



— CLUB MEETING: AN EVENING WITH STEVE WEINSTEIN —

How to Hook, Play, Land, and Release Fish

By Larry Forte

We have all been there. You have the correct fly, the perfect drift, and your target fish comes up to take your fly. Now the real challenge begins and many times you are unable to land your fish. Or, as my buddy Mr. Fine describes it, you experience a long-line release. What happened? What did I do wrong? how did I loose that fish?

To help answer some of these questions, join us at our meeting on December 13th. Club member Steve Weinstein will help answer some of those questions plus much more — like how to properly release your fish and to revive the fish if necessary. It will be a fun night. Hope to see you there at 6:30 PM: Room A170, Tuscarora High School, Frederick.

Advanced Fly Tying: Jig Rainbow Warrior

By Larry Forte

At our Advanced Fly Tying gathering on December 21st at 7:00 PM, Kyle Shenk will be our tier and will teach us how to tie a the Jig Rainbow Warrior.



There will be no Beginner's Fly Tying class in December. Have a great holiday and see you in January!

For those that prefer to join us via ZOOM, no problem. We will have a Zoom hook-up at the church for folks.

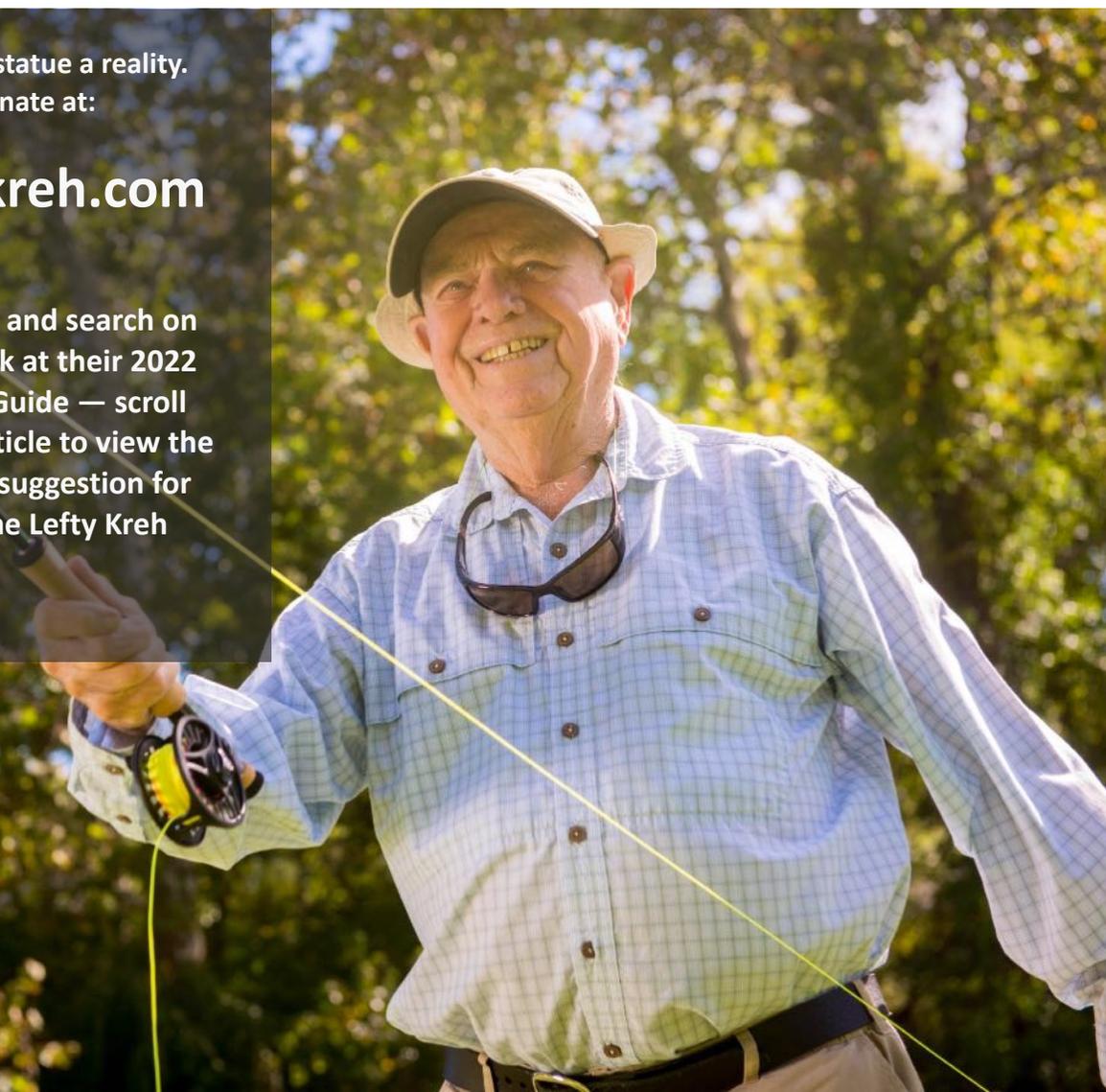
Would you like to join us? This is open to everyone. Perhaps you are not sure if your skills are to the "Advanced" level yet? No worries. Come and watch and check it out. I am barely an intermediate tier but I learn something new at each session. Plus, it is a lot of fun! We will meet in Room 108 at Trinity Church.

