



The Evening

Hatch

The Newsletter of the Michigan Fly Fishing Club

February 2021

State of the MFFC

We remain thriving and resilient due to our members' dedication

By Bruce Strachan
President of MFFC

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness...

Charles Dickens

Organizations endure with vitality and longevity due to resilience.

The past year saw immense setbacks for MFFC. Two cancelled Expos, suspension of in person meetings, outings cancelled and a financial cycle disrupted...all took a toll on our club. But resilience has prevailed.

The Board of Directors' anticipation and frugality has kept MFFC solvent and operational. I take this moment to thank each and every Board member for their tenacious service on behalf of over 300 MFFC members. And I recognize our members who have enthusiastically renewed their memberships, donated extra funds to sustain the club and volunteered to facilitate club activity. Spirit in MFFC is not lacking.

Our mission to promote fly fishing, fly tying and protect the environment has been impacted just as much as every other 501(C)(3). Our conservation grants have been suspended and their loss has been noted outside our club. It may be a year beyond our current fiscal year before we can resume this core club service.

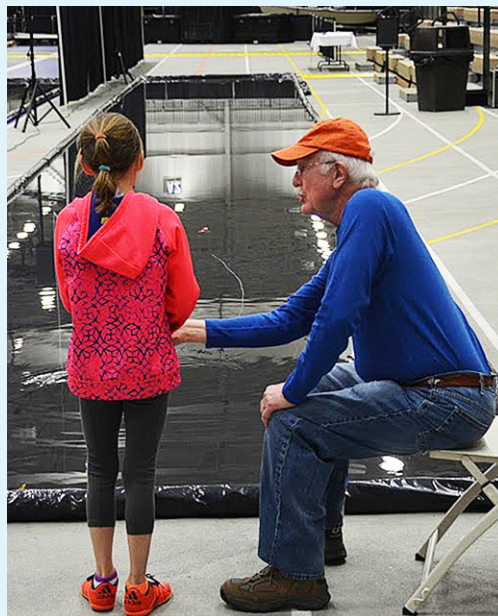
Membership has remained healthy

even though we don't see the faces or hear the familiar voices of our club friends in person each month. Sadly, the pandemic has also taken its toll on too many members and their families during the past eighteen months.

Nevertheless, current activities and the future before us do hold promise.

Traditional outings for Smallmouth, Arkansas' White River and Montana will continue with pandemic awareness and caution. A new outing for East coast striper fishing is booked and ready to go. The promise of timely vaccina-

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Once again COVID has caused the Midwest Flyfishing Expo to be cancelled.

Michigan Fly Fishing Club

Calendar

2/10/21 Speaker: John Ray of Mangled Fly

2/17/21 Board

2/24/21 Activity: Tie along with Al Haxton and Sybil Hunter

3/3/21 Speaker: Jeff McGowan, Grayling After Dark

3/10/21 Board

3/13-14/21 MFFC Expo cancelled until March 12-13, 2022

3/17/21 Speaker: Capt. Chuck Hawkins, Simplifying Your Fly Box

3/31/21 MFFC officer Nominations due

4/4/21 MFFC ballot open from April 4 to April 7

4/7/20 MFFC Elections / Speaker: Roger Greil of Lake Superior State

4/14/21 Board / MFFC election results announced

4/21/21 Activity TBD

5/5/21 Activity TBD

5/12/21 Board

5/19/21 Banquet cancelled until May 18, 2022

6/9/21 Speaker TBA

7/14/21 Speaker TBA

8/25/21 Speaker TBA

The Future of the MCCF Is As Strong As It Has Ever Been



The Midwest Flyfishing Expo, always one of the best in the country, will return better than ever thanks to MFFC volunteers.

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tions will facilitate these outings. I also hear we may most likely have a modified Trout Season Opener celebration up North this year. Stay tuned.

Our pandemic successes include monthly Zoom meetings featuring guest speakers and fly tying demonstrations. We have attracted as many as 50 members to these meetings. If you have not participated, join us. You will enjoy the presentations, demos, banter and most of all, fellowship.

For those chafing at pandemic isolation, our library is open and delivering reading pleasure. Consult the

Hatch and Constant Contact postings for more information. Also keeping us all in touch is a revitalized MFFC.ORG website that was revamped despite the pandemic during the past 12 months. Our communication tools are excellent. You are only a click away from MFFC. The pandemic cloud's silver lining is new internet tools that will continue and enhance our club's future.

