



— CLUB MEETING: FEBRUARY 13, 7 PM —

A Trip to Yellowstone National Park with Don Dunkers

By Larry Forte

Join us at our February meeting as we will take a trip to Yellowstone National Park. Not only is it one of the most beautiful places in the world, it offers some of the best fly fishing you will ever find.

Club member Don Dunkers just spent five weeks there last fall. This was not just a long vacation at the park. Don retired a few years ago and decided to work at the park this past fall. When not working, he

was fishing. The program is called Helping Hands. Basically you work after the majority of seasonal employees go back to school. He started in mid-September. The cool thing is you work and stay in the park. Sounds like an awesome GIG!!!

Hope you can join us on the 13th and learn about fly fishing in the park and the Helping Hands Program.

Beginner's Fly Tying: Griffith's Gnat and Zebra Midge

By Don Fine

Just because its winter and some of the warmer-water species (e.g. smallmouth and largemouth bass) are not as active, that's no reason not to go fly fishing. There are two types of winter days which I enjoy my fly fishing; when the snow is falling in large flakes, or on a sunny afternoon when there is a midge-hatch. Nevertheless, the combination of warmer temperature and witnessing the repetitive rise of a fish taking one midge after another enhances my day on the water.

While there are hundreds of fly patterns which imitate midges* (ref. Midge Magic by Don Holbrook and Ed Koch, 1st edition, 2001) two of my favorite patterns are the Griffith's gnat and the Zebra midge. I consider these two flies (with the Zebra midge tied in several colors) will cover most fresh-water streams and rivers.

Join our Beginner fly tying class at 7:00 PM on February 20th, at Trinity United Methodist Church,

West Patrick St. Frederick. As always, we welcome fly fishers who have never tied an artificial fly to join our Beginner fly tying classes. Equipment and materials are provided to both newcomers** and club members.



*Midges are a subcategory of non-biting flies found in the same scientific Order (Diptera) as biting flies, e.g. deer flies, horse flies and gnats.

**Note for all fly tying newcomers. Our PVFF fly tying instruction has been broadened to provide monthly instruction for those who might never have tied a fly (i.e. true beginners), as well as for those who have some experience in fly tying and wish to expand their skills by tying artificial flies which imitate natural fish foods. If you are planning on attending and do not

already have your own basic equipment for fly tying, please let Don Fine (301-371-5617) know prior to the February session, so a tying vise and tools will be provided.

Advanced Fly Tying: Seth Denbo's Terrestrial Fly

By Larry Forte

At our Advanced Fly Tying gathering, on February 21st at 7:00 PM, Seth Denbo will show us how to tie a special large terrestrial fly. I hope you can 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.



Fly Tying Saturday

March 9th, 11 AM – 3 PM, Room 207 at Trinity United Methodist Church

As I write this, it is 18 degrees outside and I have about six inches of snow on the ground. I don't think I will be fishing anytime soon ☹️. However, it's a perfect time to fill my fly box and one thing I need are more beadhead nymphs. If you have similar ideas, you should plan on joining us on Saturday, March 9th. We are going to focus on beadhead flies!

We will have 4-5 club tiers, each one tying their favorite beadhead fly. We will provide all of the materials and hooks. Each tier will be demonstrating how to tie their fly. You can learn how to tie all of them or just the ones you want to tie.

Beginners are welcome to come to either observe or participate in the tying if you are comfortable tying without one-on-one instruction. Lunch will be provided. If you want to join us, register online (the link is on the homepage) or send us an email (lbforte@verizon.net) — Larry Forte and Don Fine

Support the Club: Volunteers Needed

As we are a member run organization, we always are looking for members that want to volunteer to help. Whatever your imagination or talents can contribute to your fellow members. If you can spare an hour or two a month, join the effort! — Martyn Holland

Time To Renew Your Membership

Please go to our website or use the form at the end of this newsletter to renew dues for 2024 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



Project Healing Waters: Starting Off Fast

By Andrew Frutiger

What a great start to the year. We kicked things off with a trip to Harry Murray's Fly Shop in Edinburg, Virginia. For those not familiar with Edinburg, it sits at the north end of Shenandoah National Park, which sports some of the best fishing in the Mid-Atlantic. Harry himself broke out the slide projector (old school, with 1970s-80s slides) and walked the veterans through how to fish these streams, where to fish, and the most effective fly patterns throughout the year. It was amazing to see how far everyone has come in just a few short years. The veterans asked questions around approaching the water, how to fish certain areas of the pools and what were the best times of year to fish. After the session, we headed next door to Beans Barbecue for an unbelievable eating experience. If you believe that there can never be too much barbecue, try Beans — the portion sizes

are ridiculous! When all was said and done, everyone agreed that we should come back and take the outdoor instruction class (run by Harry's son) which includes time on the water.

