



The Evening

Hatch

The Newsletter of the Michigan Fly Fishing Club

January 2024

Michigan Grayling



Our Beloved Species Returns to the Upper Peninsula

Michigan's legendary grayling has returned to the cold waters in the Upper Peninsula and will be available to anglers beginning on the last Saturday of this April.

Read about the amazing effort to re-introduce the species on [page 7](#).

To MFFC member Jay Labban, winter steelheading on the Pere Marquette has a Zen quality to it. Enjoy his recent trip with the Metro West Steelheaders on [page 6](#).

Who had more fun tying flies at MFFC booth at the Ultimate Fishing Show; the instructors or the children that left with a Woolly Bugger they

tied and the possibility of catching a fish with it this summer?

You would be surprised to see who was smiling more. Turn to the photo essay on [page 5](#) to find out.

This fall MFFC will be offering a new outing to the famed Driftless Area of Wisconsin. Get all the details and the costs on [page 2](#).

Finally, the 2024 Club elections are fast approaching, and the MFFC is looking for members to fill various positions on the board, [page 4](#). The Club is also searching for a new editor for *The Evening Hatch*, [page 8](#).

Michigan Fly Fishing Club Calendar

1/17/24 Board Meeting, Virtual
1/24/24 Activity Meeting, Spence Vanderhoof, Fly Tying

2/7/24 Speaker Meeting, Lance Nelson of Gates AuSable Lodge, Favorite Flies on the AuSable

2/14/24 Board Meeting, Virtual
2/18-23/24 White River Trip, Cotter, AR
2/21/24 Activity Meeting, Tom Sewruck
2/23-25/24 Outdoorama, Suburban Collection Showplace, Novi

3/6/24 Activities Meeting, Scott Freeburg
3/9-10/24 Midwest Fly Fishing Expo, Macomb Community College
3/13/24 Board Meeting, Virtual
3/20/24 Speaker Meeting, TBA

4/3/24 Speaker Meeting, TBA
4/6/24 Trout Tune-up, Huron River, Walled Lake Outdoor Education Center
4/10/24 Board Meeting, Virtual
4/17/24 Activity Meeting, Joe Sprys
4/25-28/24 Opening Weekend at Riverview Lodge, Grayling
4/27/24 Trout Opening Day & Remembrance, Gates Au Sable Lodge

5/1/24 Activity Meeting, Dan Walker
5/4/24 Youth School, Tollgate Farm
5/6-8/24 Old Member's Outing, Wawa Sum Lodge, Grayling
5/8-11/24 Dick Schot New Member's Outing, Wawa Sum Lodge, Grayling
5/8/24 Board Meeting, Virtual
5/15/24 MFFC Club Banquet, Italian American Banquet Center, Livonia, speaker Dirk Fischbach

Meetings are held at Clarenceville Middle School, 20210 Middlebelt, Livonia.

MFFC Memembers Heading to Driftless Area This Fall

This fall MFFC will be offering a new outing to the famed Driftless Area of Wisconsin. This trip will be staged Sept. 29 through Oct. 3 and coordinated by Jerry Deputat.

The Driftless Area is a 24,000 sq-mile region spread across Southwest Wisconsin, Southeast Minnesota, Northeast Iowa, and Northwest Illinois that was untouched by glaciers that occurred 10,000 years ago.

It's a topography characterized by steeply forested hills, deeply carved river valleys, spring-fed waterfalls, and some of the coldest trout streams in the country.

The area is not the recipient of the leveling and the typical glacier deposits (salt, clay, sand, gravel, boulders, etc.) known as "drift" and hence the name "driftless." An estimated 85% of the driftless area resides in Wisconsin. The central hub of the fly fishing activity lies in the vicinity of Viroqua, which serves as the Grayling of Wisconsin.

The trip will be limited to 12 people. Projected costs per person are \$350 for five nights lodging at Nature Nooks Retreat (www.nature-



Jerry Deputat and his guide hike through Wisconsin's Driftless Area on the way to the trout stream they planned to fish.

nooksretreat.com) and \$150 for food, which will cover five breakfasts, four brown bag lunches, and two dinners.

Other costs will include a Wisconsin fishing license, a guide if one is needed (highly recommended for the first day) and gas and tolls for the trip to the Driftless Area, an eight-hour drive from Detroit through Chicago.