The MFFC Expo has been cancelled for two years but not in the minds of our vendors, suppliers, speakers, club members or participants. This community has not lost its enthusiasm for our unique event. Vendors and sup-

pliers have responded to the cancellations with understanding and generous financial decisions on contracts and commitments disrupted by Covid. As a result, Expo finances remain sound. I expect the next Expo will be especially welcomed and very well attended. It will no doubt be an event to celebrate.

The State of MFFC? We remain thriving and resilient due to our volunteers' ingenuity, dedication and fellowship. Before long we will meet again in person each month and on our favorite streams. I wish you good health, another day's fishing and hope to see you soon!

Tight Lines MFFC!

A Call for Candidates for the MFFC 2021-2022 Term

The strength of our club is the willingness of members to get involved and make things happen – not only as volunteers but as leaders.

President

Presides at all club meetings and functions as the chief executive officer. For a one year term

Vice President

Presides at meetings of the Board Of Directors. For a one year term

Recording Secretary

Keeps the minutes of all Board meetings and other special business meetings as necessary and maintains

the inventory of the club's equipment. For a one year term

Corresponding Secretary

Is responsible for arranging speakers for club meetings and special events. Is responsible for all club correspondence. For a one year term

Treasurer

Manages the club's finances, pay's the club's bills, and ensures that all finance related reports are filed with the appropriate government agencies. For a one year term

Membership

Is a first point of contact and a re-



source for individuals interested in joining the club and maintains the club's roster. For a one year term

Directors

Provide insight, perspective and advice as members of the Board and guide

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Michigan Fly Fishing Club

Business

Michigan Fly Fishing Club Board of Directors Meeting January 20, 2021

Roll Call

Meeting called to order 7:35 p.m.

Present: Strachan; Hunter; Oehring; Fischer; Niemi; Bada; Mayes; Sejalon; Green;

Absent: Nowicki

Visitors: Tom Doyle

Approval of Agenda - Approved with additions.

Approval of Minutes - Minutes approved with the correction of Jim DuFresne's name.

Officer's Report

President: Strachan

- Michigan United Conservation Clubs MFFC Representative Tom Doyle. Reported on last confluence topics including: gun rights, evasive species – mostly fish and amphibious species; Native American treaty rights; commercial fisheries, multi-state contributions to Asian Carp control. Board suggests Doyle provides the summary at a future MFFC meeting.
- Discussion regarding MUCC Magazine availability.
- Discussion regarding \$5 membership fee paid by MFFC to be a voting member of MUCC tabled.

Vice President: Hunter

- Club email address remind-

ers: previous Club Webmail host will be gone 1/22/21. Use Google Drive to load commonly used Club forms and documents.

- Website status: main page widget still needs installation; Benevity renewed.
- Operation Pin Drop postage numbers presented. 400 pins delivered. 44 shipped.
- Board will be given access to shared Google Drive, but must have Gmail account.

Treasurer: Oehring

- Treasurers Report accepted as presented.
- FFI Dues and insurance. \$1,000 savings. Board approved.
- Retention of financial documents: use advice of CPA. 7 years.

Corresponding Secretary: Fischer

- Club blast for 400 paid members, 9 blasts sent. 60% Hatch open rate; 65% obituary open rate.
- Corresponding Secretary data retention and archive history process to be done by Corresponding Secretary.
- Future blast content: tie along, striper outing reminder, remaining 2021 schedule
- Possibility of button links in blasts to scheduled calendar. Requesting events canceled by

2019 - 2020 Officers

President:
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Vice President:
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**Michigan Fly Fishing Club
Board of Directors Meeting
January 20, 2021**

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Covid to be placed into schedule with cancellation placeholder statement.

- Speakers: Bob Jacklyn retired from traveling. Feb 10: Capt. John Ray. Mar 17: Capt. Chuck Hawkins. Apr 7: Roger Greil, LSSU. May: TBD. Summer: TBD. Questioning in person or Zoom. Mayes to send notice of interest to VFW Hall.

Membership: Niemi

- 326 current paid members
- Concern about renewals, many take place at the Expo or fall meetings.
- Pay Pal Account Website Button: widgets set up for new members logistics. Oehring has Pay Pal password.

Events & Outings

- Suburban Collection Expo Center Schedule: Outdoorama Feb 25-28; Ultimate Fishing Show Mar 25-28. Bada to contact Showspan regarding not participating this year due to the inability to safely distance when tying with children.

New Business

- Anglers of the Au Sable requested a donation. Not funding at this time. Strachan to contact.

Old Business

- Expo Update: website was updated with 2022 dates.

Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at 9:38 p.m.

A Cold Winter of Tying Flies



Let's face it, it's been a long cold winter of Zoom meetings. Or as MFFC President Bruce Strachan put it "No convention ...just lots of spare time to tie some new patterns. Lots!" Here are the streamers Strachan has been working on. For more new patterns and tying tips read Sybil Hunter's features on Jason Pokone and his favorite flies for the Manistee River on page 5 or Tie Along Tips from our own Corey Thelan on page 8.