In addition to the Murray's outing, the team has a ton of outings planned for this year, some old, some new. If you have any ideas, we would love to hear them so please reach out to any member of the PHW volunteer group. If you have any questions or would like to make a donation to the program, reach out to me at any time at andrewfrutiger@yahoo.com.

Support the Frederick Chapter of Project Healing Waters online by visiting:

projecthealingwaters.networkforgood.com/projects/63663

Save The Date: Youth-Only Trout Fishing Day March 23

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is offering the state's first-ever Youth-Only Trout Fishing Day for children under 16 years of age on March 23, one week before opening day for all trout anglers. On March 23, the state's put-and-take trout areas under closure will be open to youth from 6:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. These will be stocked in advance. Fishing areas under closure are online and in the Maryland Guide to Fishing and Crabbing. Youth anglers may catch and keep up to two trout each, except brook trout, which must be released if caught.

Big Hunting Creek Working Group Update

By Kevin Haney

The first meeting of the Big Hunting Creek Working Group was held on January 17. Participants included PVFF, Brotherhood of the Jungle Cock, Trout Unlimited, Cunningham Falls State Park, USGS, and the Maryland DNR. Among the noteworthy things discussed were the following:

- Rt. 77 along Big Hunting Creek closed in January and will remain blocked to all traffic until at least mid-June and possibly early July. The creek remains open to fishing throughout the road closure but access will require walking downstream from the Catoctin National Park Visitor Center or upstream from Bentz Pond.
- Brown trout have taken over Big Hunting Creek and the self-sustaining wild population remains strong and vibrant. Though there are concerns about how the heat and drought during the summer of 2023 affected the brown trout population in the creek, for the past 30 years the population has been both healthy and stable.
- Brook trout, however, have not been found in the main stem of Big Hunting Creek since around 2016. Fisheries managers are considering options for re-introducing wild strains of brook trout.
- Removing the dam that forms Frank Bentz Pond is expected to create conditions that will increase the population of wild brown trout downstream from the pond because the water temperature will decrease.
- A new technology that takes advantage of artificial intelligence involves using remotely operated cameras, comparable to game monitoring cameras,



that are focused on specific spots in small creeks. Artificial intelligence software is used, allowing the program to accurately estimate stream flow based on the photographic images. The USGS reported on the technology and said they would look into the logistics of having such a system installed on Big Hunting Creek.

- It was agreed to produce an updated and expanded version of the Friends of Big Hunting Creek publication “Fly Fisherman’s Guide to Big Hunting Creek.” It would be distributed at the park visitor centers and through the various organizations.
- It was suggested that the state park create a fly fishing heritage trail on their upper section of the creek, in conjunction with the proposed national park trail along the lower section, since they have a number of historic areas in that section.
- A state-wide regulation is being discussed within the DNR that would ban stocking on any native brook trout streams such as Fishing Creek. The group was supportive of the idea.



A Month in Yellowstone

By Don Dunkers

Ok so it was actually five weeks. There is a program called Helping Hands Yellowstone run by Xantera, the concessionaire in Yellowstone. Before the summer help arrives and as the summer help leaves, they still need to keep the services in the park up and running so they hire people to work part-time filling in doing whatever is necessary. They run that program for five or six weeks in the Spring before schools let out and then again in the fall, when I did it. You work 20 hours a week, and have the rest of the time off to play in the park — they supply room and board taken out of

your salary. Considering driving out there and back, it is basically volunteer work that allows you to spend time in the park. There are five locations for the helping hand program in the park. I had picked Canyon as it is basically in the center of Yellowstone. It is also one of the quieter locations, not as popular as Mammoth or Old Faithful — those spots are overrun with visitors.

So my goal was to catch the native species: cutthroat trout, grayling and white fish, as well as the non-native rainbow, brown, and brook trout. But also to catch one of the larger runners, browns, and

rainbows that come up into the park from Hebgen lake in the fall. The browns come to spawn and the rainbows come to eat the eggs of the browns.

So on my first excursion I headed over to the Firehole hoping for a hatch. I found the hatch, white miller caddis, and was able to catch a few brown trout but I learned this was not going to be as easy as I expected. These fish see quite a number of fisherman as the Firehole is easily accessible and there are a serious number of anglers in the park. My next stop was on the Gibbon on the ride back to Canyon. I found a few cutthroats willing to eat my grasshopper pattern, so overall a good start to my stay.

Next opportunity was right after orientation, so I had a half day. As Cascade Lake is close to Canyon and is one of the few reliable places to catch a grayling, I hiked over there. Was rewarded with cutthroat and grayling willing to take grasshopper and ant patterns.

