

The Newsletter of the Michigan Fly Fishing Club

October 2021

All That Is The MFFC

Al Haxton

By Al Haxton

As I sit here considering our club, it still amazes me all the wonderful things we do each year. Between our

many meetings, our countless interactions with one another, our marvelous sharing of all the fun of our sport, and our many fishing outings, I am not only proud to be an active member but consider myself a very lucky man to be involved with such a great organization.

I know that our meetings have changed a bit over the last

few years ... from no meetings at all to ZOOM meetings, and now back to face-to-face meetings. It sure has been a

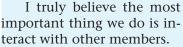


A fine catch from the MFFC's annual bass outing in Lake Huron.

tough couple of years.

We currently meet at a new venue that seems to be working pretty well. Whatever happens in the future will be

strange and probably a bit of a challenge for some of us, but I feel confident that WE, the MFFC, will see this through and move forward with so many of the fun things we have done for so long.



If you tie flies and save money, of course, I feel very sure that our activities meetings with our spotlight tier are a big help to you. If nothing else, it makes you think about how you tie, and maybe the person leading has different ideas about how best to get things done.

On a personal note, I have been tying flies for over 33 years (Imagine all the money I have saved!) and still am learning. Folks share ideas about how to tie a specific part of a fly, maybe use a new material, or maybe have a new pattern that they are working on for a specific time or place.

Fly fishing is truly a lifelong learning experience. As they say, a fly fisher never steps into the same river twice. It is always new and different, and the learning never ends.

We all share experiences and may-

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Michigan Fly Fishing Club

Calendar

10/20/21 Board Meeting, Virtual10/27/21 Activity Meeting, Tie Along with Chris Hunter, VFW Post345

11/3/21 Speaker Carl Heuter, Vitual or VFW Post 345

11/10/21 Board Meeting, Virtual 11/17/21 Activity Meeting, VFW Post 345

12/8/21 Speaker TBA, Vitual or VFW Post 345

12/15/21 Board Meeting, Virtual 12/22/21 Activity Meeting Garage & Estate Sale, VFW Post 345

1/5/22 Speaker & Location TBA 1/6-9/22 Ultimate Fishing Show, Suburban Collection Showplace in Novi

1/12/22 Board Meeting, Virtual 1/19/22 Activity, Location TBA

2/2/22 Speaker & Location TBA
2/9/22 Board Meeting, Virtual
2/16/22 Activity, Location TBA
2/24-27/22 Outdoorama, Suburban
Collection Showplace in Novi

3/2/22 Activity, Location TBA 3/9/22 Board Meeting, Virtual 3/12/22 Midwest Fly Fishing Expo 3/16/22 Speaker & Election Nominations, Location TBA

4/6/22 MTG elections & Speaker. Location TBA

4/13/22 Board Meeting, Virtual **4/20/22** Activity Meeting, election results, Location TBA

4/30/22 Trout Opening Day Celebration, Gates AuSable Lodge

MFFC: Great Members, Fun Meetings & Wonderful Outings

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be even "secret spots" with our fishing buddies. But at our meetings, we also share so much else.

Bring a new fly rod to share on activities night and cast it with other members. We discuss the qualities of the rod, including how we feel about the way it loads and casts. Others might take note, add this rod to their arsenal, and maybe even buy it in a series of weights.

This is all part of the learning experience. We all do it at our meetings. Each time we chat with a new member or sit with a longtime member that we have not chatted with before, we share information, ideas, and experiences.

This sharing, in turn, might cause some of us to try fishing new waters. It might make us explore more of the rivers in our wonderful state and maybe even provoke us to try new fish and rivers in other states...or maybe even the ocean.

Our club, The Michigan Fly Fishing Club, has so many outings and opportunities to share fishing with others that I feel we are truly blessed. Our outings begin in early March with our very own Midwest Fly Fishing Expo. Our show is the longest-running fly fishing only show in the entire nation. It's the weekend that I always feel sorry for kids because I get two days of Christmas, and they only get one.

A few weeks after our show, we have a Trout Tune-Up in Wixom, a great opportunity to fish with other members and maybe catch the biggest fish of the season. A bit of true history about that outing, the first year of the Tune-Up, MFFC got in touch with the Michigan DNR to get some fish put into the river. This fishing opportunity was so popular that after the first year, the DNR put the fish in for free, and they advertised and





A tie-along, one of the many activites that take place during a MFFC Activites Night.

promoted the fishing there. Our idea turned out pretty good, I think.