Calling for MFFC Candidates

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special Board endeavors as directed by the President. Directors serve two-year terms.

Board meetings are once each month, typically on the second Wednesday of the months September through May. Special meetings may be convened during the summer or at other times as necessary.

If you are interested in running for a position please email Barry Green at greenbar1020@aol.com. In order to prepare the ballot, and vote electronically your submission is due by 3-31-2021

Due to volatility of meeting in person, the method of voting is being modified due to these extreme circumstances.

Since we are not meeting in person the option of floor nominations will not be available. The vote will be done electronically. Positions that have only one candidate will be elected by acclamation to simplify the process.

If you have any questions on the elections please contact Barry Green at 248-345-4100 or if you would like to discuss specific positions please contact the current board member.

Timing

Nominations due by 3-31-21

Ballot open 4-4-21 to 4-7-21

Tabulation 4-8-2021 to 4-13-21

Results 4-14-21





Magnificent in the Manistee!

By Sybil Hunter

Jason Pokone joined us in January as our first 2021 speaker. Hailing from Macomb, Pokone's day job is with Consumer's Energy. He is a Clinton Valley Trout Unlimited board member, a fly fisher of 18 years, and a fly tier for 16.

His specialty is Manistee River Trout. Despite being a Michigan native, he wore his Alaska tee - from his first trip to Alaska in 2019. That night he tied the Hex Dry Fly, Iso Wet Emerger, the Full Pint, and his own super secret Euro nymph.

Hex Dry Fly

"I like the tails long," said Pokone, "especially on dry flies, about a hook and a half. This is one of my go tos, especially during the day."

He suggests dubbing the thorax with EP Trigger Point Fibers (his personal favorite), versus using hackle, and making sure the thorax is darker than the rest of the body.

Iso Wet Emerger

Pokone advises Semperfli Dubbing because it is "similar to cotton, has great floatability...this stuff is amazing!" Also, "I use a lot of barbless hooks," Pokone said, "They seem to swallow the hook all the time so I use barbless."

Pokone recommend using CDC



Flies just for the Manistee River - Jason Pokone's Hex Dry Fly, Iso Wet Emerger and the Full Pint.

feathers when tying this Iso, the oil of that particular feather and the fact that it naturally traps air, helps the fly float."

The Full Point (articulated fly)

"This is one of the only things I fish

in the Manistee," said Pokone. He suggests using a Gamakatsu hook, no flash, a tungsten cone and Nature Spirit in golden tan to tie this fly.

"Once it gets wet, it gets really good," said Pokone.

When connecting the two flies, Pokone uses Beadalon 19 strand 0.015 jewelry wire and 6/0 glass beads.

"A lot of times I use orange. These are a little iridescent," he said. "Tie on the jewelry wire, thread two beads on, pass the wire through the eye of the first fly. Get that loop kinda straight. Get the wire back all the way to the front. Bend the wire back and tie it in," said Pokone. "I'm going to secure this really well. You build that thread base up first, so you have something to glue it down to," said Pokone demonstrating.

As for distance of the articulation; "On the tail I like to go back half way,

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A fly angler fishes the Manistee River near the Yellow Tree access south of M-72

Flies for the Manistee River

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so it's touching the head of the other fly. You want to cover those beads up. Cover up all that wire and beads with that maribou."

Answering a question regarding collar color, Pokone advised Tan, ginger and gold. "Those are my favorite colors for streamers. I use this all year long."

When queried as to how he fishes,

While tying, Jason Pokone gave a shout out to the Midwest Fly Fishing Expo, "I missed your guys' show! You guys put on a really great show!"

Pokone said, "I've been a wade fisher all my life. I like being in the water. I like stalking fish." As for his tying background, "I learned from books, I am kinda self-taught. That's how I learned to fly tie."

Euro Nymph

As a special treat, Pokone tied a fourth fly. "I call it the Money Penny" he said.

It requires a gold tone slotted bead and tan thread. Put the bead on the hook. Tie on. Create a thread dam to

make the bead stop moving. Build a thread base half way down the hook. Use rooster feathers - Whiting, Hareline from Spain.

"I'm going to use six barbs," said Pokone. "Put on a short tail; on nymphs I like shorter tails." Copper colored body, "tie it in and wrap it. Build up a little bit of a taper, but it's going to be a really thin body. Wrap the copper to

front. Tie off. Trim."

