



The Evening

Hatch

The Newsletter of the Michigan Fly Fishing Club

December 2021



A limit of sockeye salmon from the Russian River, a fly-fishing-only fishery in Alaska's Kenai Peninsula, a two-hour drive from Anchorage.

All I Want for Christmas ... Is an Alaskan Fly Fishing Adventure!!!

Editor's Note: We decided to turn the Evening Hatch into an Alaskan adventure issue because we have two great articles from MFFC members about fishing in the Final Frontier. Besides, this is the time of year when you sit inside, watch the snow fall and dream about great fly-fishing anywhere but the Au Sable River in the middle of January.

On page 7 Jim Aitken writes about his bucket list trip that he took to Katmai National Park to fish the famed Naknek River on the Alaskan Peninsula.

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On page 8, Jim DuFresne writes about sockeye salmon, brown bears and the flies-only segment of the Russian River just south of Anchorage in Kenai Peninsula. DuFresne is a former resident of the 49th State and for more than 30 years the author of *Alaska*, Lonely Planet's travel guidebook to the state.

"You quickly learn after you arrive," DuFresne says, "that where there is salmon in Alaska there are usually bears. Big ones." This is as true on the Russian River as it is in Katmai.

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Michigan Fly Fishing Club Calendar

12/8/21 Speaker DNR Officer Keven Luther, Virtual 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 Dan White 1884 Fly Shop "Fishing for Trout Near Baldwin" 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 Alexa Blankenship, Detroit River Western Lake Erie Cooperative "Invasive Species 101," 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

3/12-13/22 Midwest Fly Fishing Expo, Macomb Community College - Sports & Expo Center

3/16/22 Chuck Earls & Election Nominations, Location TBA

4/6/22 Speaker & Location TBA

4/13/22 Board Meeting, Virtual

4/20/22 Activity, Location TBA

5/4/22 Activity & Location TBA

5/11/22 Board Meeting, Virtual

5/18/22 Club Banquet, Alice Owsley, Italian American Banquet Center.

Our Show *Thanks to You, Our Fly Fishing Expo Will be Better*

By Al Haxton

In 2004, a group of us, Past President Joe Sprys, Past President Kevin Lipp, Past President Mike Matuszewski, and I, traveled out to Somerset NJ to check out a Fly Fishing Show. We had heard that it was the largest fly fishing show and the fellow that owned it, Chuck Furimsky, was expanding his shows and their locations. We were a bit concerned because our show is so very important to our club.



Al Haxton

While at the show, we happened to be walking down an aisle when Chuck came walking towards us. We were all wearing MFFC shirts. Chuck stopped in his tracks in front of us and said "Michigan Fly Fishing Club, the best darn fishing club there is anywhere."

We were rather surprised to hear that he even knew of us. Chuck shared the names of 8 to 10 members, like Ron Angove and John Pinto, that had run our show years before. He explained that he visited our show years ago and those great folks had shared how we did it, what it took for workers, and basically how to run a show. He commented that without those great folks sharing info with him he would not have his shows now.

Our club and members helped him develop his shows and made his life easier. He thanked us, and them, and we shared dinner that evening. Chuck noted that he always told his vendors about our show and recommended that if they even wanted to be in a show in Michigan that they should contact us. We all came away from that experience with a much better attitude and outlook for the future.

A few years ago, when Joyce and I first decided to drive west for our Yellowstone trip, driving home through the town of River Falls Wisconsin, in the Driftless Area, suddenly our Jeep turned into a parking lot. There, in the shopping area, was Lunds Fly Shop. (Yes, our Jeep was well trained.)

We went into the shop to look



OUR SHOW is the longest running "fly fishing only" show in the nation and the pride of the Michigan Fly Fishing Club.

around a bit and take a break from traveling. We looked at a few items and the owner came over and asked if he could show us anything. We explained that we were members of The Michigan Fly Fishing Club and on our way home from Yellowstone.

When we mentioned MFFC his jaw dropped and he told us he had heard a lot about our club and the show we put on each March, The Midwest Fly Fishing Expo.

Frankly we were a bit surprised about that too. He explained he attends, as a vendor, a show in Minneapolis each year and the club that sponsors that show always gives MFFC credit for giving them the background and 'how to' info about running a fly fishing show. We talked with him a bit longer, made a few purchases and hit the road homebound.

