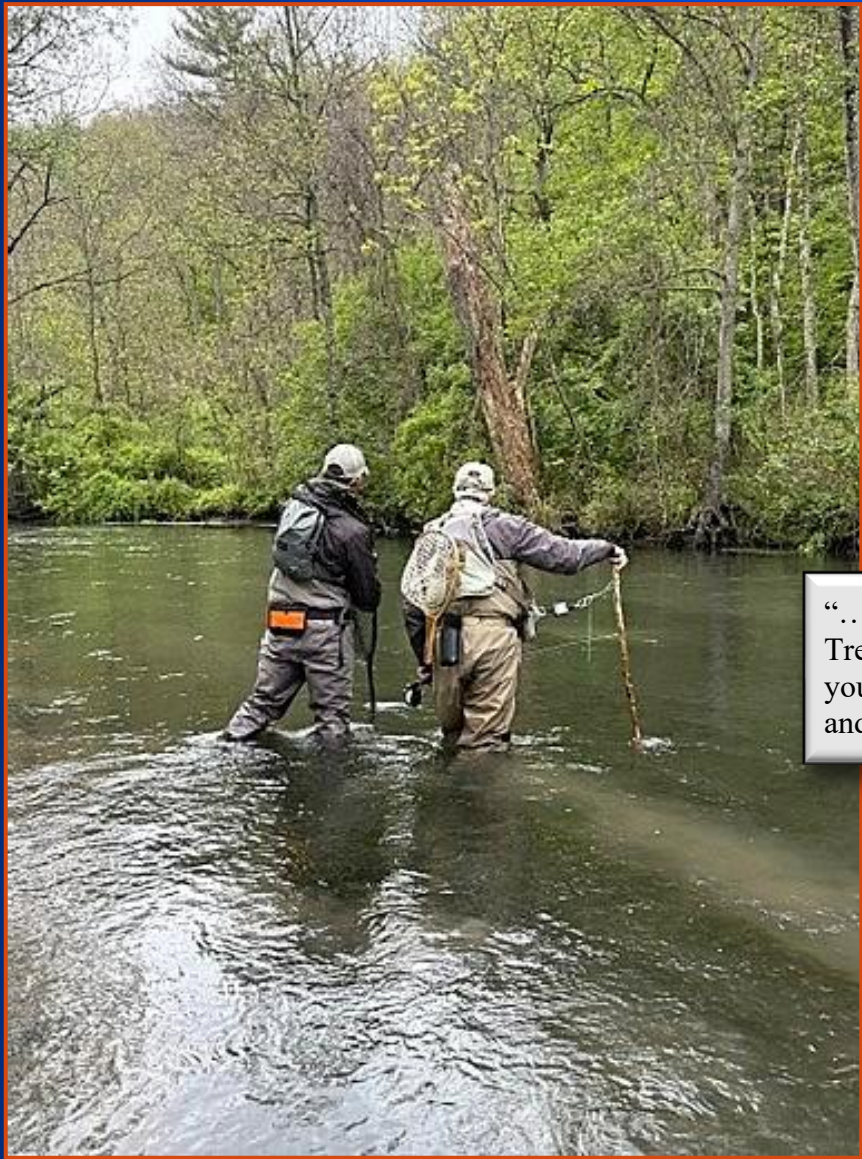
Fred, with his digital counter, is usually more accurate. He caught one and missed some. The Trout were nowhere near the size of what we saw in the fly shop brochures. The fishing in paradise was a little disappointing, but the fly shop pictures of those huge Trout gave us high hope for our guided trip tomorrow.

"Fred, with his digital counter, is usually more accurate. He caught one"



After a comfortable night sleeping in the RV, we drove off to meet Trevor, our guide. Trevor has a full-time job as a speech therapist helping cancer patients who have throat cancer. He assists physicians who insert devices enabling patients to speak. The young man has guided for years and is good at it. Trevor first took us to Spring Creek off of Spring Creek Canyon. We walked about a quarter of a mile from the parking area and found ourselves all alone. With tall trees surrounding us it was easy to feel as if you were deep in the woods and secluded until a woman jogger appeared running along the trail.

It was mostly nymph fishing with a dropper using 6X tippet. Fred was fishing upstream and close enough so that I did not have to wake up the dead to let him know I had just caught a Trout. Once again, the size was small. I rarely use indicators, so it was a good learning experience for me to see an expert do it correctly. It's all about the proper drift. Simply put, I learned there is room for improvement in my nymph fishing. What was most challenging was learning to quickly react to a Trout's subtle hit. Eye and neck strain are unavoidable.