Interested? We would love for you to join us. Just let me or Don Fine know. You can sign up on our website or you can email me at lbforte@verizon.net.

Help make the Lefty Kreh statue a reality.
Learn more and donate at:

friendsofleftykreh.com

Also, head to forbes.com and search on "fly fishing" to take a look at their 2022 Fly Fishing Holiday Gift Guide — scroll down to the end of the article to view the best item on their list: a suggestion for readers to donate to the Lefty Kreh statue!



Support the Club: Volunteers Needed

As we are a member run organization, we always are looking for Members that want to volunteer to help. There are many areas where you can volunteer: being on the board, helping with the newsletter, website, outings, mentoring, trout pen stocking, project healing waters, the banquet, picnic, fly tying and whatever your imagination or talents can contribute to your fellow members. If you can spare an hour or two a month, please let me know at andymekelburg@outlook.com.

— Andy Mekelburg

Time To Renew Your Membership

A reminder to go to our website or use the form at the end of this newsletter to renew dues for 2023 or to join as a new member. Whether you renew online or in-person at our club meeting, note that you can purchase more than one year at a time.

— Dave Dowiak



Congratulations Denny Grizzle (shown here holding plaque) — the 2022 PVFF 3-Fish Challenge winner! He caught four different fish. Congratulations also to (from left to right) Mike Holland, Peter Ring, Corvin Robinson, and Don Dunkers for successfully completing the challenge!



PROJECT HEALING WATERS FLY FISHING

Project Healing Waters: Getting Ready for Harman's Creek

By Andrew Frutiger

First and foremost, I would like to thank the Ausherman Family Foundation whose generous donation to Project Healing Water Frederick Chapter made our 3-day trip possible. For those of you that may not be familiar with Harman's Creek in West Virginia (about 3 hours from Frederick), it is a spectacular stretch of water that supports massive trout and fishes well, even when water levels are low. When the fishing is done, their luxury log cabins are an incredible place to eat, trade stories, or actually get some sleep.

The fun started on a Friday when all of the Frederick Chapter veterans (100% participation) and the majority of volunteers arrived (some volunteers went

out early to get setup for the outing). As soon as licenses were in hand, the veterans were on the water catching trout. These trout were big and did not want to be landed, which made for some unbelievable fights, long distance releases, and some amazing memories. Every veteran caught multiple fish over the three days — each fish required the net and most required two hands for the picture. The weather ranged from perfect one minute to a raging wind tunnel the next, but no matter what mother nature threw at us, she could not keep us off the water. In fact, the only things that begrudgingly got anyone off the water was either food or lack of sunlight.

Although the veterans were there to fish, another goal of Project Healing Waters is to create a sense of community, and this was on full display during meals and evenings by the fire. Everyone was sharing stories or asking questions about everything from family to fishing. Many of these conversations went late into the night and continued on at breakfast or until it was time to get back on the water.

Whether on the water or off, this was an amazing trip both for fishing and as a reminder of how important this program and the many Project Healing Waters Chapters are across the country. I would urge that during this season of giving that you please keep Project Healing Waters in mind. Every contribution makes a huge impact on those that have served our country.

If you have any questions or would like to make a donation to the program, please reach out to me at any time at andrewfrutiger@yahoo.com or go to our Facebook page at *Project Healing Waters — Frederick Chapter*.

Upcoming Outings

SMITH CREEK, VA

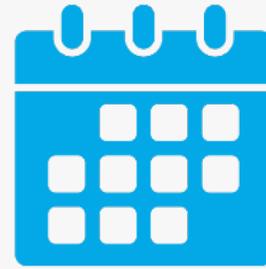
Date: December 17, 2022

Time and Location: Meet at Susie Q Farm around 9 am. Directions will be provided. We will fish Smith Creek on Susie Q Farm, which is located off of Exit 257 of I-81 in Broadway, VA. There is a \$100 rod fee payable to the Mossy Creek Fly Shop; we typically call in at lunch time and each provide our payment information.