OUR SHOW, The Midwest Fly Fishing Expo, is rather famous in the fly fishing world. OUR SHOW is the longest running "fly fishing only" show in the nation. OUR SHOW has introduced so many folks to the wonderful world of fly fishing. OUR SHOW has provided funds for our Conservation donations for so many years, and they have added up to huge sums. In just a few months

OUR SHOW will be back and better than ever.

Before that can happen, we need folks to step up and volunteer. Each show requires countless hours of planning, set up time, tear down time, and all the jobs of handling our visitors with tickets, security and so many other jobs. Traditionally we would have a signup sheet at each meeting for a few months for folks to review what is needed and sign up to assist. In the past we had big meetings with high attendance to promote OUR SHOW to help folks get excited. This year is a bit different.

OUR SHOW requires 160 weekend volunteers:

Set Up 40-50 members

Saturday about 85 members:

8:30 to 11:00 about 28 workers

11:00 to 1:30 pm about 24 workers

1:30 to 4:00 pm about 22 workers

4:00 to 6:00 pm about 11 workers

Sunday about 60 members

9:30 to 12:00 pm about 22 workers

12:00 to 2:00 pm about 22 workers

2:00 to 4:00 pm about 16 workers

Tear Down, about 20 workers

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Michigan Fly Fishing Club

Business

Michigan Fly Fishing Club Board of Directors Meeting Nov. 10, 2021

Roll Call

Meeting called to order 7:31 p.m.

Present: Strachan; Bada; Oehring; Fischer; Niemi, Sejalon; Green; Nowicki; Doyle

Absent: S. Hunter

Visitors: Kevin Lipp; Chris Hunter; Peter Albertson; Craig Summers

Approval of Agenda - Agenda approved with amendments.

Approval of Minutes - Minutes from 10/20/21 Board Meeting Approved.

Officer's Report

President: Strachan

- *Venue Information* (C. Hunter)

Theater in Downtown Northville (Brandon Beuter), free parking behind theater; 7 Mile & Sheldon area

Theater under renovation; lobby open; additional rooms for tying;

\$200 per meeting or \$400 per month; short term commitment;

WiFi & sound board; acoustics excellent

- Other venues Northville Senior Center and Plymouth Cultural Center, VFW Hall in Livonia
- Clarenceville Evening

Doesn't allow evening meetings for non-students functions in the evening

- President's 2022 Absence: Feb 2 and 16.
- President Message – Hatch article coming
- Trout Tune Up

April 2, 2022 contract sent for \$150 for Yurt (Walled Lake Activity Center)

- Guides to Events

Summary of events: location/facilities/chairperson/logistics/budget, info on BoD shared drive

- Directors & Nominating Committee

Fred, Barry, Jim not term limited – can run for the same position if so desired, everyone else is term limited

Vice President: S. Hunter Absent

Treasurer: K. Oehring

- Treasurer's Report approved as submitted.

Corresponding Sec: J. Fischer

- Speaker scheduled booked with one month in April. Alice Owley will be the banquet guest speaker

- eMail Blasts Logistics: 347 members

- Blast outs: 1300 members (average read rate at 62%)

- Blast out: 150 vendors w/ 56% read rate

- Venue Update: 29 sites on the list; 3 or 4 suggested sites

Membership: B. Niemi

- Fed-Ex Update: we are getting replacement checks by members; Fed-Ex denied claim, requested claim be started at OfficeMax; restitution being started by Bob; update to be given to effected members; still working" with Fed-Ex to get a claim process, effected members should resend checks directly to Bob (to be hand delivered to the Treasurer), or use PayPal or submit checks at the meetings; going forward no outside commercial courier will be used to submit checks to the Treasurer.
- Shared BOD drive has member-

2019 - 2020 Officers

President:

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Michigan Fly Fishing Club News & Events

MFFC Trout Tune-up is Back On

The annual early season trout angling on the upper reaches of the Huron River will take place on April 2, 2022, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Dust off those fly rods, seal the wader leaks and join MFFC for a day of angling at the "Yurt," located at the Walled Lake Outdoor Education Center, 3577 Sleeth Court in Commerce Twp.

MFFC will provide early morning snacks, coffee and other beverages and some hot pick-me-ups. The Walled Lake Outdoor Center will graciously provide a large pot of hot water at no additional charge.