Watching for the slightest delay or lazy pull downstream is what you're looking for. Several times Trevor would see it and tell me to set the hook. It took me a while to catch on. A strike can be so subtle that you might see it but not feel it. I may have netted the biggest fish here. It was a fat 10-inch Brown Trout. It was to be the closest Fred, or I would come to match the pictures in the several brochures at the fly shop.

We ended the frustration by breaking for lunch.

"... we drove off to meet Trevor, our guide. ... The young man has guided for years and is good at it."

"Angler Reflections"
continues on the next page.

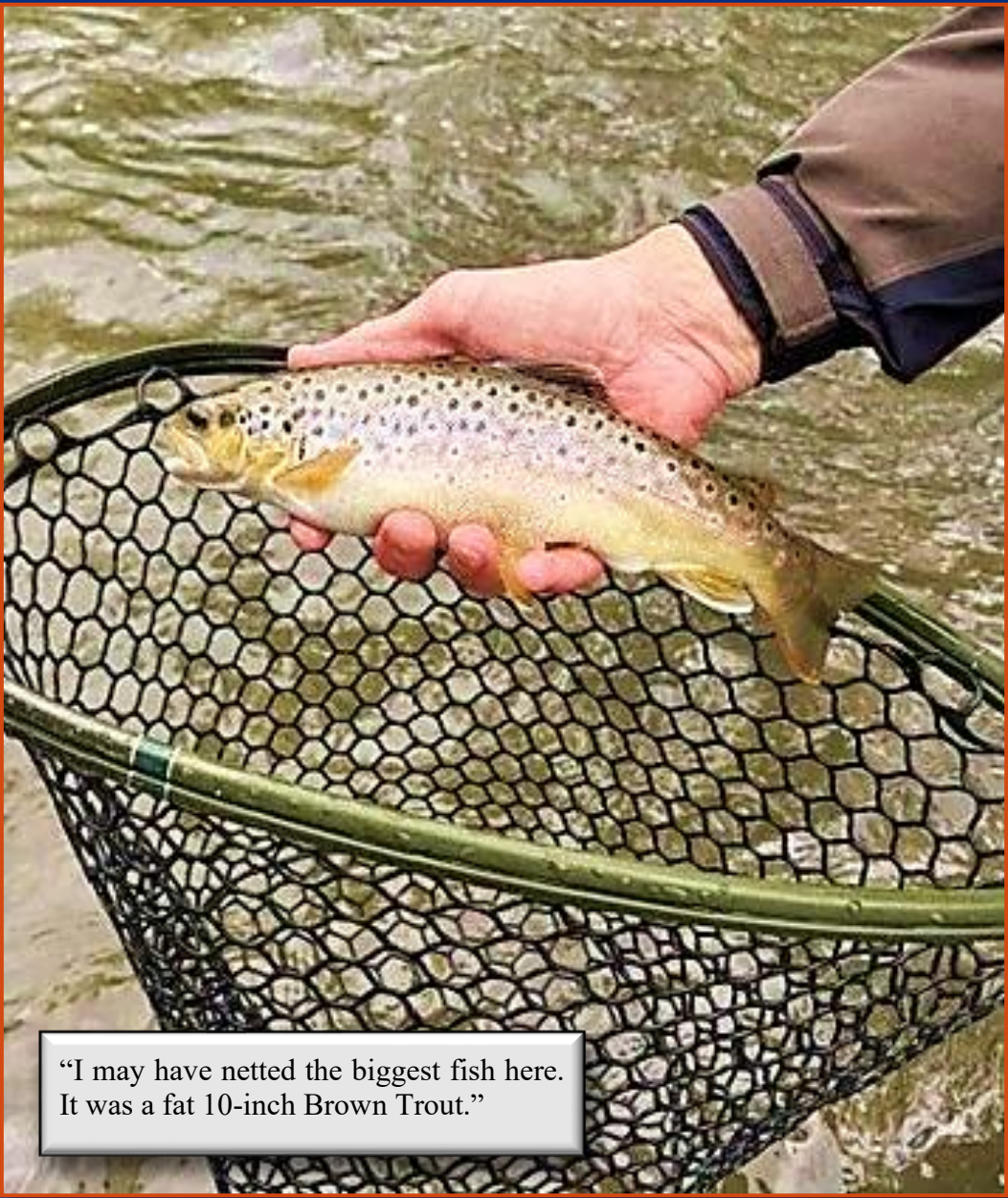
ANGLER REFLECTIONS -- CONTINUED

Lunch with free parking-lot dining was part of the package deal. I brought the wine while Trevor supplied the sub and chips.