A deposit of \$100 payable to Michigan Fly Fishing Club will hold your spot. Mail your payment to Jerry Deputat, 9250 North Rushton Rd., South Lyon, MI 48178. Once a group is established, a meeting will be held to review more specifics.

For more information contact Deputat by phone at (248-798-3089), or email him at membership@mffc.org.

2024 Sturgeon Season Set For Feb. 3

The 2024 lake sturgeon fishing season on Black Lake in Cheboygan County, Michigan, will begin at 8 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 3. How long it lasts is anybody's guess.

Lake sturgeon rehabilitation efforts in Black Lake over the last two decades have been a successful collaboration between the DNR, Sturgeon for Tomorrow, tribal agencies, Michigan State University and Tower-Kleber Limited Partnership.

This population has increased in the past 20 years due to lake sturgeon rearing and stocking efforts, research and protection of spawning adults, and this trend is expected to continue.

The harvest limit for the 2024 season on Black Lake is six lake sturgeon. Officials will close the season when one of two scenarios occurs:

- The sixth fish is harvested.
- Five fish have been harvested at the end of any fishing day.

Fishing hours are 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. each day of the season. The season will end either at 2 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 7, or when one of the above scenarios is met, at



A sturgeon from the 2023 season at Black Lake.

which point anglers will be notified via text message and on the ice by DNR personnel that they must immediately stop fishing for lake sturgeon.

So far this year, marginal ice conditions have existed on regional lakes, including Black Lake. DNR staff will notify participants by email if procedures change due to ice conditions but the Black Lake sturgeon season starting date will not change.

Anyone who wants to participate this year must register online by Feb. 2. Get more registration and season information at Michigan.gov/Sturgeon.

Michigan Fly Fishing Club

Business

Michigan Fly Fishing Club Board of Directors Meeting

December 13, 2023

Roll Call

Meeting called to order 7:33 p.m.

Present: S. Hunter; K. Lipp; J. Deputat; B. Green; J. Aukee; N. Tabaka; J. Bada; J. Eriksson; B. Strachan.

Absent: J. Aitken.

Visitors: Scott Freeburg.

Approval of Agenda – Agenda from 12/13/23 approved.

Approval of Minutes – Meeting-minutes from 11/13/23.

Officer's Report

President: S. Hunter

- Election committee formed includes: Scott Freeburg, Norm Tabaka, John Aukee, Chris Hunter, Spencer Vanderhoof
- Sybil & Jim DuFresne will be stepping down as Hatch editors in May
- How to check and fix bounced back emails
- Jerry Deputat included on membership renewal form a place for people to verify their contact information is correct
- Jon Bada will provide bounced email contact lists to Membership chair Jerry Deputat going forward

Vice President: K. Lipp

- Requested Hatch SOP.
- We should look for replacement editor
- Advertisement for replacement to be placed in The Hatch

Treasurer: B. Green

- Current Month Treasurer's Report accepted. We're still on forecasted budget. Close to year 2022.

Corresp. Secretary: J. Bada

- Total number of eBlasts: Month-

ly meeting announcements – 4; Special news/announcements – 1; Hatch Publications – 1

- Number of contacts: 373, with an open rate of 69%
- Speakers: Todd Schotts (December); Jim DuFresne (January); Lance Evans of Gates (February); TBD (March, April); Dirk Fischbach (May); TBD (June, July, August)

Membership: J. Deputat

- 508 renewal letters mailed July 24, 2023
- Current active members 407; 47 former members 2022; 54 former members 2021
- 407 members surveys mailed; 135 surveys returned
- As of December 11, 2023: 83% of members have paid their dues, 83% by check

New Business

- Scott Freeburg presented MFFC audit report results. The Audit Committee found the club's financial records true and accurate and recommends report acceptance. The Audit Committee commends the treasurer for record clarity and accuracy.
- The Audit Committee consisted of: Scott Freeburg (Chair); Bill MaGee and Tom Mogford.
- Jerry Deputat started discussion on how to reach out to new members to keep them engaged in Club activities.
- New vendors coming to the expo. Vendors coming back from pandemic time.
- WhatsApp discussion. How do we better utilize it?

Old Business

- Volunteers needed to support Zooming meetings.

Adjournment: 9:12 p.m.