Bring your warm weather and possibly rain gear because the yurt is not heated or air conditioned. And don't forget to purchase a 2022 Michigan Fishing License as a CO has been known



The Yurt, the site of the Trout Tune-Up at the Walled Lake Outdoor Education in Commerce Township.

to show up!

For more information reach out to Bruce Strachan at 248-346-6391 or online at president@mffc.org.



Strike! Double! Turkey! Tom Mogford was a threepete raffle winner at the November 18 pre-Thanksgiving meeting! His haul included a set of tools, lock in vice and tying bench. Happy Thanksgiving Tom!

The President's Message.... Bruce Strachan

The temperatures have dropped and snow has flown. It is winter. It is time for those fortunate to head for warmer climes and others to dust off their tying vices or read another John Gierach. It may be the winter doldrums for fishing but much is about to happen for MFFC members.

The longest, darkest day of the season will be Dec. 21 but the days will lengthen beginning on December 22, just in time for our annual MFFC garage sale. This year's sale will be augmented with the John Long and Jim Mimaugh estates. A myriad of tools, rods, reels and John's deep collection fishing books will be for your benefit at very moderate prices. All proceeds will benefit the MFFC general fund. John and Jim and their families will be pleased to have it all in fellow angler's hands.

The Ultimate Fishing and Outdoor-rama Shows kick off in January and February. Check your club schedule for dates. These shows serve to promote The Midwest Fly Fishing Expo and recruit people for a potential Public School in April. Jim Aitken is planning an active and safe club booth. We will welcome the usual young newbie tiers and no doubt some veterans of past shows. Sign up as a Ultimate Fishing and Outdoor-rama Show volunteer at



your next meeting or contact Jim (248-840-0539; dznvnm@comcast.net).

With lengthening days fishing infections will take hold or at least start to circulate. Chris Hunter is planning a Members School in February that will refresh our fishing knowledge and limber up our skills. Watch for more about the school in the Hatch. Novice, intermediate or guru, it will be an opportu-

nity to reconnect with MFFC friends.

Craig Summers and Dave Mayes, for nearly 18 months, have been preparing the return of the Midwest Fly Fishing Expo on March 12 to 13, 2022. Be an Expo volunteer and energize the Expo to once again "run itself." Our premier annual event lives and breathes with volunteers that cement success for MFFC and vendors alike. Our reputation as an exceptional, well-oiled event precedes us! Sign up for the return of the year's much anticipated 2022 Midwest Fly Fishing Expo.

A public school is in the works for later in April followed by the annual Huron River Trout Tune-up. The fishing season becomes palpable with the Tune-up and the annual Trout Opener on April 30 formally ushers in the Michigan fishing season on The Au Sable River at Gates Lodge.

Indeed the next five months are fully stocked with volunteer opportunity, challenges, and gatherings of fellow MFFC'ers. Join our monthly in-person meetings to assure yet another successful club year. I personally look forward to greeting you in the weeks and months ahead.

Tight Lines,
Bruce Strachan
MFFC President



The Eggmakers

Michigan DNR Busy Harvesting Fish Eggs

By Sierra Williams
Michigan DNR

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has been working hard this fall to gather the eggs necessary for the continued production of hatchery fish that support Michigan's world-class fisheries, and that effort will continue this winter.

Fall egg-takes have been completed for wild Chinook and coho salmon but are ongoing for captive broodstocks – the mature fish used for breeding – of brown, rainbow, brook and lake trout.

Chinook salmon eggs were collected Sept. 30 through Oct. 7 at the Little Manistee River Weir, and coho salmon eggs were collected Oct. 17 through Nov. 2 at the Platte River State Fish Hatchery Weir.

"We had a decent run of wild Chinook salmon this year," said Aaron Switzer, manager of the state fish hatcheries located in the Lower Peninsula. "The run at the Little Manistee was healthy enough to provide all of Michigan's



Above: DNR staff members hold Chinook salmon as they prepare for the fall egg-take at the Little Manistee River Weir. This year the run at the Little Manistee was healthy enough to provide eggs to Indiana and Illinois. Below left: Buckets of Chinook eggs collected at the Little Manistee Weir.

egg needs. We were also able to provide eggs to Indiana and Illinois. Once hatched, reared and stocked, all of these Chinook salmon will contribute to the Lake Michigan salmon fishery."

The coho egg take got underway at the Upper Platte River weir Oct. 14. The coho run has been very strong this fall, with just over 17,500 adults already passed above the Lower Platte River weir.