After the Tune Up, we, of course, have our Trout Opening Day Celebration, remembering and honoring the folks that are no longer with us. We toast them with a great Bloody Mary, then share some time and stories of the folks we met and now miss.

Not long after that is our New Members Outing. I can remember my first time going to that outing and everything I learned. I am still thankful for that great opportunity to see new areas of the rivers, learn some new casting techniques, and share laughter and fun with so many other fly fishers.

Next, the Bass Outing in the thumb area of our state. Fishing for large Bass in Lake Huron is another one of those things that just seems so right. Each year more folks try it and find they like it. We have a wonderful picnic each summer with lots of shared food, laughter, and fishing stories.

Another summer outing is the Yellowstone Trip: three weeks in the Yellowstone area with over 2000 miles of trout streams and numerous high mountain lakes to explore. I have been there over 20 times now and am still barely scratching the edge of all the fishing spots.

Our club recently added an ocean fishing trip to the list. Fishing for rather large ocean fish that fight like heck and run long distances is on my list for future participation. The pictures I have seen are nothing short of incredible, and the fish...well, just allow me to say they are awesome and beautiful.

Salmon fishing is on our agenda too. There are still pink salmon in the Upper Peninsula, and I know folks that go there for a fun challenging weekend. That outing was probably the first one I went on when I joined the club so long ago. The thing that really caught my fancy was catching a salmon on a 5-weight fly rod. It was so fun I went many times.

One last item of mention is our annual December garage sale. I think this is such a wonderful idea. What a great opportunity to find some new stuff or sell some old stuff that will be new for someone else. Between rods, reels, fly tying stuff, and all the other gear we use, there is always lots to look at.

So consider how lucky we all are. Think about maybe adding some travel to your plans for next year, and get ready for a new year and a new show and an entire year of great new experiences and fun.

Tight lines.



Michigan Fly Fishing Club Business

Sept. 15, 2021 - MFFC Board of Directors Meeting

Roll Call

Meeting called to order 7:36 p.m. *Present:* Sybil Hunter, Kathy Oehring, Bob Niemi, Jim Fischer, Jon Bada, Barry Green, Fred Sejalon, Dave Nowicki

Absent: Bruce Strachan, Tom Doyle *Visitors:* Kevin Lipp; Jim Aiken **Approval of Agenda** - Agenda approved with amendments.

Approval of Minutes - Minutes from May 12, 2021 Board Meeting Approved.

Officer's Report

President: B. Strachan (via email prior to meeting)

- FFI Collaboration: FFI wishes to know if MFFC wants to collaborate on the following activities? As an example – publish collaborative events & news in both the Hatch and the FFI Newsletter. List of FFI suggestions: conservation programs; education programs; casting certification; fly tying group; learning center. Areas of flyfishing are most interested in: improving fly tying skills; improving fly fishing skills; improving casting skills; conserving fish habitat; providing access to fisheries; being part of the fly fishing community.
- BoD Decision: postpone FFI collaboration (due to limited activity/participation at club during COVID)
- Board Recruitment of Chairpersons via Phone: to recruit event chairpersons, do Board Members wish to call 10 members each as proposed in a recent President's email? If so, the President will prepare a spreadsheet to assign member names

to each Board Member.

- BoD Decision: time for presidential letter (business as normal; need help/volunteers; come to the meetings (instead of Zoom participation)
- BoD Further Input: more thought into process on group calling members; face-to-face meetings is preferred way to get volunteers; Membership Chair will include snippet on opportunities to serve when Membership Thank You letter goes out in October.

Vice President: S. Hunter

- Media Committee Formation requested.
- MFFC Club Website Updates: Social Media Chairpersons Facebook (Joyce Haxton & Bob Niemi). Instagram (Joyce Haxton).
- Website Hacks: by AI-Bots (more frequent) suggest firewall and back-ups for our websites; Go-Daddy quote presented; firewall approved.
- Jim Aiken: topic children participating at MFFC shows/ events. Chairperson asking for assistance when he cannot attend (due to conflict with another meeting) on the 1st meeting of the month. Options on handling children at club shows/events with most kids under 11 years of age participating. Minimize children participation; place barriers; possible canceling MFFC participating.
- BoD Feedback: plan to be there with minimum presence; spacing (4 vices) – adjust for kid activities at Outdoorama & Ultimate Fishing Show.