2023-2024 Officers

President:
Sybil Hunter
president@mffc.org

Vice President:
Kevin Lipp
kjlipp@gmail.com

Corresponding Secretary:
Jon Bada
correspondence@mffc.org

Recording Secretary:
John Eriksson
recordingsecretary@mffc.org

Treasurer
Barry Green
treasurer@mffc.org

Membership
Jerry Deputat
membership@mffc.org

Immediate Past President:
Bruce Strachan
bruced0402@gmail.com

At-Large Directors

Jim Aitken
dznvmm@gmail.com

John Aukee
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Norm Tabaka
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Hatch Editors

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

Jim DuFresne Production
kidven@aol.com

Webmaster

Sybil Hunter Club Webmaster
sybilsypemail@gmail.com



Sure it's winter here but not in New Zealand where MFFC member Dan Finstad recently enjoyed balmy weather and outstanding fly fishing for browns and rainbows.

Best Bargain in the Outdoors: the DNR Recreation Passport

Starting next year, the resident Recreation Passport vehicle fee will increase from \$13 to \$14, while the cost for motorcycles will not change. The nonresident Recreation Passport fee annual pass also will increase from \$39 to \$40.

The Recreation Passport is valid for 12 months when purchased at the time of license plate registration renewal through the Secretary of State. There's a \$5 convenience fee when the passport is not purchased through the Secretary of State and is instead purchased at a state park or recreation area.

The passport provides year-round vehicle access to 103 Michigan state parks and recreation areas, 1,300-plus state-managed boating access sites, 140 state forest campgrounds, and parking at thousands of miles of trails and other outdoor spaces. Many of these facilities provide access to some of the finest trout streams in Michigan, including the Upper Manistee, Holy Waters and Boardman River.

Approximately 97% of state parks funding is generated by user fees, including the Recreation Passport, and royalty revenues. Just 3% comes from Michigan's General Fund tax dollars.



Wanted: Few Good Members to serve on the MFFC Board of Directors

By the MFFC Election Committee

We need your help!

The 2024 Club board elections are fast approaching and will be held during the first meeting in April (Wednesday, April 3). Please consider supporting the MFFC as an officer to the board. You will be glad you did.

Needless to say, the club does not run itself. The board is an integral part of our success. These are the people who make the daily decisions that keep MFFC functioning and on track as one of the most respected fly-fishing groups in the nation.

Board Meetings are held on the 2nd Wednesday of each month and are conducted via Zoom meetings. The board of directors consists of 10 members, of which seven positions are up for election:

President

Vice President

Treasurer

Corresponding Secretary

Recording Secretary

Membership Chairman

Director At Large

Most are 1-year term commitments with 2-year term limits, except Director At Large, which is for a 2-year term and 4-year term limit.

Please contact a current board member or anyone from our election committee to volunteer as a candidate or if you have questions regarding the available positions.

Election Committee Members: chair Scott Freeburg, Spencer Vanderhoof, Norm Tabaka, John Aukee, Chris Hunter.

MFFC Books Riverview Lodge for Trout Opening Weekend

There are still openings for the Riverview Lodge Trout Opening Weekend 2024 event, a mere three months away. For \$255 per person, you can stay in the Riverview Lodge with other Club members. There are also cabins available.

There is Jan. 26 deadline to register for the event. For more information or to register, contact Bruce Strachan at 248-346-6391 or email bruced0402@gmail.com.

Time to Submit MFFC Conservation Funding Requests

We are happy to report that the Club is once again accepting Conservation Funding Requests.

If you have a favorite project or know of a worthy effort needing conservation funds, please contact Committee Chair Kevin Lipp at 734-837-1100 or kjlipp@gmail.com to get a copy of the Request form.

Completed Requests for Funding are due to Lipp by Feb. 7, 2024. If you have any questions please contact Kevin Lipp.

Teaching the Ways of the Woolly Bugger at the Ultimate Show



In mid-January, MFFC members gathered at the Ultimate Fishing Show at the Suburban Collection Showplace and sent home hundreds of kids with a Woolly Bugger, the possibility of catching a fish with it, and the knowledge to tie another one if they do.

And hopefully, the desire to take up fly fishing and eventually become MFFC members. Parents as well as their children.

During the four-day event, MFFC members tied with almost 300 kids, received strong interest from at least 20 parents to join the club, and talked to a steady stream of show visitors who were already planning to come to the Midwest Fly Fishing Expo or expressed interest in it for the first time.