"We're planning to collect about 5.5 million coho salmon eggs at the Platte River weir by the time the egg-take is wrapped up. This includes approximately 2.5 million eggs for Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin. All four states work together cooperatively each year to ensure Lake Michigan continues to receive Pacific salmon to supplement the fishery," said Switzer.

At Oden State Fish Hatchery, egg-takes for brown trout occurred in late October. Captive broodstock egg-takes

for brook and lake trout are in progress until mid-November at the Marquette State Fish Hatchery. Rainbow trout egg-takes at Oden State Fish Hatchery will start in December and continue until mid-January.

Captive broodstocks will provide 220,000 brook trout eggs, 410,000 lake trout eggs, 2.3 million brown trout eggs and 1 million rainbow trout eggs. An additional 640,000 splake eggs (brook trout and lake trout hybrid) also will be collected to support Michigan's fisheries management objectives.

To learn more Michigan's state fish hatcheries or to plan a trip, scan the QR code or visit Michigan.gov/Hatcheries.



Dreaded 'rock snot' found in Upper Manistee

The Michigan departments of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy and Natural Resources confirmed a report of didymo, a nuisance freshwater alga, in a stretch of the Upper Manistee River in Kalkaska County. Also known as rock snot despite its coarse, woolly texture, didymo can grow into thick mats that cover the river bottom.

The Manistee River finding marks the first detection of didymo blooms in the Lower Peninsula. In 2015, extensive mats of didymo were found on the Michigan side of the St. Marys River near Sault Ste. Marie in the Upper Peninsula.

"Didymo can attach to fishing equipment, wading gear and other hard surfaces and be moved to new waterways," said Bill Keiper, an aquatic biologist with EGLE's Water Resources Division. "With each new detection, it becomes more important for people who fish, wade or boat to clean boats and equipment, including waders, after each use."

Anglers who have encountered didymo-infested streams in the western or eastern U.S. know that rock snot is more than just a nuisance.

"Didymo has potential to be a nasty nuisance species in Michigan's cold-water fisheries," said Samuel Day, a water



Didymo from the Upper Manistee River on a fly. Photo courtesy of Samuel Day, LTBB.

quality biologist with the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians. "Unlike the harmful algal blooms that plague areas of the Great Lakes due to warm temperatures and excess nutrients, didymo blooms form in cold, low-nutrient streams that most folks would generally consider pristine and great habitat for trout. Didymo can become a problem when it blooms, covering streambeds

and reducing habitat for macroinvertebrates, which are important food for fish."

Day, who studied didymo in southeastern U.S. streams as a graduate student at Tennessee Technological University, discovered the algal blooms between the Three Mile Bend and Sharon Road Bridge landings on the Upper Manistee River while fishing with a friend Nov. 14. After Day examined collected samples, his findings were forwarded to the EGLE Water Resources Division, then verified by Julianne Heinlein, an aquatic ecologist and algal taxonomist with the Great Lakes Environmental Center, Inc.

Since 2015, the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program has supported researchers at Lake Superior State University's Center for Freshwater Research and Education in an extensive study of occurrences of didymo in the St. Marys River and Upper Peninsula waters, the risk of spread and why nuisance blooms are increasing - a phenomenon being observed worldwide.

The Manistee River detection suggests didymo's distribution in Michigan waters may be more widespread than previously expected. LSSU's ongoing efforts will help guide didymo research and management needs statewide.

Al Haxton: Time to Step Up and Make OUR SHOW Even Better

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There you have it.

OUR SHOW requires a lot of volunteers to make it happen. That truly says a lot about our members. We volunteer and we do great things. We bring a wonderful show to so many folks that enjoy the speakers, love the vendors and really savor the experience each year.

So, gang, what are YOU going to do for OUR SHOW? It's time to step up and make a commitment. A commitment to OUR SHOW, a commitment to our shared sport, a commitment to funding our long-time stewardship of conservation projects. A commitment is needed and needed NOW.

It's time to stand up for our club and OUR SHOW and make things better. OUR SHOW is the most fun weekend of the year for me. I have said it before and will many more times, during OUR SHOW I feel sorry for children, because they get only one day of Christmas and we get 2 days of OUR SHOW.