The next day off was a trip over to the Barns Holes on the Madison to try and learn the rules of the cult following that regularly fishes those holes for runners. If you have not read about the Barns Holes as well as the Cable Car hole on the Madison, I can recommend Yellowstone Runners by Chester Allen. That will explain the cult following and the Conga line at those famous holes. I do believe you would catch more fish there with a good Euro Nymph rod but that does not allow the masses a chance to fish the run. So the accepted method is to swing a streamer or soft hackle, then take two steps downstream and do it again. Etiquette requires that the next guy enters the run above you and follows you down the run. Not unusual to see four guys in the run at the same time with more waiting to start. If you go, talk to the anglers there before heading into the water, they are friendly when people talk to them before starting and hostile to people who do not follow the accepted rules.

If the runners are not there in large numbers the crowd tends to start leaving around 10:30 and the place can be quite empty by 1:00 PM. I did have the

opportunity to fish it one time without a crowd with my euro nymph rod for a few minutes before a thunderstorm hit. The place seemed to be loaded with whitefish and resident browns and rainbows. The residents will go from 4-16" and the whitefish that I caught were all in the 15 – 17" range, so plenty of fun even though all of that is frowned upon by the cult looking for the runners which are 16-26". I was able to land a runner, a 20" brown swinging a soft hackle in the cable car hole.

So after the Firehole, Madison, and Cascade Lake, I had all the fish on my list except a brook trout. That meant the next time out would have to be Obsidiann Creek, known as the easiest place to catch a brookie in the park. That was a great day fishing dry flies for eager brookies. Some really beautiful fish, no size but plenty of fun on my 3wt. It is a little unnerving to be fishing a small stream alone in Moose territory. which has brush along the banks so that you cannot see what might be sneaking up on you.

Everything I read about late season fishing in Yellowstone said that the fish take hoppers until the first hard frost. So I made the false assumption that the hard frost killed off the grasshoppers. I was so wrong. There are tons of grasshoppers still in the fields until the first snow, but for some reason the fish quit taking them. I would throw grasshoppers into the water to see what would happen, nothing. The grasshopper would simply float away squirming the whole time and nothing would come up to eat it. As if the fish had gotten a memo that hopper season is over do not eat them. Maybe they taste bad after a frost, no idea but I could not figure it out.

Due to construction from the floods last year, I did not fish the northeast corner much. The one time I did, the Lamar was great and the lower meadow on Slough Creek was difficult.

As the season progressed the fishing seemed to become more concentrated on the Madison, Firehole, and Gibbon. There were times at Madison Junction where I could count over twelve other anglers within sight. Always possible to find a place to fish and to

catch fish but it might not be your first choice of locations.

If you ever have the chance to spend some serious time in Yellowstone, it is well worth it. And if you want to do it on a budget considering Helping Hands. I spent five weeks working with people from

all over the world, in an environment where everyone is in a good mood and friendly, where the only decisions I had to make was where I was going to fish next. It does not get much better than that.

Conservation News: Plans for the Summer

By Dave Keane

It's time to start thinking about plans for summer. Below are some opportunities for youth that offer instruction in fishing and conservation education. Many of these camps are highly competitive to attend, so if you know a young person that may be interested, please have them apply now.

Rivers Conservation and Fly-Fishing Youth Camp (Pennsylvania)

The Cumberland Valley chapter of Trout Unlimited is hosting the 29th Rivers Conservation and Fly-Fishing Youth Camp. Several other states now offer similar camps, but this is the original camp that became the model for the others. Camp is limited to boys and girls between 14 and 17.

www.riverscamp.com/

Brotherhood of The Jungle Cock (Maryland)

The Brotherhood of the Jungle Cock was organized in 1940 with the sole purpose of passing on the tradition of fishing, and the responsibilities that go with it, to the next generation. The Maryland Chapter is open for boys between the ages of 8 and 18 years old. Boys who start coming to Camp prior to turning 8 years old will be introduced to BOJC through an early learner program known as the "Emerger Program"

bojcmd.wordpress.com/the-annual-campfire/

Natural Resources Careers Camp (Maryland)

Join high school students from across Maryland at this week-long camp in Garrett County to explore careers and college studies in natural resources. This partnership with Allegany College of Maryland and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources-Forest Service offers high school students a co-educational opportunity to learn from industry professionals and develop contacts that could lead to future employment and a career in natural resources.

bojcmd.wordpress.com/the-annual-campfire/

Virginia's Soil and Water Conservation Districts Youth Conservation Camp

For 40 years, the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts has sponsored a week long summer conservation camp for Virginia high school students (currently enrolled in grades 9-12) on the campus of Virginia Tech. The program brings together about 70 interested students for a week of learning about Virginia's natural resources from conservation professionals and faculty from Virginia Tech. Most of the instruction is hands-on and outdoors. Youth Conservation Camp is open to all Virginia students enrolled in High School for the current year.

vaswcd.org/conservation-camp

The Wildlife Leadership Academy (Pennsylvania)

Nominations for the 2024 field school season are now being accepted. Academy students gain extensive knowledge about wildlife, fisheries, and conservation plus develop leadership and communication skills. Do you know of a student who would benefit from our program? Nominate them today!