"Coat the body with UV resin." Pokone recommends UV Craft, which is made in Michigan. "It's a good resin and it's cost effective," said Pokone.

"Next I'm going to get some CDC. I'm going to make a dubbing loop. I'm going to make a collar of dubbing. Cut off the feather fibers [to tie in]."

Wrap the thread back over one side then the other. Create the loop. Place the fibers in the loop. Close the loop. Spin it. "Then I'm just going to wrap it to make a soft hackle collar."



Jason Pokone's Money Penny fly for Euro nymphing.

"Tie it off. Whip finish it. Pop out any long ones [barbs]. These are the flies I like to nymph with," said Pokone. "They are really simple and they catch fish."

"I like to Euro Nymph. If there is no hatch going on, I'll use it. It just kinda out fishes everything else, said Pokone. "Sometimes the simple patterns are the best patterns."

Monthly Webinars Focus on the New Zealand Mud Snail in the Great Lakes

The Great Lakes New Zealand Mud Snail Collaborative will stage a series of monthly webinars from February through June so anybody, but anglers in particular, can learn about the invasive species in the Great Lakes Region.

The Collaborative is a regional approach to New Zealand Mud Snail (NZMS) management and includes state, federal, academic and non-profits in an effort to raise public awareness the snails have on the environment and to develop strategies to minimize their spread. The first webinar will be Feb. 24 from 2-3 p.m.

The New Zealand mud snail (*Potamopyrgus antipodarum*) is one of the most wide-spread aquatic invasive invertebrates in the world. After being initially found in North America in the Snake River in 1987, the first populations of NZMS in the Great Lakes region were discovered in Lake Ontario in 1991.

Since then, they have been found in all other Great Lakes except Lake Huron. Recently, NZMS have been found in the Pere Marquette, Boardman, AuSable and Upper Manistee rivers, as well as Tippy Dam Pond near the Pine River.

Only one-eighth of an inch long, a mudsnail may be difficult to see but can radically change the aquatic habitats where they live by reaching very high densities. When that

occurs, NZMS can out-compete native species that are important food sources for trout. They also have no nutritional value for fish that do feed on them, and that can negatively affect overall fish health.

Researchers say it's critically important for anglers to properly decontaminate gear and equipment to protect other streams and inland lakes in Michigan from a NZMS invasion.

All webinars will be from 2-3 p.m. on Feb. 24, April 28, May 26 and June 30. To register, send an email with your name and affiliation to: info@nzmscollaborative.org.

For more information about NZMS go to the Collaborative website at: www.nzmscollaborative.org.



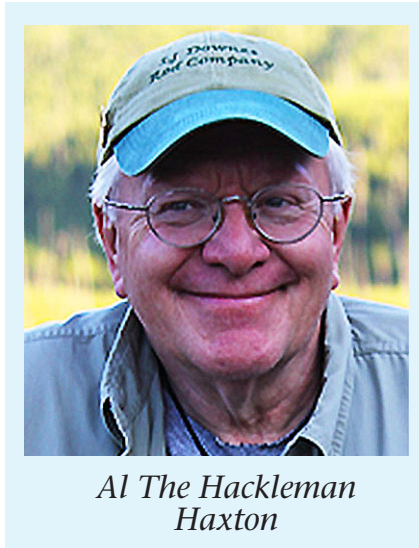


Meanderings of a Fly Fishing Mentor

By Al Haxton

I sit looking out at our river and think back about all the wonderful things that The Michigan Fly Fishing Club has provided to me. Being a member for 30 plus years sure provides many things to think about.

When I joined The Michigan Fly Fishing Club I was rather new to our shared sport. Like most of us, I had started fishing with “tools of the devil” when I was just a little guy. My uncle Harold had sort of shown me some of the fun of catching Bluegill and other warm water species. We always fished from the bank and while we did not really practice catch and release we always put the fish back into the lake. Why we did that was more the fact that my aunt Helen just would not clean and cook all the little fish we caught.



Al The Hackleman Haxton

I was informed about the MFFC by a fellow that sort of taught fly tying at the Northville High School during the winter each year. I had been fly fishing for a couple years then and decided I needed to tie my own flies and save money. A guy named Ron Angove lead the group. It was a nice group that tied together each week, some other club members were there too. During one evening, Ron mentioned MFFC. I got interested and joined. Thank you very much Ron.

That started some of the best years of my life. Finding so many other fly fishing folks was really exciting for me. I had been mostly fishing the Pine River in Alcona County, over near Lake Huron. Of course joining our club brought me into

touch with folks that fished other rivers all over our state. This lead to a lot of exploring and a lot of great guys mentoring me in the finer aspects of our sport. That mentoring was the greatest gift aspect of our club. So let me offer some of that mentoring, and what it meant to me in the long term.