"I want to recognize our great cadre of volunteers," said Jim Aiken. "There were 68 time slots for members to work as a greeter or as a fly tyer



Above left: At the recent Ultimate Fishing Show kids were tying and taking home Woolly Buggers for free as part of a MFFC outreach program. Above MFFC member Mark Stephens works with a young tyer at the Ultimate Fishing Show. Left: Three happy fly tyers with the Woolly Buggers they tied at the MFFC booth.



helping kids tie their first and sometimes second or third Woolly Bugger."

The enthusiasm of the MFFC instructors, the students, some as young as 4 years old, and their parents was infectious.

Many members continued beyond their scheduled time slot, and others stopped by to help out during busy periods of the day.

"It was great!" said Dave Oakley on Saturday. "I had fun tying today. Five hours non-stop."

Tying in the booth on Saturday afternoon was the current MFFC Club president and four past presidents; all part of the seven-wise effort to keep up with kids lining up around the booth.

Now onto Outdoorama. "We need volunteers to help kids tie a Woolly Bugger and promote our upcoming EXPO next March," said Aiken.

The MFFC will also staff an activity booth at Outdoorama to teach kids how to tie Woolly Buggers or guide them through fly rod casting fundamentals on an indoor pond.

Outdoorama is Feb.22-25 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and is also staged at the Suburban Collection Showplace, 46100 Grand River Ave. in Novi.

To sign up for a session go volunteersignup.org/H4ERD. For more information contact Jim Aitken (dznvmm@comcast.net).



Above: Glen Easterbrook, who is usually teaching adults at the New Member Outing, joined the MFFC staff at the Ultimate Fishing Show to spend an afternoon helping young anglers to tie a Woolly Bugger. Right: Four-year-old Layne with his Woolly Bugger. Left: Iris proudly holds up her fly.





Zen Fishing

On the Pere Marquette on a Cold Winter Day

By Jay Labban

As a fly fishing guy, I have always enjoyed the Zen aspect of the sport.

On Dec. 2, I joined some of my friends with Metro West Steelheaders for their last fishing tournament of the year on the Pere Marquette River.

I had been looking forward to this trip to get away from work and enjoy northern Michigan. My goal for the day was to prove to myself that I can effectively Euro Nymph Michigan waters.

I am a new convert to Euro Nymphing. Last summer, Jon Bada and I used it fishing the Madison with Mike Loebel of Madison River Outfitters. I loved the simplicity of it. Watch the sighter (i.e., strike indicator).

If it goes down, set the hook!

Back to the PM and the fishing tournament...After a healthy breakfast, I arrived at the Green Cottage around 10 a.m. It was a cold morning; snow covered the ground. I put on my waders to head down to the river.

The view was just amazing! I crossed the water and started fishing from the north side. The water was very clear. After several tries, I still had no bite.

I noticed a pool to my left, with water accelerating in a shallow gravel area followed by slow, deeper water. I cast upstream, waiting for the nymphs to sink, and then I started slightly leading my set-up while watching the sighter.

I got my first bite as the nymphs crossed the pool's deep section. I set the hook and ended up with my first rain-



Black and white and shades of gray; a cold winter day on the Pere Marquette River. Our Jay Labban (below) joins the Metro West Steelheaders for their final fishing tournament of the year and discovers the peace and tranquility of fishing when you can't feel your fingers or toes.



bow trout of the day. I was so happy! So proud of myself!

Fishing for another hour, I switched to the Clay Banks, where I caught two more rainbow trout. One was just below the stairs, and the other about 100 yards upstream.

Around 3 pm, I headed back to my truck, then to the rendezvous point to exchange notes and fish stories and have dinner with the club.

Several fish were caught that day. Three 8 to 10-inch rainbows on my fly rod. One 6.5-pound steelhead caught on a center pin that was set around the Maple Leaf area. The largest fish, which was 11.9 pounds, was caught downriver on an orange plug behind a drift boat.

I shared the photos of my fish. A friend indicated that they were possibly steelhead smolts.

What do you think? Will these migrate to Lake Michigan, lose their spots, and become steelheads? Or stay in the PM and keep their rainbow colors?

Fly fishing in the winter can be challenging. With the proper clothing, it is very doable. The crowds are gone, and the scenery can be spectacular, like what I experienced in early December.

