



## Blue Mountains trout news

Newsletter of the Ashokan-Pepacton Watershed Chapter of Trout Unlimited, #559

P.O. Box 119, Phoenicia, NY 12464

January 2019

Banner above depicts a Devil's Hole Biscuit Brook winter scene; refer to Closing Thoughts below.



**January meeting:** The first 2019 meeting will be January 23<sup>rd</sup> at 7 PM at the Boiceville Inn. This month is a fly-tying night. Bring your stuff to tie a few flies, or watch others and ask questions as they tie. In the event of bad weather, please call the Boiceville Inn on 845-657-8500 after 5 PM for the latest meeting status.

The February meeting is scheduled for Feb. 27<sup>th</sup>, we hope to have NYS DEC Region 3 Fisheries personnel present to update us on future fishing regs and the Esopus Creek trout fishery.

**Theodore Gordon and the Esopus Creek:** Recently while recovering from heart surgery I read *Theodore Gordon on Trout*, a book given to me by Lisa Menard, one of our newest members. This little piscatorial primer was edited by Paul Schullery, a preeminent angling historian, renown flyfisher and author, and former director of the American Museum of Fly Fishing. Some of these Gordon stories were not have been published previously, other than in early editions of *Forest and Stream* and John McDonald's *The Complete Fly Fisherman*.

Several of Gordon's early 1900s text regarding the Esopus Creek follow. "... the Esopus being formed by the junction of the Big Indian with a small brook called Birch Creek, a short distance from Big Indian station. The Big Indian has its source way up in the mountain of the same name, the highest peak in the Catskills..." "Even at an earlier date the rainbow trout of the West had found a congenial home in the Esopus and thriven amazingly, thus affording good fly-fishing where formerly there was little or none. I am referring now to the lower river. It is claimed by some fishculturists that the rainbow trout can live and grow in water of too high a temperature

for many other members of the salmon family. The brown trout has usurped first place in the Big Indian." The preceding was from Chapter 5, Fly-fishing near New York, dated March 19, 1904.

He goes on, "It was reported that a trout of eight pounds was killed in the Esopus near Phoenicia last summer, but I do not know whether this is correct or not. Formerly there was a grand stock of the rainbow trout in the stream, the Esopus, but since the advent of the brown trout they have decreased greatly in size, and in numbers also, I believe. This is unfortunate, as this is one of the very few streams in the east where this species was established, and a pronounced success for years." And, "If it was always easy to take trout, surely we would not be so fond of fly-fishing." The preceding was from Chapter 8, Trout tactics for spring, dated January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1907.



Dry fly pioneer Theodore Gordon

Finally, "Several big trout have been killed recently by fishing after dark with rather large flies in deep pools on the Esopus. Mr. Willard Marsh took one in the 'Green Deep' pool 19½ inches long, a thin trout that had evidently been fasting for some time. Last night Mr. William Dunn, after drawing the Green Deep blank, stopped at another pool on his way home, and after 11 o'clock P.M. hooked a four-pounder which he succeeded in landing after twenty minutes' play. This was an old 'he' trout with a very pike-like head, and in rather poor condition. This fish feel a victim to the charms of the Cahill." The preceding was from Chapter ten, Large trout, dated August

5<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

There are several other interesting Gordon tidbits of information to be had, which might be referred to in future newsletters.

**Annual holiday party:** Instead of a December business meeting, the chapter held its Annual Holiday Party as a way of thanking our volunteer members for their ongoing support. Approximately 35 folks were in attendance to enjoy a buffet meal and celebrate 2018-chapter activities.



#### **Ashokan Watershed Stream Management Program**

**(AWSMP):** The Ashokan Watershed Stream

Management Program approved a Stream Management Implementation Program (SMIP) grant of up to \$500 for an early 2019 chapter study of heritage brook trout in South Hollow Brook, a West Shokan Bush Kill Creek tributary. More on information this activity will be forthcoming in future newsletters.

AWSMP also announced the availability of information on their long-term Esopus Creek rainbow trout study, found here: <http://ashokanstreams.org/rainbow-trout-study-concludes/> This is based upon six years of monitoring numerous watershed sites upstream of the Portal and in a few tributaries. The following study information was taken from an AWSMP press release:

A study of how invasive fish in the Ashokan Reservoir have affected rainbow trout populations just concluded with some surprising findings. The study was launched when the number of rainbow Trout in the upper Esopus Creek, a major tributary draining into the Ashokan Reservoir, showed a precipitous drop between 2009 and 2013 and it became urgent to identify the cause. One potential cause for the decline was the establishment of two invasive fish in the reservoir - the alewife established in the 1970s and white perch in the 2000s. Both species are not native to the Ashokan Reservoir watershed and have the potential to change the type and abundance of food available to other fish, including rainbow trout.