The mission of the Wildlife Leadership Academy is to engage and empower high school age youth to become Conservation Ambassadors to ensure a sustained wildlife, fisheries and natural resource legacy for future generations.

wildlifeleadershipacademy.org/

Youth Day for Trout

The Maryland DNR recently announced that our state will have its first Youth Only Trout fishing day for youth that are under 16 years old on March 24, 2024. For details, click on the link below.

go.activecalendar.com/doit-md/event/youth-only-trout-fishing-day/

Coming Soon: Newsletter Changes

In a month or two, we will be transitioning this newsletter to an online platform called Mailchimp. Instead of receiving the newsletter as a PDF attachment, you will receive it in your inbox as a formatted email. The most significant change is that you will be able to subscribe or unsubscribe to the newsletter on your own by following a link in the email. While this change will make it easier for club volunteers to produce and distribute, we think you'll enjoy our new email-based newsletter format.



Calendar of Events

- Feb. 13** Club Meeting at 7:00 PM
Tuscarora High School
Room A170
Frederick, Maryland
- Feb. 20** Beginner's Fly Tying
7:00 PM
Trinity United Methodist Church
Frederick, Maryland
Room 207
- Feb. 21** Advanced Fly Tying
7:00 PM
Trinity United Methodist Church
Frederick, Maryland
Room 108
- Feb. 29** Board of Directors' Meeting
7:00 PM
Trinity United Methodist Church
Frederick, Maryland
Room 109
- Mar. 9** Fly Tying Saturday
11:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Trinity United Methodist Church
Frederick, Maryland
Room 207
- Mar. 23** Youth-Only Trout Fishing Day

2024 PVFF Officers & Directors

President.....Martyn Holland
Vice President.....Dirk Vandervaart
Secretary.....Owen Davis
Treasurer.....Rick Baseley
3 year Director.....Kevin Haney
2 year Director.....Dave Dowiak
1 year Director.....Russ Hanson
Past President.....Andy Mekelburg

Last Cast

By Martyn Holland

Being my first Last Cast, I need to get in the swing of writing again having retired just over a year ago, ostensibly to do more fishing — wonder what happened to that?

Firstly, I would like to thank Andy Mekelburg for steering our club for the last four years as president. To say that he presided over turbulent times would be an understatement. The fact that the club flourished during this time is a great testament to his commitment and leadership.

I would also like to thank Dennis Allen for serving as Treasurer for the club and ensuring that the finances of the organization have been healthy and secure. We are in a good position financially moving in to 2024.

Additionally thanks to Mike Holland for being the outings coordinator and doing such a fine job. We now need someone to step in to do this. This does not mean necessarily organizing outings, but just coordinating so that we do not step over each other.

This year, unlike a recent few, winter has decided to throw a little disruption into our plans. The presentation (and club meeting) by Tom Weaver for the month of January was cancelled. We will try to rearrange Tom's session for a later date. We also had to cancel Beginner's Fly Tying for the month. Hopefully that will be the extent of weather challenges for this Winter, although the doom and gloom weather predictors foresee more snow in February — hopefully not.

Recently I was struck by a passage from Jerry Hamza's book *The Zen of Home Water*.

"It takes the acquisition of wisdom to understand that a happy life is actually a mosaic of small and insignificant events. Moments like a butterfly landing on your visor or a small hatch so localized you

imagine it was created just for you. It takes a while to get past the ego's notions of youth. Though some people do get discovered at the shopping mall or win millions in a lottery, big fortuitous events are rare and in themselves cannot make happiness. For the rest of us, we string together moments in life — like pearls becoming a beautiful necklace.

Fly fishermen can trade in pearl necklaces for functional lanyards. The beads are often made up of the little things we find as we meander without consequence to our fishing places."

The message I took from this was that I need to get out and do whenever I can. Even in the grip of winter we can get out and enjoy nature, go fishing (of course with a mind to safety) or spend time with loved ones to create our mosaic of happy events.

As an aside, I am not a great reader of books, but happened on Hamza's book and thoroughly enjoyed it. Actually I had finished all of Gierach's books so was looking for another author to try!!

If you do have a hankering to go fishing, and you are looking for a partner — which is the best way to go — drop us an email and I am sure that there will be others just waiting for an excuse to get out. I am one of them!!

Inclement Weather

Since we hold our meetings in a Frederick County High School, if classes or evening activities are cancelled due to inclement weather, our meeting will be cancelled. In the event of bad weather on the day of our meeting, please check your email and our club website before coming to the meeting.

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 _____