Recommended Flies: Nymphs, such as Prince Nymphs, Copper Johns, and Zebra Midges. Woolly Buggers always work well.

Outing Leader: Mike Holland

How to Sign Up: Contact Mike (michaeldhollandjr@hotmail.com) or go to the “Outings” page of our website.



Calendar of Events

- Dec. 13** Club Meeting at 6:30 PM
Tuscarora High School
Room A170
Frederick, Maryland
- Dec. 17** Smith Creek Outing, 9:00 AM
Meet at Susie Q Farm. View details and register on our website's Outings page.
- Dec. 21** Advanced Fly Tying
7:00 PM
Trinity United Methodist Church
Frederick, Maryland
Room 108

2022 PVFF Officers & Directors

President.....Andy Mekelburg
Vice President.....Kevin Haney
Secretary.....Owen Davis
Treasurer.....Dennis Allen
3 year Director.....Troy Kitch
2 year Director.....Dave Dowiak
1 year Director.....Kevin Lynn
Past President.....Larry Forte



Cattaraugus Creek bright male steelhead caught by Dan Neuland on a black egg-sucking woolybugger. Photo by Dan Neuland

PVFF Anglers Heading North to Steelhead Alley

By Dan Neuland

Steelhead are more than trout. Any angler that has played a steelhead on their fly rod will attest to their energy and power as well as their beauty. Steelhead Alley refers to the many river tributaries that flow into Lake Erie from its southern shore bordering New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio.

The steelhead trout is a migratory variant of the rainbow trout that originate from the Pacific Coast states. The fish are stocked as fingerlings in tributary streams and after a year or two in the creeks and rivers, the steelhead swim out into the lake where most of their growth occurs. Most Lake Erie steelies

usually weigh 3 to 6-pounds and are generally 18 to 26 inches in length, while 30-inch fish weighing 10 or more pounds are not uncommon.

The prime months to fish for steelhead are late October, November and December in the fall and winter and March and April in the spring. Steelhead Alley waters are well worth the drive north when water levels are fishable. Rising waters bring in fresh steelhead from the lake but too much water can make fishing impractical.



Cattaraugus Creek near Springville, New York in late October.
Photo by Dan Neuland

New York

Cattaraugus Creek is considered the crown jewel of Steelhead Alley. From the lake to the dam in Springville, the steelhead run some 34 miles up the waterway to spawn each year. The first 17 miles of creek flows through land owned by the Seneca Indian Nation. Anglers who fish that stretch must possess a special \$60 license that's good for a year. Three other popular waterways for steelhead are Eighteenmile, Canadaway, and Chautauqua creeks.

I was fortunate to spend a few hours fishing for steelhead on Cattaraugus Creek following the morning after I attended a memorial service for my uncle at my hometown in western New York State. It

was a brief, solo trip in late October with time well spent with family and distant relatives. My plan was to fish a run in the early morning on my property near Springville before driving back to Maryland to attend the PVFF annual banquet that evening.

At first light, I began working the fast, shallow water at the top of the run. I cast my streamer, a white wooly-bugger, across the current, quickly mended my line upstream to allow the fly to sink and then stripped the fly in short strokes as it swept downstream through the run.

I continued working my streamer in a similar fashion as I slowly moved downstream toward the deeper and slower section of the run. I wasn't sure where the fish would be holding so fishing a streamer in

this way would allow me to methodically cover the run. The chilly, early morning temperature in the 30's had ice forming in the guides of my fly rod.

I worked to the tail of the run without a hit. The warmth of the rising sun was welcome relief to my numb fingertips. I returned to the top of the run and switched flies to a black egg-sucking woolly-bugger streamer. It was now a little more than an hour after I began fishing when a steelie grabbed my fly. I was fortunate to bring to hand a beautiful chrome buck. A light splash of crimson was evident on the side of the gill plate, as the spawning season progresses, the brightness will give way to deeper and vivid colors on the male steelhead, not unlike the colorful transformation of a fall leaf.

My morning was already a success when I hooked a second fish in the run soon after the first. It was a slightly larger hen steelie. The bright silver color indicated that this was a fresh run fish that entered the river recently. Besides color differences, female steelhead can be recognized by their rounded head while males generally exhibit a hooked lower jaw. Both were strong, hard-fighting fish.

Catch and release is an important concern for most steelhead anglers. Both fish landed that day were quickly returned to the river. I fished only a few hours, as I had to make the long drive back to Maryland. It was an absolutely gorgeous fall day on the 'Catt' and I hated to leave.