The Ashokan Watershed Stream Management Program funded researchers from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to complete an analysis of fish caught in the Ashokan Reservoir over the past 70 years. Researchers looked at the rate of rainbow trout growth before and after alewife and white perch became established.

Surprisingly, the growth of rainbow trout appeared to increase over recent decades. The largest increases in both growth and condition of rainbow trout were observed after the introduction of white perch. This

was unexpected considering white perch should be poor prey for rainbow trout and may also compete with rainbow trout for food.

The researchers did not conclude that white perch in the reservoir benefitted rainbow trout. Instead, other changes in the watershed and its ecology may have affected the growth and condition of rainbow trout over recent years.

The principle investigator of the study, Scott George, described the study findings as positive. "It puts the ball back in our court from a management point of view. There isn't much we can do to control populations of small invasive fish in an 8,000 acre reservoir once established," said George, a research scientist at the USGS.

Future research and management may focus on identifying, protecting, and restoring areas in which rainbow trout spawn.

Rainbow trout were introduced to the Catskill Mountain region in 1883 – and were known at the time as the California Mountain Trout or the California Brook Trout. Today, rainbow trout have adapted to local conditions and reproduce on their own as a wild population in the Ashokan Reservoir and its tributaries.



The study was conducted by researchers at the U.S. Geological Survey, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, and environmental consulting firm EcoLogic. A peer-reviewed article on the study was published in the October 2018 issue of the North American Journal of Fisheries Management. For more information see <https://doi.org/10.1002/nafm.10203>.

The AWSMP provided funding for this study through a Stream Management Implementation Program grant managed by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County. The grant program is funded by the NYC Department of Environmental Protection.

The Kingston Daily Freeman ran a version of this press release on page 7 of their January 11<sup>th</sup> edition.

**East Branch Delaware River:** Our EBD Restoration Committee--- George Markos, Peter Marx, and Lenny Millen, with help TU's Northeastern Restoration Coordinator Tracy Brown and Catherine Skalda of the Delaware County Soil & Water Conservation District (DCSWCD), are already busy making plans to potentially plant trees and shrubs along an East Branch Delaware River tributary. This might be a considered a "system view" of the watershed, upstream of NYC's Pepacton Reservoir. Tribes often serve as nursery spawning grounds for wild trout and can provide cooler flows during hot, dry summer months.



**2019 Fly-tying class:** Dates for Hank Rope's 2019 fly-tying classes are Saturdays: Feb. 9<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 23<sup>rd</sup> from 10 AM to 2 PM at the Phoenicia Fish & Game Association Clubhouse on NY 28 in Mt. Tremper. Youngsters welcome, ages 14 and up; materials will be provided. There are a limited number of vises available. **Pre-registration is a must for all folks seeking free instruction.** Contact Hank to register, call or email Hank at 845 2545904 or [tyeflys@hvc.rr.com](mailto:tyeflys@hvc.rr.com) Help is always needed if you'd like to stop and assist, or tie flies yourself.

If you're busy Saturdays, the Catskill Mountains Chapter is conducting free tying sessions on Sunday afternoons from Noon through 3:30 PM at Kingston's Gander Mountain Outdoor Lodge through the end of February.

**31<sup>st</sup> Annual Conservation Dinner:** **Save the date, April 13<sup>th</sup>, for the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Conservation Dinner. Details will be forthcoming in future newsletters.**

**Trout in the Classroom:** Sarah Hornbeck, of the Rondout Valley Central School District, reports her 6<sup>th</sup> grade class avoided a near disaster when her TIC cracked and lost its water and trout! Fortunately she and students were present to scoop the fish up, placing them in another TIC tank temporarily. Sarah has since replaced much of her TIC setup. Jane Wolfrom at Phoenicia Elementary School reports her trout are doing great!

**Federated Sportsmen's Clubs of Ulster County (FSCUC):** The chapter is still in need of a rep to represent us at monthly FSCUC meetings. If you can spare a few hours, please let us know.

**Acid rain report:** Jody Hoyt reported that during December there were 7 measurable events with 6.47 equivalent liquid inches, including 2.0 inches of snow, having a 5.6 weighted average pH, as measured in Boiceville. By comparison in Dec. 2017 there were 9 events with 2.75 equivalent liquid inches, including 17.9 inches of snow, with a 5.4 weighed pH. During 2018 we experienced 78.83 equivalent inches of rain, including 69.0" of sleet and snow in Boiceville, while in 2017 there were 52.52 equivalent liquid inches, including 72.9 inches of sleet and snow. Historical yearly averages are 52 equivalent liquid inches, including 80 inches of sleet and snow. Thus 2018 was a much wetter year than 2017 while the amount of sleet and snow falling has decreased for the last two years. Jody, thanks for all this work and information!

**Treasurer's report:** Jody Hoyt reports as of the end of December the chapter had \$12,347.14. These funds were distributed among the following accounts: General operating - \$11,135.57 and Conservation Fund - \$1,211.57.