Probably the first real mentoring started at the first meeting when the school gym was open for casting, discussion of fly rods and stuff like that. Just standing there and listening to the long time members talk about different casts and how to preform them while getting the best drift on the fly was such a bonus for me. Then we discussed different line weights and rod types, different fly types and how to be prepared for each thing that can happen on a trout stream...So much to learn and so many great teachers. I remember John Pinto and John Long talking and showing how to cast better and how to perform a tight loop on the cast. To me that was one of the most enjoyable and educational aspects of our meetings. We all know that fly fishing has many different aspects, and the members of our club seem to excel in so many of those aspects.

Want to learn how to build a fly rod? I bet most of the folks that have built rods were at our meetings had never done that before, maybe never even thought of that before. From learning about how and why to build a rod of my own, I have since built about eight rods, including two of bamboo. You know what they say about catching a fish on a fly you tied yourself, well it’s even better to catch a fish on a rod you built.

We all have seen so many of our members tie a fly at one meeting or another. And I can assure you we have all learned from those demonstrations. Even if the pattern was one we have tied ourselves, each of us has a different opinion of each fly. Maybe the tier has shared a special way of presentation, a special spot to look for on the river. Maybe a new material to be used with a new place to get that material. Bill MacArthur seemed to always be looking for new materials to use; he

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DNR Fisheries Division to The Evening Hatch: About that Article You Published . . .

When The Evening Hatch gets an email from the DNR Fisheries Division in Lansing, we take notice. And nervously hope we got the facts right. But this was not case with an email from Lynne Thoma, who was the topic of Jim DuFresne’s column last month about chasing a Master Angler award:

Hi Jim,

Thank you for sharing the article with me. I enjoyed reading it very much and I must say, your writing is very good. It kept me interested right up to the “Bah Humbug”!

It is people like you that make my job so wonderful. Though you did not catch that green sunfish, it was a plea-

sure to engage with someone so nice and respectful. I can’t tell you how much that means to me. People like you are what keeps me coming back every day for almost 34 years.

Thank you again and good luck in 2021. May you find that green sunfish and entice him with a home-made fly!

Take care and stay safe,

Lynne Thoma



Tie Along Tips *from our own Corey Thelan*

By Sybil Hunter

MFFC's own Corey Thelan lead the January Tie Along from his own wintery wonderland of Wisconsin. He tied The Pink Squirrel, Rusty Spinner with an encore Parachute BWO.

Rusty Spinner

"I like the the thinner bodies. When it's later in the hatch, the thinner body will get the fish to commit," said Thelan. "Earlier in the Hex, I usually fish the thicker body [fly] because they float better."

"When tying the body, make the spacing as evenly as possible...in a nice even crisscross pattern," said Thelan. "When picking the hen hackle, pick a couple next to each other on the side of the hackle, so they are about the same size." Otherwise the wings will be uneven. "I like to tie them in one at a time. Keep the feather perpendicular to the hook shank. When the second wing is tied on, crisscross a little bit to make sure they are held in place."



"When I trim my dry fly hackle, I like to trim the butt end off, then when I trim up the sides, I leave some of the stubble there." This allows the thread wraps to better "grip" the feather. "I use 6/0 thread on these. It will kinda bind it [the feather] down and the natural tendency is to flare out."

Once it is tied off, "Trim these bottom fibers off. It lets the fly sit lower in the water," said Thelan. "This is one of my go to flies...size 10 is perfect for a Brown Drake."



Parachute BWO

Thelan recommends a size 16 hook. "This is a standard size 16 dry fly. Use 8/0 olive thread, as you will actually see this thread color." When tying on the tails, spread the tail fibers apart, as Thelan said it provides angler appeal, along with stability of the fly on the water.

"Criss-cross the wraps on the thread base of the post, then crisscross again," said Thelan. "Tie the hackles right at the base of the post. I like to hackle these posts heavily; it will probably be about four or five wraps." With thread in one hand, hackle in the other, take one wrap there, then bring it around for a second wrap, add a third going down underneath the hook shank.

Fielding a question about the fly's dubbing, Thelan said, "I have olive dubbing Awesome Possum. As long as it's a finer dubbing," it will work. Next, crisscross the thread back and forth under the hackle feathers "to create a little dubbing thorax."

"Bring the thread to the front. Be careful not to catch any of the

hackle feather," in the thread on the way. Tie off. Trim the post leaving about 1/8 inch. "This is another of my go tos in Wisconsin. They also work well on the Au Sable."