Pennsylvania

Due to heavy stocking, Pennsylvania has an excellent run of steelhead each year. The PA Fish and Boat Commission website lists a dozen steelhead streams, most are small and medium sized. Elk Creek is the largest and most popular. Chuck Dinkel arranged a guided group outing with Ben John of Precision Fly Fishing on November 11. Unfortunately, heavy rain was expected to start that morning. Interesting to note, despite the impending



storm, he was told that trips are not cancelled. So, he had no choice but to show up and hope for the best.

Ruth Eichler landed a spring hen steelie caught on the Ashtabula River in Ohio using an egg pattern. Photo by Bob Eichler

Rain was predicted to start that morning – at least two inches from the recent hurricane. The group arrived at Elk Creek before first light and started drifting egg patterns under a float. Chuck was using an 8-weight fly rod that he built in 1993. Before the rain started, Chuck landed his first steelhead, an 8-pound male. The rain started at 9AM and within two hours the Elk was too high and it was decided to break for lunch. After lunch they spent about two hours driving to other streams looking for water to fish. With the rains still coming down they finally decided to call it quits for the day.

The next day, a cold front arrived. “We started out a bit later because we knew the streams would be high...most were a raging torrent!” said Chuck. They tried one small stream and fished the edges for about two hours without success as the water continued to rise. Other guided groups tried a few other streams but all were very high. After lunch, Chuck’s group wound up on 16-mile Creek as the stream was

dropping. Fortunately, some fish were beginning to be caught but fishing was difficult. The high water washed debris into the stream and drifting leaves were problematic when drifting egg patterns. “Around 3PM I caught my second fish – a bright steelie; fresh from the lake. I gave my spot to another angler who hadn’t caught anything. This was a good way of making sure that everyone had an opportunity to get a fish,” said Chuck.

At the same time, Larry Forte and John Dunkers had traveled to Erie, PA to fish the tribs only to find that heavy rains had blown out the rivers. They rescheduled a trip for late November. We are looking forward to their report.

Ohio

Ohio raises approximately 450,000 steelhead smolt at the fish hatchery at Castalia. The smolt are stocked each year in the Vermillion, Rocky, Gran, Chagrin, Conneaut and Ashtabula Rivers. In the spring of 2021, Bob and Ruth Eichler made their way to the Ohio tribs. They had great success fishing several waters including the Conneaut River, the Ashtabula River at the Cedarquist Park location and the Grand River at Harperfield Covered Bridge Park in Painesville, Ohio.

Despite low flows from a lack of snowmelt and dry conditions, the husband-and-wife team landed several steelies making for a very successful trip. “Ohio is a great state to fish in the spring and fall,” said Bob. According to Bob, the strain of steelhead Ohio stocks is from a spring spawning steelhead. “They also tend to grow larger than the steelhead PA stocks,” he said.

For gear, Bob and his wife recommend 7-weight fly rods with floating lines. Both 9’ and 10’ rods are preferred. Steelhead were caught on a variety of patterns including a White Death streamer with an



egg fly dropper,
black stonefly
nymphs and natural
colored egg flies.

Chuck Dinkel's first steelhead
with guide Ben John on Elk Creek
in Pennsylvania. Photo courtesy
of Precision Fly & Tackle

Before you go

Steelhead provide great cold weather action for hardy anglers looking for a challenge. The primary fly fishing techniques for steelhead are dead drifting flies under a float or bottom bouncing using added weight to keep the flies near the bottom where steelhead lie. Swinging streamer patterns is an exciting method that can produce hard strikes, do not go light on your tippet strength. Newly arrived steelies will even smack a surface fly, such as a ‘Bomber’ pattern when fishing an undisturbed run. Steelhead tend to attract hordes of anglers so heavy fishing pressure should be expected on weekend trips while an angler may have no company on weekdays. Most importantly, anticipate water levels and weather conditions online before embarking. Guides are helpful but certainly not necessary for Steelhead Alley success as important information on such as stream descriptions and access locations are well documented.

Last Cast

By Andy Mekelburg

While some may think that December is the end of the fishing season, I plan to continue getting out. On November 10, through the assistance of Mark Toms and the DNR crew, we emptied the trout pen and brought the fish over to the Catoctin Nature Center. My thanks to Rick Loose and Russ Hanson for coordinating and for those getting in the pen and the creek. There were no small fish! One of them (I call him Moby — he's probably 24 inches) was super fast and got behind me to a corner of the pen. Can't wait to see how big he is next year!