It's time to sign up. It's time to decide what and when you want to volunteer. Contact Kevin Lipp at kjlipp@gmail.com and ask when folks are needed. Send Kevin an email with perhaps some ideas of when you want to work. Maybe include a preferred day. Let him know what type of work you prefer and get your name on the list of good folks soon.

Let's make OUR SHOW next March the best show ever. Sign up now. See you there.



The Kids Corner, popular with children and their parents, is a staple at at the Midwest Fly Fishing Expo.

Bucket List Fishing Alaska's Naknek River & Katmai NP

T By Jim Aitken

Two years ago, some friends and I started discussing where we should head for our next fly fishing adventure. Someone spotted an Alaska trip being sponsored by Baldwin Bait and Tackle; the Naknek River Camp owned by Jim Johnson, a regular vendor at our expo.

After much discussion, we put down a deposit and started planning what to take. Then along came the Covid pandemic. We hoped the pandemic would ease in 2020, but that didn't happen... we waited till the last minute to cancel.

Disappointed? Yes, but we made new reservations for last August. There were five in our group and we all arrived in Anchorage on August 7 and boarded an Alaska Airlines flight for the final leg of the trip to King Salmon.

We were met by two of our guides and soon were on our way to the river camp. The ride was about half an hour, but in just a few miles, we were off the grid...no phone or Wifi. The camp is on the Naknek River, close to where it begins at Naknek Lake within the 4.2-million acre Katmai National Park. There is a main lodge and a series of cabins. Each cabin has running water, shower and toilet...so, no getting chased by bears in the middle of the night!

We quickly got settled in our cabins, set up rods, shook out our waders and were ready to fish. After our welcome dinner, we tried our luck at the



Salmon make the 10-foot leap up Brooks Falls in Katmai National Park on the Alaska Peninsula en route to their spawning grounds.

dock getting that first fish. Fish were jumping all over the river. It turns out they were all Reds (we call them Sockeyes). Not much luck that first night.

Twenty miles downstream from the camp, the Naknek River flows into Bristol Bay. This part of the Pacific can be subject to high tides of 16 feet or more. Movement of spawning salmon is impacted by the higher tides. A day after a high tide often results in a fresh run of salmon moving up the river.

In 2021, the river level was two feet above normal, also a factor in spawning

runs of salmon. A combination of various factors meant that spawning was running a couple weeks later than normal. While there were plenty of salmon in the river, the progress to the spawning areas located in rivers flowing into Naknek Lake was delayed this year.

We hoped to target some really big rainbows on this trip as they feast on salmon eggs, but it was not to be. Instead, we sought various salmon species, Dolly Varden, smaller trout, and grayling. Two days were spent fishing the Naknek River targeting silver salmon (coho). While not eating during their progress toward spawning, it is possible to get them to hit on streamers that pass close to them. These fish are typically 6 to 15 pounds and very strong fighters.

Also in the river were reds (sockeye salmon), some smaller kings (chinook) and dogs (chum salmon). We typically used 7- and 8-weight fly rods with floating line and a 3X leader. Flies were 2-3 inches long in bright colors like pink, orange and chartreuse. Two fishermen per guide boat, the guides had all the necessary flies, beads, and tippet material. They also had both fly rods and spinning gear available.

Brooks River Falls

A highlight of Katmai National Park is the Brooks River and the falls where



When salmon do clear Brooks Falls they're often met by a crowd of hungry brown bears.

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Hungry Bears & Sticks of Dynamite

By Jim DuFresne

The salmon runs in Alaska are legendary, well known by fly fishermen around the world. Alaska also has more bears than the rest of the states combined, including 100,000 black bears and more than 30,000 brown bears or 95% of the U.S. population.

The first thing you learn when you arrive in the 49th State to fish for salmon is that where there is one there's usually the other. Such was the case at the Russian River Campground, a Chugach National Forest facility in the heart of the Kenai Peninsula.

I arrived at this 80-site campground with Ed Fogels, a good friend from Anchorage, in mid-June to a surreal scene. Every site was filled, most having been reserved six months in advance, ours included, because the opener for sockeye salmon was that night at 12:01 a.m.

The Russian River with its fly-fishing-only regulation is one of the most popular sockeye salmon streams in Alaska, the reason strolling through the campground were men, women and entire families outfitted in waders and vests, carrying a rod or two.