When asked to compare Michigan and Wisconsin fly fishing, Thelan pointed out, "There is one thing about Wisconsin in that there are not a lot of hatches, like there are in Michigan." Wisconsin has the sulphur hatch in June; yellow/brown mayflies from June to August; then olives can to be fished all year around.



The Pink Squirrel

"I like dubbing instead of chenille. It's easier to tie in, and it gives it a spikier look," said Thelan. "The more fish you catch, the spikier it gets, as it bounces along the bottom." The more the fish gnaw on it, the better it looks to them. That's why, "You're looking for that spiky look and that chunky body."

When asked how he fishes it, Thelan said, "I like to tightline nymph. It's a heavy fly so it works for Czech nymphing too."

A Tie Along *Attitude Correct Emergers*

Activity Zoom Meeting with Al Haxton, Feb. 24



Klinkhamer Emerger

Hook: Dry fly hook bent or Klinkhamer bent hook, size 14

Thread: Tan size 8/0

Post: Para post

Body: Tan super fine dubbing

Thorax: Peacock herl

Hackle: Blue Dun dry fly hackle sized for hook

For years I have been a proponent of “emerger” patterns. I have enjoyed tying and fishing these patterns ever since an old vendor from our shows in the 1980s and 90s showed me his developed pattern called the ACE. That’s ACE for Attitude Correct Emerger. That vendor, Mike Freeland, of Freeland Outfitters, once had a shop in Waterford.

So at the Tie Along on Feb 24,, we will tie a couple different emergers, both newer patterns, but using one of Mike’s tricks with the hooks.

These patterns, or similar, are both on U-Tube. Here are the links:

Deer hair emerger :

www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ABafzWjFDU

Klinkhamer :

youtu.be/sTKCB6R3T_c

Both of these links are shown in Barry Ord Clarke’s book *The Feather Benders Flytying Techniques*.

This is truly a great book and I highly recommend it.



The Deer Hair Emerger

Hook: dry fly hook bent or Klinkhamer bent hook, size 14

Thread: tan size 8/0

Wing: Deer hair

Shuck: Z-lon tan

Body: Tan turkey biot

Thorax: Tan hares ear dubbing

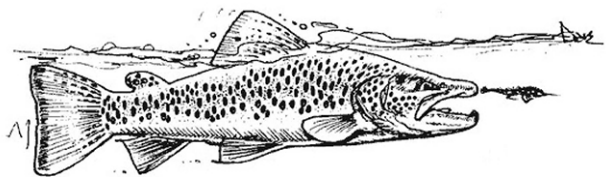
Haxton: Thank Heaven for MFFC

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shared his findings and experience of how to best use these materials at so many meetings.

And don’t even start to talk about folks that have shared new rivers and where they fish them. We are all so fortunate to live here in Michigan. There are so many great rivers, for trout, for bass, for salmon. I fondly remember the very first time I went to the U.P. to fish for Pink Salmon on the Carp River. I have previously commented on that first trip and it still brings such great memories of the guys who acted as mentors that weekend....and to be able to catch a salmon on a 5 weight rod, WOW. It was superb.

Later in the years on the Carp, I was fishing with Kathy Gross on a new spot that we had never fished before. There were a few of us in the river, we were having fun and catching some fish. An unknown guy pulled up, got out of his car, watched us for a bit, and saw us catching fish. He yelled down to us, “What are you using?” Kathy replied loudly “A fly.” He left shortly thereafter; we kept hooking Pinks for a while, most of the time laughing together about her comment. Great memories.



One of these days we will be back to in person meetings. I am sure that the first few meetings will be low attendance, but that’s okay. The meetings will increase in turnout and get more lively. We can all enjoy some face to face time with others with our addiction. HOORAY. I challenge each of you, if you have been in the club for a while, find some newbies and share some information with them. Tell them some great spots to fish, some good patterns that work well, some insight into specific rods or reels. And for the newbies, start to look around the meeting. Ask questions. Ask about where, and when, and how, and what to use. Get information and learn more about this great sport that we all share. After you have learned some new things, after you have been the “Spotlight” tier, after you have built a rod or two, then it will be your turn to that share information.

Thank Heaven for The Michigan Fly Fishing Club.

Muskrat Love *No Bones About It; I'm a Rat Lover*

By Jim DuFresne

I know a rat lover when I see one. So does Thelma Zenser. So it didn't take me long to bare my soul and divulge my deepest secret to this woman who I met only 15 minutes earlier.

Man, do I love to eat rat.

Muskrat, that is. Or marsh rabbit to those who love that dark, favorable meat but want nothing to do with rat even though it's only the second half of its name.

Go to a place like Ann Arbor and those trendy yuppies would be horrified at the suggestion of dining on muskrat.