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2019 - 2020 Officers

President: Bruce Strachan president@mffc.org

Vice President: Sybil Hunter sybilsvpemail@gmail.com

Cooresponding Secretary: Jim Fischer coorespondence@mffc.org

Recording Secretary: Jon Bada jonbada@hotmail.com

Treasurer Kathy Oehring treasurer@mffc.org

Membership Bob Niemi membership@mffc.org

Immediate Past President: David Nowicki info@mffc.org

At-Large Directors

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Fred Sejalonn sejalon@comcast.net

Hatch Editor

Sybil Hunter *evening.hatch.mffc@gmail.com*

Webmaster

Harry Briggs habriggs@gmail.com

A Tie Along

Tying the Purple Haze with Chris Hunter

MFFC Activity Meeting, Oct. 27

By Chris Hunter

I started tying flies in college. While others went to Spring Break in Florida, my father kept me away from fun (i.e. girls) by taking me to Montana to fish for a week. While I knew I had it good, I had no idea how good I had it until years later. (By the end of college I had been to Montana four times, fishing the Bighorn and one of the Spring Creeks (Armstrong, DePuy, & Nelson) each trip with my father.)

Given the number of flies I lost, tying was the logical next step. For Christmas my sophomore year of college dad gave me the Dan Baily's Beginning Fly Tying Kit, with an upgraded vise – the state of the art Thompson Model A.

I thought I was doing pretty well, and after years of tying Wooly Buggers and Prince Nymphs (the only two flies in the book) I was pretty much tapped out. After college, I put away tying in favor of studying while attending Law School. With more education than I needed, I realized my tying skills were pretty bad.

Enter Al Haxton and Joe Sattler. Sybil (my wife) and I signed up for tying classes with Al at the "Southfield Show" with some strong urging from Joe who let me know in a polite way that my flies would look better in a garbage can. (I also met Todd Schotts who took time

at the Southfield Show to teach me how to tie wings for an Adams.)

After tying classes with Al, I was ready for the big time. The next thing I knew, Al talked me into teaching the beginning tying class at the Club. Time just flew by and more than 20 years from my first Wooly Bugger I pretty much have the same skill level as I did when I started.

There is some dispute regarding the origination of the Purple Haze, although both origin stories start with a guide on the Bitterroot River in Montana. (I floated with a guide on the Bitterroot who claimed the pattern was his – and I had the best days of fishing in my life – so in my book Wes gets the credit for his origin or variation.

My recollection is that Wes was also featured in Fly Tyer Magazine for his variation.) The pattern is actually pretty simple, it's an Adams – tied with purple floss, and in Wes' opinion Purple hackle.





Purple Haze

Tie Along Recipe for the Oct. 27 Activity Meeting

Hook: Size 12-18 **Thread:** 8/0 – purple

Tail: hackle fibers (natural grizzly or purple grizzly)

Body: purple floss

Parachute post: white calf tail **Thorax:** Ice dub - UV purple

Hackle: purple grizzly

Michigan Fly Fishing Club Board of Directors Meeting Sept. 15, 2021

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• Jim to publish recommended guidelines on show activities.

Treasurer: K. Oehring

• Treasurer's report accepted and approved.

Corresponding Secretary: J. Fischer

- Speaker Updates/Schedule: Sept/ Oct/Nov covered; Dec/Jan in progress.
- 2022 MFFC Banquet Speaker: Alice Osley possibility
- eMail Blasts Logistics: Blast outs: 16 during the summer months; average read rate 64%

Membership: B. Niemi (interim)

Current: 360 active members; only one member has opted out of Constant Contact; letters to be sent out for membership renewal tomorrow.

Events & Outings

- Feedback from members not getting feedback from event chairpersons.
- Project Healing Waters (Rich/ Scott chairpersons) put in contact to Westland VFW for possible launch; looking for club volunteers to line up
- Venue Committee looking

for better facilities with better acoustics; VFW contract through December

New Business

- Lovells Porta-Potty Request at new Twin Bridges Access denied based on freeze of conservation funds at this time.
- Media Committee motion for standing committee passed.
 Website + social media accounts.