With our bellies full we tried another Springs Creek spot hoping the fishing would be better but unfortunately it wasn't.

While the creek looked good enough to harbor 1,900 Trout per mile, according to our guide, our experience didn't support it.

Maybe the Trout knew we were coming or possibly someone miscounted. I never asked how big those 1,900 Trout were, and when the census was taken. Visualizing the fly shop brochures with giant Trout displayed only added insult to injury, and I began thinking of suing for false advertising.



“I may have netted the biggest fish here. It was a fat 10-inch Brown Trout.”

“Two small Trout caught in a little over a day of fishing is embarrassing and a subject best kept secret”



On the last day we drove east to Penns Creek and saved a lot of money by fishing without a guide. The couple of hours we fished here produced two small Trout, one caught by Fred and the other by me. Again, the water looked good, but Trout were not feeding. Two small Trout caught in a little over a day of fishing is embarrassing and a subject best kept secret especially when it involves two of the smartest and highly renowned Trout fishermen east of the Mississippi. We both learned that fishing can sometimes be best in our own backyard. So that is the fishing part of the trip, sad to say, a series of diminished expectations.

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

ANGLER REFLECTIONS -- CONTINUED

Now for the travel experience part of this adventure:

Fred relied on his GPS to guide him home and that was a big mistake.

The “Woman in the box,” as Fred refers to his GPS took us on a series of winding, hilly country roads that led us into places few fly fishermen have seen. I saw a lot of beautiful wild countryside but no people. There were plenty of road signs depicting snaky curves ahead. The going was slow and we were getting desperate to find civilization and a coffee shop.

Fred smartly disobeyed Miss GPS and chose to follow a trail of horse shit left on the road that led us to an Amish or Mennonite café. It was a small, clean café with guys wearing straw hats coming and going. It was a relief to see people, drink coffee, and eat a homemade moon pie. We left and hit the back road heading east or maybe west. It seemed we were going in circles again. A couple of times we passed the same spot. At least three times Fred pulled over to anxiously communicate with “The woman in the box.”



“It was a relief to see people, drink coffee, and eat a homemade moon pie.”

As I comfortably sat in the cushioned seat listening to miss GPS, I thought of “Charlie.” Remember him? He was the guy the Kingston Trio sang about years ago who was trapped on the Boston subway because he didn’t have enough money to exit the station due to a fare increase... *“Will he ever return; his fate is still unlearned.”*

That is what I began to feel like as we endlessly wandered the winding tertiary, back mountain roads of Pennsylvania. We were somewhere north or maybe it was east of Harrisburg passing about a hundred Dutch hamlets along the way. We certainly got to see a good portion of mid PA before we found the sterile interstate.

We both expected to catch more fish and honestly it should have been like that. After all we are not novices, we had a professional guide, and we were fishing in renowned Trout waters and brochures don’t lie all the time but one can never know for certain even when it looks like you can’t lose. I remember poor Bob. You guys don’t remember Bob, but I do. He once bet on two horses, the one to win and the other to place second.

Both horses were far ahead of the pack coming around the last turn. Excitable Bob was jumping up and down waving his winning tickets so all could see. It looked like Bob was going to have some big bucks in his pocket for the first time in his life. The number one horse was in first and the second horse was in second place until the second horse suddenly collided with the first horse short of the finish line. Neither horse placed in the money. Bob looked like a stepped-on, deflated balloon. Like poor Bob, even when you think you have a winner you may not. Get my drift?



Winchester TU Monthly “BarFly” Events

Wednesday, 15 July 2026, 7:00 PM
Wednesday, 19 August 2026, 7:00 PM
Wednesday, 16 September 2026, 7:00 PM



Escutcheon Brewery
Commercial St., Winchester, VA

See you at the next
Winchester TU BarFly.