"Don't they have long skinny tails?" they would say if they say anything at all.

"Oh, don't worry. They cut most of the tail off before they serve it."

Muskrat is, of course, an acquired taste. Either you grow up with it and love it or you never accept the fact that this little rodent can grace a dinner table.

Some people, my mother being one, marry into it but at best they spend the rest of their lives picking at the bones and not once pile it high on their fork.

I grew up with it. Living where the Detroit River empties into Lake Erie and being French Canadian and Catholic, muskrat runs deep in the blood of my father's family.

We would get all dressed up on Friday evening and go out for muskrat because the Pope said it was okay to eat rat when all other meat was forbidden during lent...seeing how its spends most of its life under the water anyhow.

At least that's what the French Canadian Catholics in downriver Detroit would say right after grace and right be-



Jim DuFresne



Who knew these rodents were so tasty? Especially during lent.

fore ordering a rat for dinner.

We would go to restaurants and halls that were never more than a stone's throw away from the Detroit River and the rat would arrive buried in sauerkraut and guarded by a mountain of real mashed potatoes. The kind with lums in it and a small lake of butter on top.

Muskrat is a very dark meat and very favorable. When cooked properly it's so tender it falls off the rib cage, has the texture of roast beef and a taste that is often described as "sweet and wild."

That's why, I suspect, they always served it with sauerkraut. You'd take a big chunk of rat, maybe from the hind leg, throw a little tangy sauerkraut on that fork to balance it out and wash it down with a glass a beer.

Then praise the Pope for allowing us to have rat on Friday nights.

Zenser loves her rat as well. Oh, she was cooking snapping turtle that day I interviewed her in Saginaw but we talk about muskrats.

Zenser came from the marshes of Ohio's Lake Erie and married a man who trapped rats from the day he could walk until he was 73 years-old.

Needless to say Zenser has eaten her share of rat. Two or three times a week most of her life.

And she knows how to cook it as well. Zenser once fixed 180 rats in a single day when her husband's union hall had a musk-