Jim DuFresne

But this was also bear country, the signs of that were everywhere. Literally. Every site had a large, metal bear box for food store with a sign *WARNING Bears In The Area!* Every picnic table had a yellow sign stapled to it that said *WARNING Food & Odors Attract Bears!* The campground dumpster had a sign asking you to be responsible with your garbage; *Help Keep Alaska's Bears Wild.*

The most obvious sign you were in bear country was hanging on the wading belt of almost every angler; a can of pepper spray.

Brown bears, big fish – sockeyes run between six and 12 pounds – and a campground full of anglers with a serious case of salmon fever. The level of anticipated excitement for this opener was amazing.

We passed up the 12:01 start. Ed's theory is that the best time to be on the water was during a lull between the midnight anglers and those who rather wait until a more civilized time to fish like after their first cup of coffee in the morning. We hit the river at 4 a.m.

It had been light for almost an hour when I stepped into the Russian River for the first time, clutching an eight-weight rod. Two things immediately



A pair of Alaskans with a catch of sockeye salmon from the Russian River.

challenged me; casting a fly line rigged with 16-pound tippet and eight 3/0 split shots on it and spotting the salmon, the blue ghosts, as Ed called them, among the boulders and rocks in the Russian.

I struggled all morning with both. By early afternoon I was alone at a hole, still looking for my first hook-up when my fly snagged a boulder in the middle of the river and I lost my hook, split shots and tippet. I re-rigged, lost that one a few minutes later and re-rigged again.

When my line stopped in the swift current yet again, I gave my rod a hard yank in frustration, thinking I was on the verge of losing my third fly in less than 30 minutes. That's when a 10-pound-plus sockeye leaped clear out of the river, a startling acrobatic display that was so close I could see my purple streamer hooked in the corner of its



An Alaskan brown bear feasting on a sockeye salmon from the Russian River.

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Fly Fishing for Sockeyes in Alaska's Russian River

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mouth.

I almost wet my waders.

"I call them sticks of dynamite," the angler camping next to us said that evening. "They're that explosive."

The fish leaped again and again as I fanatically reeled in my excess line. Then it took off downstream and there was little I could do to stop my reel from spinning wildly.

At this point I experienced something I never have on the Au Sable catching my usual 10 or 12-inch trout; I was down to my backing. There, stretched out a 100 feet downriver from me, was my \$80 fly line with one end tethered to a rampaging sockeye and the other to my backing by a knot that I may or may not have taken the time to properly tie.

I pumped my rod wildly as if I was deep sea fishing to work in my line and then fought that fish for at least 10 minutes maybe longer before it broke off, almost effortlessly it seemed.

I lost that sockeye but I was hooked.

On Wednesday I hooked and landed – netting the fish was often the most



Ed Fogels cooking dinner in his campsite in Russian River Campground.

challenging aspect – my limit of three sockeyes. On Thursday I hooked 16 before I was able to land the first one. I caught my limit that day as well.

I'm basically a catch-and-release angler, either it's the law like the Holy Waters or I'm just too lazy to deal with the bluegills and crappies I land belly boating. I'll never keep a bass only because I can't fathom killing something that just gave me so much pleasure on a fly rod.

But somehow on the Russian it seemed like the right thing to do. If you don't catch and eat that salmon a bear will or bald eagles, seagulls, foxes and mergansers will after it spawns. One thing for sure, that fish is not returning to the ocean from which it came.

You can "Disney-ify" this and call it the circle of life. Or you can simple acknowledge that salmon is the protein that sustains all of Alaska, residents and wildlife alike.

On Friday when I reached the riv-

er at 5 a.m. I was the only one around. The anglers from opening day had to rush back to Anchorage for at least a morning at the office. The weekend crowd hadn't shown up yet.

I was casting into my hole when I saw something move. It was my first bear of the trip, standing on the opposite bank 50 yards up stream. It was staring into the water, doing basically what I was trying to do, spot a sockeye.

Signs around the campground and the river say that if a bear approaches, give up your hole. If you have a fish on, cut your line. If it is still staring at you, toss that string of salmon into the moving current of the river.

I just watched him. You never want to have an encounter with a 500-pound brown bear but you sure hate to leave Alaska without seeing one. I watched that bear for 10 minutes until it left the river and disappeared into the woods.

That's when the first sockeye of the day hit my purple streamer.



Warning: Bears in the Area!