We are so blessed to have so many great rivers to fly fish, recharge our batteries, and enjoy the Zen moments of the outdoors.



An eight-inch steelhead smolt fooled by Euro nymphing on the Pere Marquette River.



Grayling! *Milestone reached in Arctic grayling reintroduction effort*

By the Michigan DNR

In early November, three Michigan lakes were stocked with Arctic grayling.

These fish are surplus from the establishment of a grayling brood stock as part of the Michigan Arctic Grayling Initiative. The initiative has been underway since Little River Band of Ottawa Indians and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources began a partnership aimed at reintroducing this iconic species to Michigan waters in 2015.

The full partnership now includes nearly 50 stakeholder and partner groups, along with the general and angling public.

Four hundred grayling were stocked at Alger County's West Johns Lake, 300 at Penegor Lake in Houghton County and nearly 1,300 in Manistee County's Pine Lake.

The fish were taken from the Marquette State Fish Hatchery in Marquette and represented year classes from 2019 and 2021.

"When starting a year-class of brood stock, you always start with more than you will need in the end to allow for potential losses to disease, mechanical issues, et cetera," said Ed Eisch, assistant chief of the DNR's Fisheries Division. "Such losses never materialized with the two year-classes that were stocked. The numbers needed to be thinned down to levels that are safe to carry into the future at the Marquette hatchery."

With the third year-class recently clearing their requisite health inspections, it is highly likely that there will be additional surplus available for stocking again next fall.

The Arctic grayling, called "Nmégos" by indigenous people, was an important connection to nature as it provided a substantial food source for the Anishinabek people's subsistence.

This connection has been lost for the Little River Band of Ottawa

Indians community and the Anishinabek people through the extirpation of the Arctic grayling from Michigan. The arctic grayling reintroduction initiative, with the supporting partners, provides a way to reconnect the Anishinabek people with their culture and heritage.

"There is a strong Tribal interest in reclaiming what was lost. To recapture what has been lost takes more effort, but as a



A grayling caught on a fly. In November, three Michigan lakes were stocked with Arctic grayling.

Tribe, Little River Band of Ottawa Indians is committed to this project because it is the right thing to do," said Larry Romanelli, Ogema Little River Band of Ottawa Indians.

At the October meeting of the Michigan Natural Resources Commission, fishing regulations were modified so that it is now legal for an angler to attempt to catch, but not harvest, Arctic grayling.

"We're excited to be able to provide this opportunity for Michigan's anglers to try to catch an Arctic grayling this early in the reintroduction initiative," said DNR Fisheries Division Chief Randy Claramunt. "Anglers need to be aware, though, that any grayling that they catch must be released. They cannot be harvested."

The lakes the grayling were stocked in are open to fishing from the last Saturday in April until Oct. 31.

Arctic grayling are known to be susceptible to handling stress when caught by recreational anglers. Anglers are encouraged to use single, barbless hooks and to allow the fish to remain in the water when taking them off the hook.



DNR fisheries biologist George Madison empties a bucket of grayling into Penegor Lake in November.

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Anglers, Tribes & DNR Work to Return Our Prized Species

Continued from page 7

Actions such as these will reduce the chances that the released fish will die.

Now that the three lots of future broodstock have been developed, the Little River Band, the DNR and other partner groups are eyeing spring of 2025 as the likely timeline for the first eggs to go into remote site incubators.

While it would be great to start earlier, females of one year class need to be spawned with males from a different year class. This results in the most genetically fit fish possible by avoiding the potential of crossing siblings.

Work continues by several partner groups to collect stream data to determine which watershed will be selected to receive the first eggs in this initiative.

Visit Michigan Arctic Grayling Initiative (migrayling.org) to learn more about this effort.

MFFC Searching for a New Editor for The Evening Hatch

MFFC is looking for a volunteer to serve as editor of The Evening Hatch, the Club's monthly newsletter.

The final edition for the current editors will be the May 2024 issue, and then the publication will be on its summer hiatus until the September issue.

Members interested in the position should ideally have some desktop publishing experience and the software to produce an 8 to 12-page newsletter that is published September through May.

If interested, contact Sybil Hunter at evening.hatch.mffc@gmail.com.



A close-up view of an Arctic grayling is shown just before the fish was to be released into an Upper Peninsula lake in November.



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