Old Business None at this time. **Adjournment:** 9:15 p.m.

Hoppers, Ants, and Beetles, Oh My!

Fishing Late-Season Terrestrials

By Todd A. Schotts

Late Season Terrestrials, what are they? They are grasshoppers, ants, beetles, and crickets. Last August, I gave a presentation on these amazing alien-looking creatures. Here is what I covered:

Terrestrials are insects that are not born in the watersheds. Some noted terrestrials include grasshoppers, crickets, ants, spiders, inchworms, snails, moths, and termites to name a few terrestrials you should always have in varying size and color residing in your terrestrial box.

The four late-season terrestrials, noted first, come in various sizes and colors. The hatch guides say that these late-season terrestrials last until mid-October, but there is one that actually lasts until winter starts -- that would be the grasshopper.

When tying hoppers, the colors to keep in mind are green and brown, but do not forget the Pink Pookie hopper. Hoppers are typically green, but later in the season tend to be tan in color due to their diet.

Sizes change throughout the season as well. The most useful sizes are 8 and 10. However, from mid-August until the first of winter, size 6 is the go-to. When tying hoppers, remember that they have pronounced rear hind legs, and bulky heads.

Tying Ants, which should be a staple in everyone's fly boxes all summer long, vary in size from a 10 (carpenter



Fishing late-season terrestrials is an effective strategy until winter arrives.

ant) to a size 24. The colors for Michigan are black, cinnamon, and red, or a combination of the three.

I prefer to tie these in a size 14. When tying ants, remember they have three pronounced body segments, but you can get away with using just two body segments. Also, do not forget the legs, made using rubber leg material or hackle. There are flying ants too. Do not forget when tying these tiny morsels to tie in some wings. One thing with Ants, there are three different ways to fish these insects: top water, emerger, or fully sunken style.

Beetles, often the forgotten late-season terrestrial, are a fly that I love to fish. There are quite a few different patterns out there. Sizes I use for the late-season terrestrials are 10 and 12. Remember

when tying these little aliens, they have two sets of wings, hard shell wings and underwings, along with six legs.

Crickets wrap up the last of these unique late-season wonders. The cricket is a great fly to fish. The most versatile sizes are 10 and 12. The one cricket you want to try to follow is the common Black Field Cricket. The

color is mostly black with some brown mixed in. When I tie my crickets, I like to add a touch of blue or purple highlighting.

When rigging terrestrials, remember to use mono instead of fluorocarbon because mono floats and fluorocarbon sinks gradually. If you're using a hopper dropper, then use fluorocarbon on the dropper to help make it sink. Also, keep your leader shorter than normal; my leader is usually four to five feet in length. With a dry terrestrial, I use Abolene on my fly and then powder on my tippet and leader. This helps to make it float a lot longer in the water.

Always check the shoreline grasses to see what type of terrestrials are out there before tying one on. On hot sunny days, terrestrials tend to migrate to the watershed shorelines and banks, but if it is cold and windy, they won't be around as much. Don't get discouraged. If it warms up in the afternoon, you may see terrestrials. If you are fishing a mayfly or caddis hatch and are not getting any takes, try putting on a grasshopper and see what happens. The best way I have found to fish terrestrials are with a dead drift, keeping my rod tip pointed at the fly, and keeping my offering drifting naturally, not water skating.

If you have any questions about terrestrials, contact me at *GrizzlyFlies@yahoo.com*, or catch me on Facebook at *Grizzly by Schottsie* or *Michigan Bobbin Slingers* (fly tyers), or on Instagram at *Grizzly Flies by Schottsie*.



Todd Schotts leads a fly tying demonstration on late-season terrestrials at a MFFC activities night last summer.



In the Shadow of Ernest Hemingway

By Jim DuFresne

I was not the first choice of the Michigan Nature Association when they were looking for a fly angler to film on the Fox River in the Upper Peninsula. I wasn't the second or third either. I'm pretty sure I wasn't even in the top 20.

Their first choice was Bryan Burroughs, a fisheries biologist for Michigan Trout Unlimited. When he was unavailable, they asked local guides, outfitters and other Yoopers, and

when they couldn't commit, they desperately reached out to MFFC because time was running out on the trout season.