Spruce Fly
by Luke Robins
photo by Bill Prokopchak

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.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

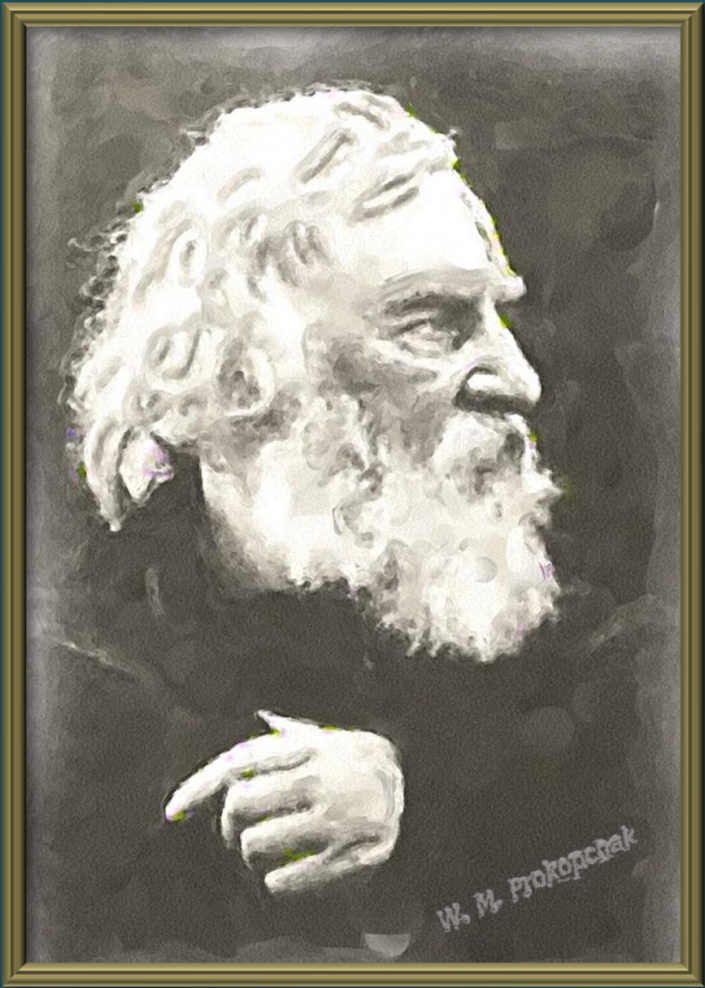
Some nice ones to the boat, but not as good as years past. We all had a good time.
Fred Boyer



Poet’s Corner:
Poems selected for the angler

Paul Revere’s Ride

by *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*
1807-1882
American



Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
Ink wash by W.M. Prokopchak © 2026
after a PUBLIC DOMAIN, Gutenberg Project photograph
by Julia Margaret Cameron in 1868

Listen, my children, and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-Five:
Hardly a man is now alive
Who remembers that famous day and year.

He said to his friend, “If the British march
By land or sea from the town to-night,
Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry-arch
Of the North-Church-tower, as a signal-light,—
One if by land, and two if by sea;
And I on the opposite shore will be,
Ready to ride and spread the alarm
Through every Middlesex village and farm,
For the country-folk to be up and to arm.”

Then he said “Good night!” and with muffled oar
Silently rowed to the Charlestown shore,
Just as the moon rose over the bay,
Where swinging wide at her moorings lay
The Somerset, British man-of-war:
A phantom ship, with each mast and spar
Across the moon, like a prison-bar,
And a huge black hulk, that was magnified
By its own reflection in the tide.

Meanwhile, his friend, through alley and street
Wanders and watches with eager ears,
Till in the silence around him he hears
The muster of men at the barrack door,
The sound of arms, and the tramp of feet,
And the measured tread of the grenadiers
Marching down to their boats on the shore.

Then he climbed to the tower of the church,
Up the wooden stairs, with stealthy tread,
To the belfry-chamber overhead,
And startled the pigeons from their perch
On the sombre rafters, that round him made
Masses and moving shapes of shade,—
By the trembling ladder, steep and tall,
To the highest window in the wall,
Where he paused to listen and look down
A moment on the roofs of the town,
And the moonlight flowing over all.

Beneath, in the churchyard, lay the dead,
In their night-encampment on the hill,
Wrapped in silence so deep and still
That he could hear, like a sentinel’s tread,
The watchful night-wind, as it went
Creeping along from tent to tent,
And seeming to whisper, “All is well!”
A moment only he feels the spell
Of the place and the hour, and the secret dread
Of the lonely belfry and the dead;
For suddenly all his thoughts are bent
On a shadowy something far away,
Where the river widens to meet the bay,—
A line of black, that bends and floats
On the rising tide, like a bridge of boats.

Meanwhile, impatient to mount and ride,
Booted and spurred, with a heavy stride,
On the opposite shore walked Paul Revere.
Now he patted his horse’s side,
Now gazed on the landscape far and near,
Then impetuous stamped the earth,

“Paul Revere’s Ride”
continues on the next page.