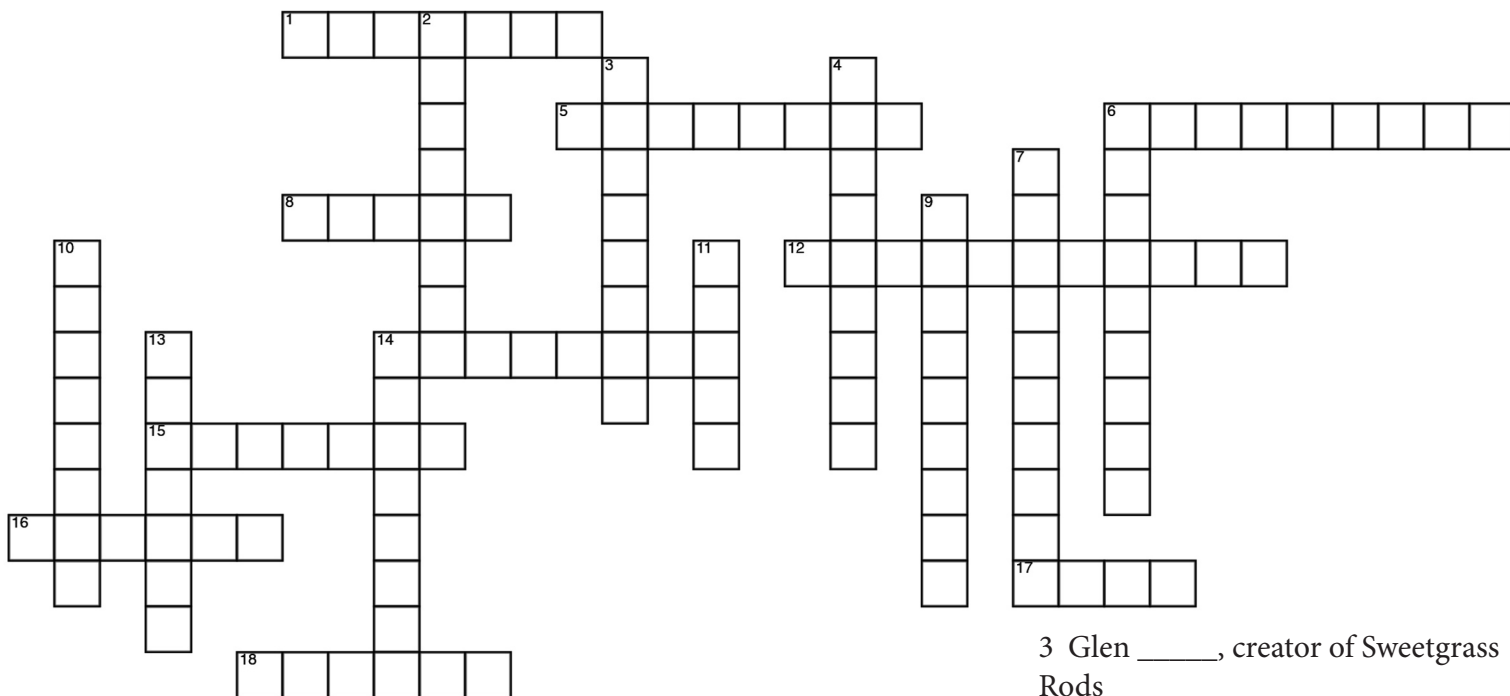


A platter of delicious muskrat. With sauerkraut and mash potatoes, marsh rabbit is a meal you'll remember and maybe even enjoy.

Continued on page 11

Crossword Puzzle: *History Of Fly Fishing*

By Sybil Hunter



ACROSS

- 1 Orvis began in this state
 5 Rod material first introduced by Fenwick and Hardy in 1970s
 6 World renowned female caster
 8 First fly line material
 12 The first fly fishing stunt double
 14 The river where *A River Runs Through It* was filmed

- 15 Wanigas is in this city
 16 Fly rods that gained 18th century popularity
 17 Another early fly line material
 18 The ____ of the line loads the fly rod

DOWN

- 2 City *A River Runs Through It* was filmed

- 3 Glen ____, creator of Sweetgrass Rods
 4 Flies imitating small fish
 6 Expo speaker, editor *Dun* magazine
 7 Material that replaced cane rods in 1940s
 9 Original fly line material
 10 Modern fly line began in this state
 11 The ____ Rod shop became Wanigas
 13 The Holy Waters
 14 Historic Au Sable fish

A Rat Lover The Day I Was Born

Continued from page 8

rat feed and 80 couples showed up.

Like all great muskrat chefs, Zenser has never used a recipe.

"I've never made it the same way twice," said Zenser. "It's just by gift and by God that I cook it."

And by God she makes sure the musk sacks have been removed. Under the leg of every rat is a gland that helps the animal to dive to the bottom of a marsh.

Leave those on and you'll never eat muskrat again. You may even become a vegetarian after that.

"They look like a little yellow sock," said Zenser. "You just pinch them off but make sure you remove them."

Then you parboil the rats, slowly cooking them in a big pot of water with parsnips, onion, a little vinegar and "any seasons you have around."

"Do we put carrots in it, Howard?" Zenser asked her husband. "No, I guess we don't, do we?"

How long do you parboil it?

"Until you're able to easily pull the front leg away from the rib cage."

Who needs a timer? Or a meat thermometer?

The rats are then removed and rolled "in any batter you want." Some people roll them in beaten eggs first and then corn meal, other use seasoned bread crumbs. Have some stale saltines in the cupboard? Just hit 'em with a rolling pin a few times. They'll work fine.

The final step is to fry the cooked meat just long enough for the coating to become crispy and brown. Nothing does a better job of that than a big cast iron fry pan with a little bit of corn oil on the bottom.

Then give praise to the Pope and serve immediately. And if your dinner guests rave about the meal, try to remember how you made it.

Participants Needed for Angler Survey on Au Sable and Upper Manistee Rivers

Gates of the Au Sable Lodge will be conducting a fishing results survey on the Au Sable and Upper Manistee Rivers from April 15 to November 1.

The collected data will assist in understanding the nature of the fishery of these two Blue Ribbon trout streams and be used to plan future habitat projects and to advocate related policy positions.

Participants must have an All Species fishing license and agree to fish at least 20 days on the designated waters. Licensed fishing guides and employees of fly shops, bait and tackle stores or any outdoor/outfitter businesses are not eligible.

Each trip will be recorded on a form and turned in on a monthly basis. All results are anonymous.

Respondents will receive \$100 dollars in gift cards at the end of the collection period. A total of 20 participants will be randomly selected from a group of applicants.

If you are interested please email



A brown trout for the Au Sable River. This year Gates of the Au Sable will be conducting an angler's survey of the Au Sable and Upper Manistee River from April 15 to Nov 1. Photo courtesy of Gates of the Au Sable Lodge.

tombuhr@prodigy.net under the heading "Angler Survey" or send a postcard or letter to Tom Buhr, PO Box 300, Luzerne, MI 48636.

For more information go to the

Gates of the Au Sable February newsletter at:

https://gateslodge.com/2021/02/respite/?mc_cid=9d195e9e71&mc_eid=3fb77574d6



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