Four of us responded to the e-blast that MNA sent to MFFC members titled "Want To Be On Camera?" and I felt good about that. It's not as embarrassing if a handful of you are out there getting hung up in the tight confines of the upper Fox River.

But when the film schedule was changed at the last minute, I was the only one still standing.



Jim DuFresne

I was given the starring role by default, and that made me nervous. I think they call that "stage fright" in Hollywood.

From my phone calls with Fauna Creative, the Grand Rapids production company producing the six-minute video, it was apparent what director Jason Whalen really wanted to capture on film; a fly angler *catching a brook trout*. He said it wasn't absolutely necessary, but I could tell he was lying.

My daughter said this could be my big break, maybe snagging me a part in the sequel of *A River Runs Through It*. I said, "put a camera on me, and I can guarantee you two things; I won't catch a brookie, and I'll leave half of my flies in the trees behind me."

She was kidding. I wasn't.

The MNA, a land conservancy that has been around for 70 years, is working to permanently protect 3,500 acres of



The star of the video; an 11-inch brook trout from the Fox River.

what is known as the Fox River Wetlands. The property lies within the watershed of the East Branch of the Fox and includes 3,000 feet of frontage and about twice that amount of on the East Branch Slough, a main tributary.

The campaign has nothing to do with public access. The very nature of this rare fen wetland prevents any sane person from crossing it to reach the East Branch. You would be hip-deep in mud if you did. The only way to fish the river here is to motor upstream from a boat launch on M-28.

But the wetlands serve as a crucial bulwark in maintaining the



A young Ernest Hemingway after a successful day on the river.

high-water quality and outstanding brook trout fishery the Fox River is renowned for. The purpose of the video is to build support to preserve this slice of the East Branch as a way to protect the entire river.

"We want to try and capture the essence of the whole Fox River system - the fishery, the high-water quality, the history - and how protecting wetlands helps protect the system's rivers." said Julie Stoneman, Director of Outreach and Education for the MNA.

I was interested in the project because I have spent a fair amount of time in that area. I hiked and mapped the 37-mile Fox River Pathway for my guidebook, *Backpacking in Michigan*, and became captivated by the Ernest Hemingway connection while working on *12 Classic Trout Streams in Michigan*.

I have even fished the Fox. By myself, when nobody was around to see me untangling dry flies and tippet from the tag alder that makes so much of the river a living hell to cast in.

So had Ernest Hemingway.

In 1919, Hemingway was a 20-year-old still recuperating from a World War I injury when he and stepped off the train in Seney with two friends. Shouldering rucksacks and carrying fishing rods, they hiked north from town for 3 miles along an abandoned railroad bed that today is M-77 and then camped along the East Branch of the Fox River for a week of fishing.

Eventually, Hemingway moved to Paris to be a foreign correspondent for the *Toronto Star* and in 1924 used the Fox

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Chasing a Brook Trout to Hollywood (Sort of)

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River experience to pen *Big Two-Hearted River*. He used some literary license in the short story, changing the river that his character, Nick Adams, fished to the more poetic sounding Big Two-Hearted even though it's more than 40 miles away.

That would have been a heck of a hike from Seney.

Before heading up north, I contacted the DNR fisheries biologist in Newberry and asked for places where there was room to cast on the Fox and open on one side. I just assumed the production crew would be on the banks filming. He pointed out several.

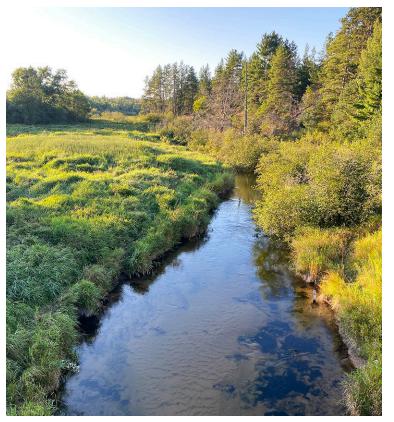
Then I emailed Josh Greenberg of Gates Au Sable Lodge for some fall fishing tips. "Try to encourage the production team that you don't start fishing until after the air (and river) warm up," Greenberg wrote to me. "This can be difficult because everyone wants the photo of a fly fisher casting fruitlessly in the morning mist."

Good Advice. Fauna Creative wanted to start filming at 6:30 a.m.