Poet’s Corner:

Poems selected for the angler
(continued)

Paul Revere’s Ride



This image is a work of an employee of the United States Farm Security Administration or Office of War Information domestic photographic units, taken as part of that person's official duties. As a work of the U.S. federal government, the image is in the public domain in the United States.

And turned and tightened his saddle-girth;
But mostly he watched with eager search
The belfry-tower of the old North Church,
As it rose above the graves on the hill,
Lonely and spectral and sombre and still.
And lo! as he looks, on the belfry’s height,
A glimmer, and then a gleam of light!
He springs to the saddle, the bridle he turns,
But lingers and gazes, till full on his sight
A second lamp in the belfry burns!

A hurry of hoofs in a village-street,
A shape in the moonlight, a bulk in the dark,
And beneath from the pebbles, in passing, a spark
Struck out by a steed that flies fearless and fleet:
That was all! And yet, through the gloom and the light,
The fate of a nation was riding that night;
And the spark struck out by that steed, in his flight,
Kindled the land into flame with its heat.

He has left the village and mounted the steep,
And beneath him, tranquil and broad and deep,
Is the Mystic, meeting the ocean tides;
And under the alders, that skirt its edge,
Now soft on the sand, now loud on the ledge,
Is heard the tramp of his steed as he rides.

It was twelve by the village clock
When he crossed the bridge into Medford town.
He heard the crowing of the cock,
And the barking of the farmer’s dog,
And felt the damp of the river-fog,
That rises when the sun goes down.

It was one by the village clock,
When he galloped into Lexington.
He saw the gilded weathercock
He saw the gilded weathercock
Swim in the moonlight as he passed,
And the meeting-house windows, blank and bare,
Gaze at him with a spectral glare,
As if they already stood aghast
At the bloody work they would look upon.

It was two by the village clock,
When he came to the bridge in Concord town.
He heard the bleating of the flock,
And the twitter of birds among the trees,
And felt the breath of the morning breeze
Blowing over the meadows brown.
And one was safe and asleep in his bed
Who at the bridge would be first to fall,
Who that day would be lying dead,
Pierced by a British musket-ball.

You know the rest. In the books you have read,
How the British Regulars fired and fled,—
How the farmers gave them ball for ball,
From behind each fence and farmyard-wall,
Chasing the red-coats down the lane,
Then crossing the fields to emerge again
Under the trees at the turn of the road,
And only pausing to fire and load.

So through the night rode Paul Revere;
And so through the night went his cry of alarm
To every Middlesex village and farm,—
A cry of defiance, and not of fear,
A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door,
And a word that shall echo forevermore!
For, borne on the night-wind of the Past,
Through all our history, to the last,
In the hour of darkness and peril and need,
The people will waken and listen to hear
The hurrying hoof-beats of that steed,
And the midnight message of Paul Revere.



Calendar of Events

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

Winchester Trout Unlimited

(For the complete Winchester Project Healing Waters calendar, please see page 17 of this newsletter.)

July 2026

Thursday, 2 July 2026

Priority Waters does not have a monthly meeting in July

Thursday, 2 July 2026

Winchester Trout Unlimited does not have a monthly meeting in July.

July 2026

Please see page 17 of this newsletter for the complete Project Healing Waters schedule.

Wednesday, 15 July 2026 – Winchester Trout Unlimited BarFly

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

August 2026

Thursday, 6 August 2026

6:00 – 7:00 PM Priority Waters monthly meeting

Thursday, 6 Aug 2026

7:00 – 9:00 PM Winchester Trout monthly meeting

Wednesday, 12 August 2026

6:00 – 9:00 PM Project Healing Waters Monthly Meeting Wednesday,
Rachel’s Kitchen, Shenandoah Lodge, Lake Frederick

Wednesday, 19 August 2026 – Winchester Trout Unlimited BarFly

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

September 2026

Thursday, 3 September 2026

6:00 – 7:00 PM Priority Waters monthly meeting

Thursday, 3 September 2026

7:00 – 9:00 PM Winchester Trout monthly meeting

Wednesday, 9 September 2026

6:00 – 9:00 PM Project Healing Waters Monthly Meeting Wednesday,
Rachel’s Kitchen, Shenandoah Lodge, Lake Frederick

Wednesday, 16 September 2026 – Winchester Trout Unlimited BarFly

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

Looking Ahead -- October 2026

Thursday, 1 October 2026

7:00 PM – Winchester TU annual meeting with Northern Shenandoah Valley Audubon
Featured speaker is Brad Fink, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources
Cold Water Fisheries Biologist



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.