The following Sunday we had a very well attended outing on our home waters, with mixed results. You wonder where these fish went so quickly? Other members are reporting success on the good days since. I even caught one. This is the value of the trout stocking program that the club runs. The state provides the babies and food and we provide the manpower to feed them through the year. At the end of the year, we stock them and go after them in the wild. This year, through Rick loose and Dave Dowiak's work and contributions, we have modernized the equipment to keep the tradition going.

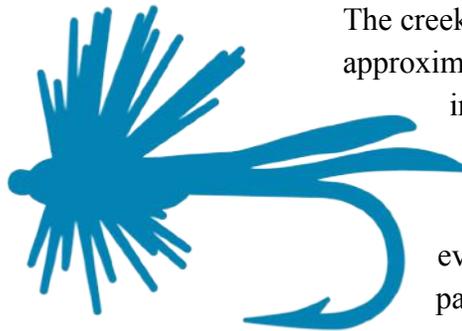
Fishing for the club was not limited to our home waters, however. We also had an outing in the

Catoctin Mountains hosted by Peter Ring. This was one of the most highly attended outings of the year, despite the cold weather. A bunch of brook trout were caught and everyone had fun fishing and hanging out over lunch. This is an outing that will be repeated.

Speaking of which, our previously scheduled trip to Smith Creek, which was scratched due to conditions, is rescheduled for December 17. It's one of my favorite locations to fish, about two hours down 81. The creek is stocked with nice fish and we have approximately one mile of water to ourselves. Right in the middle of farmland — a very peaceful place to practice our peaceful art!

As the year wraps up, I do want to thank everyone who volunteered their time, participated in our various activities, contributed to the banquet and Lefty Project or just monitored our website or newsletter. We are a member run group, so we exist to unite local fly fishers in activities and fellowships. We are now soliciting volunteers for next year. If you want to help, please let me know. I'll also make a plug for donating to the Lefty Kreh Sculpture Project (www.friendsoflefykreh.com) before the end of the year — it's tax deductible.

This is my last message prior to next year, so I want to wish everyone a happy and healthy holiday season and a fishy New Year!



Annual Elections

We will be electing our board for the coming year at our December meeting. If you are interested in running, please let Andy Mekelburg know (andymekelburg@outlook.com). The Board consists of three directors, the immediate past president, and the elected officers of President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

POTOMAC VALLEY FLY FISHERS

P. O. BOX 3001

FREDERICK, MD 21705

www.potomacvalleyflyfishers.club



FLY FISHERS
INTERNATIONAL



POTOMAC VALLEY FLY FISHERS
MEMBERSHIP and RENEWAL APPLICATION and LIABILITY RELEASE

Year _____

The purpose of the Potomac Valley Fly Fishers (PVFF) is (1) to promote fly fishing as the most sportsman-like and enjoyable way of fishing and the most consistent with the preservation and wise use of our resources; (2) to provide advice, suggestions and assistance to club members; (3) to publicize the best practices and techniques of fly fishing, fly tying, fly casting and other related subjects; and (4) to maintain liaison with other organizations of sportsmen and conservationists. By my joining PVFF voluntarily, I understand there are risks involved and will not hold the PVFF club, board of directors, and officers responsible for any injuries, accidents or death as a result of participation in the activities of the Club. I also grant PVFF permission to photograph me and/or my family at any activities and also to publish them in our monthly newsletter, at the meetings and any PVFF fly fishing functions.

Website: www.potomacvalleyflyfishers.club

The undersigned being in agreement with the above does hereby apply for membership/renewal in the Potomac Valley Fly Fishers.

Applicant's Name: _____ Date: _____
(Last) (First)

If family membership, other names: _____

Home Address: _____
Street City State Zip

Phone Number: _____ E-mail address for e-mailing newsletter _____

Applicant's signature: _____

Are you a Fly Fishers Int'l (FFI) member? Circle **Yes or No** **Yearly Dues:** ___ \$15 single ___ \$20 family \$ ___ Donation

How did you hear about PVFF? ___ Friend ___ Facebook ___ Newsletter ___ Fly Shop _____ Other

Interested in a volunteer position? ___ Officer /Board of Directors ___ Committee/Chair ___ Banquet ___ Trip Organizer ___ Teaching Fly Tying ___ Other Activities

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO POTOMAC VALLEY FLY FISHERS. Mail your check with this completed form to:

David Dowiak, PVFF Membership
8920 Bloomfield Road
Frederick, Maryland 21702

Dues for calendar year Jan 1-Dec 31

Cash _____ Check # _____ Amount _____ Date _____
New _____ Renewal _____ Life _____