I arrived in Seney the day before the production crew to scout locations and called fellow MFFC member Art Mikkola. Art was one of the original four, and even though he couldn't make the rescheduled shoot, he scouted the Fox on his way to his deer camp near Houghton. He told me the water was low and that hoppers were still out in full force.

But his best advice was "Tuesday is Taco Night at Andy's Seney Bar! They are big and delicious!" It was Art Mikkola the restaurant critic awarding what is the equivalent in the U.P. of a Michelin five-star review.

I spent the day scouting sites where MNA had obtained a



The East Branch of the Fox River near where Ernest Hemingway fished during his only trip to the Upper Peninsula.



The Fauna Creative film crew - videographer Chris Zuker and director Jason Whalen - and MFFC's own Jim DuFresne at the Ernest Hemingway marker along the East Branch of the Fox River.

videography permit, and in the afternoon texted the Fauna Creative crew who were on their way from the Keweenaw Peninsula. I told them at 7 p.m. I would be at a spot I think would work well and that the evening looked to be a calm one if they wanted to get a jump on filming.

But I said there was no chance of catching a brookie. That this stretch of the Fox was on the edge of Seney with a campground on one side, the reason for the open banks. Every person who parks a trailer here pitches a worm into the river. Because Hemingway did or so said a sign near the outhouse.

I was already in the water casting that night when I saw three people on the bank wearing camouflaged, booted waders and holding cameras. When one of them called out "Jim" it all came together for me.

They were going to get in the river with me.

Videographer Chris Zuker's equipment was so bulky he wore a support vest on his back with a post and cable that suspended the camera from above his head. Gripping the video camera with both hands he carefully waded out to me and asked, "is it a problem if I stand next to you and film?"

I said "no, if it's not a problem when I pierce your ear with my fly." Then I held up my No. 10 Royal Coachman. I don't think the size of the hook bothered him as much as the barb at the end of it. He stood right next to me anyhow.

The first hour was uneventful. Chris filmed my every cast and the other two, one with a digital camera, the other with a submersible GoPro, bounced around me. The highpoint was when I snagged a fly on the opposite bank and had to snap it off because the water was too deep to retrieve it. I

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was praying that opening my fly box and selecting a new one wouldn't end up being my breakout moment in film.

With dusk fast approaching, the



Fauna Creative videographer Chris Zuker

crew retreated to their van for fresh batteries while I carefully threaded my way through waist-deep water to the other side of the river. I was wading past a large sweeper when in the corner of my eye I saw a rise. I stood there in utter disbelief and when a second ring appeared I snapped out of it and tied on an elk hair caddis.

On my third cast, the trout came up and grabbed it.

I'm not sure what the Fauna Creative crew expected to see when or even if I caught something. Maybe Brad Pitt holding his flyrod high above his head while being pulled through Class 4 rapids by a 25-inch brook trout.

What they got was me saying "Hey, look at that. I caught a fish!"

I've never seen three people with such expensive gear run into a river so fast. With the water slapping at his waist, Chris had to hold his \$10,000 video camera up high. Somebody else yelled, "take your time reeling it in!"

It was mayhem.

Somehow they made it across to where I hooked what turned out to be an 8-inch brookie, not a trophy by any means but large enough to possess those wonderful brook trout colors. They filmed it in and out of the water

from every angle possible, long enough so everybody in the campground had time to walk over and watch.

I just stood there and beamed. The pressure was gone and the relief I felt was amazing. This small fish had just salvaged my reputation as a fly angler and the prestige of the MFFC.

I totally redeemed myself the next day when I led the crew to a lovely stretch of the Fox, where we saw a handful of rises before we even put our waders on. Within 15 minutes of entering the river, I hooked and netted an 11-inch brookie. They filmed that one for almost 20 minutes, including underwater shots with the GoPro. The trout was beautiful, and I'm sure it will be the star of the video.

But that fish will never measure up to my 8-incher. I could fish every day of my life and go to my grave clutching my fly rods and I will never catch a more beautiful trout than that brookie.

I was in such high spirits that night I bought the beer and outside the cheap motel where we all were staying we toasted getting the "film in the can." And the beer we hoisted? Bell's *Two-Hearted Ale*, of course.

I think Ernest Hemingway would have been proud of me.



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