**Membership:** As of January 15th, we have 114 chapter members. This month we welcome Lisa Menard of Olivebridge and Judd Weisberg of Lexington as new chapter members. If your email address changes, please send me the new one so we can keep you updated with chapter activities. And, remember new TU members can join at half the regular membership fee for \$17.50, of which the chapter receives a \$15 rebate from TU National. Applications are found: [http://www.apwctu.org/pdfs/TU\\_membership\\_brochure2018\\_web.pdf](http://www.apwctu.org/pdfs/TU_membership_brochure2018_web.pdf) For membership questions, email me at: [Tailwaters@Hvc.rr.com](mailto:Tailwaters@Hvc.rr.com)

**Newsletter:** This issue of *Blue Mountains trout news* was only sent electronically to all chapter members and friends that we have valid email addresses. If you received this and would rather not, please hit **REPLY** and write **REMOVE** and hit **SEND**.

**Beyond our watersheds and other news:** Don't forget The Fly Fishing Show at the New Jersey Convention and Expo Center January 26<sup>th</sup> through the 28<sup>th</sup>. FYI: <http://flyfishingshow.com/edison-nj/>

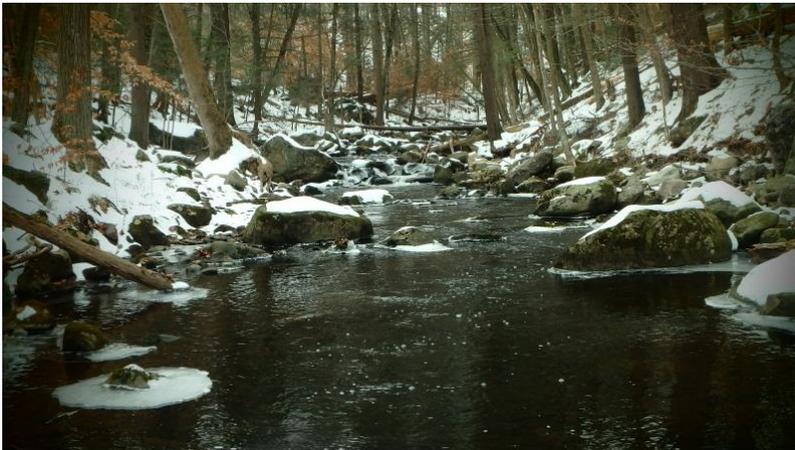
On February 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum will host their 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Fly Fest in the Wulff Gallery from 9 AM till 4 PM. This is always a great event, with lots of talented fly tyers; a \$5 donation is requested on behalf of the CFFC&M.

Chapter member Len Millen sent along this YouTube video on "The Underwater World of Trout: How They See." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S57HY7TOvMA&feature=youtu.be> You might enjoy it, skip the add, it's a long video.

More sad news, as often reported in our newsletters of late. Recently we learned of the passing of Don Traver on Oct. 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Don was the owner of Don's Tackle Shop in Red Hook, New York, an Orvis store until 2003. Prior to that, his shop was located in Poughkeepsie. Traver was widely known for his fly-fishing expertise; his stores were a friendly place to acquire angling knowledge and look over the latest items in our pastime. Several chapter members and friends knew Don, as did I, each acknowledging what a sad passing this was. Board member Kevan Best invested many an hour at Don's shop, while Glenn Debrosky commented, "HIS SHOP IN REDHOOK IT WAS MY GO-TO STORE FOR FLY TYING EQUIPMENT" and "I FOUND HIM VERY INFORMATIVE ON ANY FLY-TYING QUESTION." Don provided a service hard to find locally, and will be missed.

FYI: <https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/story/sports/recreational/2018/12/19/don-traver-angry-angler-embodied-lost-time-sportsmen/2349337002/>

**Closing thoughts:** Regarding the month of January, in *A River Never Sleeps* Roderick L. Haig-Brown wrote the following: "It is easy to forget about the river in winter, particularly if you are a trout fisherman and live in town. Even when you live in the country, close beside it, a river seems to



hold you off a little in winter, closing itself into the murky opacity of freshet or slipping past ice-fringed banks in shrunken, silent flow. The weather and the season have their effect on the observer too, closing him into himself, allowing him to glance only quickly with a careless, almost hostile, eye at the runs and pools that give summer delight. And probably his eyes are on the sky for flight of

ducks or geese or turned landward on the work of his dogs. Unless he is a winter fisherman, he is not likely to feel the intimate, probing, summer concern with what is happening below the surface."

**Useful links:** Ashokan Watershed Stream Management Program: <http://ashokanstreams.org/>

Rondout/Neversink Stream Program: <http://www.rondoutneversink.org/>

Esopus Creek hatch matching chart: <http://www.catskillanglingcollection.org/>

Until February,  
Ed Ostapczuk  
01/15/19