Scan the QR codes below for additional travel information and assistance in planning an adventure to Alaska:



Russian River
NF Campground



Chugach
National Forest



Katmai
National Park



Travel Alaska



Anchorage
Visitors Bureau

Katmai National Park: A Fortress for Brown Bears

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brown bears catch and feast on spawning salmon. If you have seen videos of bears fishing for trout at a waterfall, it was probably shot at the Brooks Falls.

Wildlife enthusiasts fly in from Anchorage just to spend a day watching the bear activity. The first stop for anyone arriving at the Brooks Camp is bear school, where a ranger conducts a short presentation regarding the bears.

The bears have free run of the area except inside buildings and one secure area surrounded by an electrical grid.

Our trip to Brooks Falls was to both see the bears and to fish this short, mile-long, river. The river is fed from Brooks Lake and Brooks Falls, a cascade with a 10-foot, is a third of a mile below the lake. The falls provides some of the best bear watching in Alaska. Adult browns jockey for the best position in their effort to snag salmon and increase their body fat for Alaska's long winters.

Fishing the upper part of the river with 6-weight rods, we had some success hooking silvers and rainbows. Various flies were tried from flesh flies to beads imitating the spawning. We worked our way downstream exiting about 200 yards before the Falls.

After hiking around the falls, we got back in the water for more fishing. We



Naknek River is legendary for its huge spawning runs of sockeye salmon.

were able to easily see the bears trying their luck fishing the falls. I must say they seemed to do better than us human fishers. There was more bear activity in the lower Brooks River, requiring us to stay 50 yards away from them.

Flyouts to the Naknek River

Our trip package included two flyouts. Each flight was aboard a Dehaviland Beaver, a single engine float plane with room for the pilot and six passengers. The planes departed with four fishermen and two guides for a truly unique experience of flying to an even more remote part of Alaska.

The Beavers picked us up right at the Naknek Camp dock. Generally, the plane drops into what seems like a postage stamp sized lake. Fishers then hike a mile or more to access the river.

The trails we used were basically bear trails, not at all improved for easy hiking. Each had at least some portion that went through thick alders that lasted up to 300 yards at times. Other areas were hard pan or a soft surface of endless low blueberry bushes full of berries.

The Naknek River is a wide and fast river. There are shallow areas where one can wade, but not this year, as the river was much higher than normal. We used flat bottom boats with outboard jet drives to move from place to place. A short trip about half a mile toward the lake was one of the guide favorites to

access silver salmon. Sometimes we motored down river 4 to 5 miles to slower water where would pool salmon to rest before continuing to their spawning grounds. During the last afternoon of fishing, we went after large trout.

Because the spawning process was just beginning, we went deep for the trout in the river a couple miles below the camp. We used 3-inch Dolly Lama streamers and a sinking line to get to the bottom. I was lucky enough to hook into a 24 incher which took about 10 minutes to bring to the net. This was my longest fish of the trip; it looked like a steelhead, but with more color.

The Weather

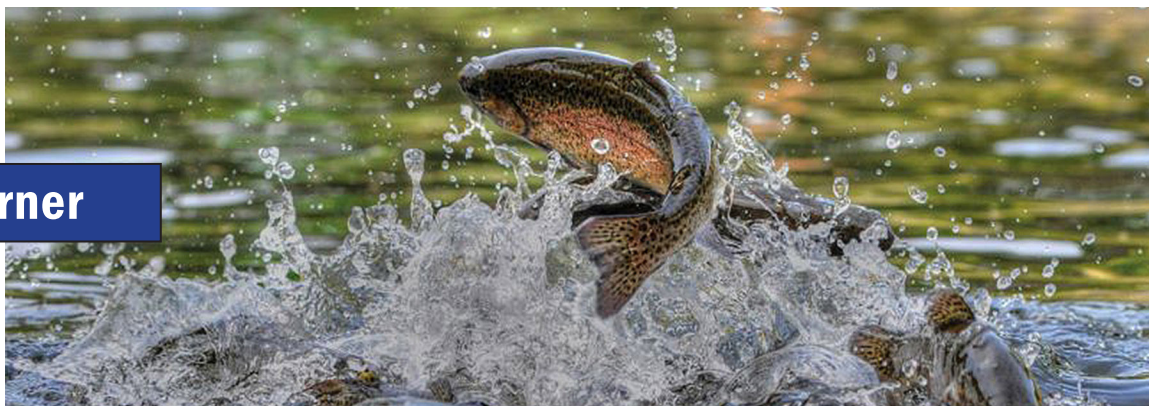
After we arrived to the Naknek River Camp in August, every day but one included rain, but never enough to slow us down. The temperature ranged from the mid-60's during the day to the low 50's at night. Low clouds and fog caused one of the flyouts to be diverted to a location with better weather. We were assured that no flyout had ever stranded fishers overnight in the wild because a plane could not make the pickup.

Bucket List Adventure

The food was good, the guides worked hard to put us on fish, we all caught salmon, trout, and a Dolly Varden and grayling. It's a long way from home, but certainly worth all the logistics such a bucket list trip demands.



Standard fishing equipment at Katmai National Park; bear spray.



Peter Albertson's

Conservation Corner

Thanks to Sybil Hunter and Norm Tabaka for Pfas info this month: from Norm a John Oliver video on Dupont's Pfas history, from Sybil a GreatLakesNow article on Pfas in the Great Lakes. The Environmental Working Group (ewg) has a Pfas contamination map with Michigan's many locations. The infrastructure Bill has funds to address Pfas, more to follow. See QR codes below.

Johnson's Creek: Discharge into the ponds status is still under review by the State. Now, two options: clean pond water and discharge into the sanitary system or, pump water into trucks and take it to a cleaning facility. Northville Township is attempting to set up a public meeting with EGLE in January to discuss the issue. Watch the Township web site for Creek and January meeting updates.

Pipe Line 5: 11/30/21, Lawsuit abandoned by Gov. Whitmer to allow a separate lawsuit with the same goal.

Check the internet for opinions from Enbridge and State's perspective. Complex issue with US, Canada, indigenous people, and related treaties, easements, etc.

Reduced Limits: Post from Brian at The Northern Angler, Traverse City, MI regarding reducing the DNR steelhead limits in Michigan. Please become aware of the suggested changes and contact nrc@michigan.gov; DNR officials Jim Dexter: dexter1@michigan.gov and Jay Wesley: westley@michigan.gov to express your opinion or concerns. Please recall that the topics are as brought forward from MFFC members.

Contact me: 248-921-9103 or palbertsontsp@me.com with any environmental issues of concern.

May you each have a joyous and safe Holiday Season. That's All, Peter

PPE: Plastic Pollution Endangering Wildlife

Since the COVID-19 virus was first detected in December 2019, our understanding of it has led to the new widespread use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in normal life.

Thankfully PPE is now more readily available than it was early in the pandemic. However with that widespread use comes consequences.

During the pandemic there were reduced environmental emissions which helped wildlife proliferate, but also increased use of plastics resulting in plastic pollution affecting the very wildlife we so love and enjoy.

Entanglement, entrapment and ingestion effects are widespread from terrestrial animals to aquatic - both

salt and freshwater. Fish are becoming stuck in rubbergloves, wildlife is starving from ingestion of the plastic, including domestic dogs and cats, and masks are being used as nesting materials, thus entangling birds.

Even the PPE labeled biodegradable, degrades into nano particles that remain in the ecosystem for many years to come.

The bottom line is that we are all trying to be responsible, and respect one another, in doing so please remember to cut the elastic from the masks and please dispose of PPE gloves and masks (with the elastic cut off) in proper trash receptacles. Our wildlife depends on it.

MFFC Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Continued from page 3

- ship directory and membership db available to BOD members

Events & Outings

- Expo Update. (C. Summers): Expo announcement letters went out a couple weeks ago as a Blast-outs; spoke w/ Harry - latest contract to be posted on the website; 4 speakers already set-up; guest tyers: Tim Flaggers; need hospitality chairperson for 2023; ATM being hosted; Square or PayPal payment schedule; Renee Gall to take over shirt orders for Expo

New Business

- Audit Report Acceptance

Old Business

- VFW Venue contract to be generated Jan - May with 30 day cancellation clause

Adjournment: 8:51 p.m.

Scan the QR codes for YouTube videos or more PPE and Pfas information:



John Oliver Video



GreatLakesNow Video



Map of Pfas contamination



Covid Litter

Members on the Fly *Fly Fishing Reports*



Above: Scott Freeburg with an impressive salmon. He was mum on when, where or how he even caught the fish. It's okay because we love the photo! Right: Jim Aitken with his guide holding a 24-inch rainbow trout from the Naknek River in Alaska. It was Aitken's largest from last summer's fishing adventure to Katmai National Park. You can read his story on page 7.



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