



The Evening

# Hatch

The Newsletter of the Michigan Fly Fishing Club

May 2024

## Drizzle, Sunshine & Hennies



### *MFFC Members Experienced an Entire Season in 2024 Opener*

We experienced almost everything during the 2024 Trout Opener. Rain, sunshine, a few bugs and a lot of bloody Marys.

On **page 5**, you can read a recap of that special day and Jim Dufresne's thoughts on when a raindrop is a trout feeding.

Or enjoy a photo essay on **Page 6** of the MFFC Remembrance Event at the Gates of Au Sable Lodge.

On **page 2** is Sybil Hunter's final President's Message column on what a wonderful experience that position turned out to be.

The FFI Great Lakes Council is staging a Fly Casting Development Course

at the Grayling Fish Hatchery in June and you can get all the details of this special event on **page 7**.

One of the most important missions of the MFFC is to spread the love of fly fishing and the Club accomplishes that through its various schools and classes. Check out who we're teaching to cast on **pages 9-10**.

The Michigan DNR collects a lot of eggs so we can catch a lot of steelhead and walleye. See how they do it on **pages 11-12**.

Finally you have to see Greg Pollina's tying room on **page 3**. It has to be the neatest tying bench in the Club.

### *Michigan Fly Fishing Club* **Calendar**

**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  
**5/16-19/24** Smallmouth Outing, Blue Spruce Motel, Port Austin

**6/5/24** Speaker Meeting, Andrew, Motor City Anglers, Northville Community Center  
**6/8/24** GLC Fly Casting Development, Grayling Fish Hatchery

**7/10/24** Speaker Meeting Matt of Nu-Canoe, Northville Community Center  
**7/17-20/24** WaWaSum Family Outing  
**7/20/24** MFFC Club Picnic, Multi Lakes Conservation Club, Commerce  
**7/27/24 to 8/3/24** First week: Yellowstone-Montana Trip, Driftwaters Resort

**8/3-10/24** Second week: Yellowstone-Montana Trip, Driftwaters Resort  
**8/7/24** Speaker Meeting - TBD  
**8/10-17/24** Third week: Yellowstone-Montana Trip, Driftwaters Resort

**9/28/24** GLC Muskegon River Spey Fest, Henning Park, Newaygo  
**9/29-10/3/24** Wisconsin Driftless Outing, Nature Nooks Retreat

The summer Meeting schedule will begin June 5 and meetings will be held at the Northville Community Center 303 W. Main

## The President's Message...

# A Changing of the Guard & an Emotional Night I'll Never Forget

*Editor's Note: The following are Sybil Hunter's opening remarks to her final meeting as the MFFC President, the first woman to hold the position in the club's 50-year history. When she finished, every member in the room stood and clapped.*

*"I was in shock," Sybil said. "I stood there absolutely floored when I realized everybody was giving me a standing ovation."*

It has been a privilege to serve as the President of the MFFC.

We are an organization of around 400 Club members spread out all over the State, with a few members around the country in places including Georgia, Indiana, Texas and Florida.

It was a blessing and a gift to get to know Club members better over the last two years.

Thank you for all your input, support, and even the pushback - it is through those avenues that our organization grows and develops.

Remember when I was Corresponding Secretary? How when a microphone was put in my hands, I couldn't talk? Yeah, well - you created a monster.

During my tenure we have unfortunately lost a number of Club members breaking our hearts along the way....we have supported others in their healing, and we have gained new colleagues with which we enjoy new fly fishing adventures.

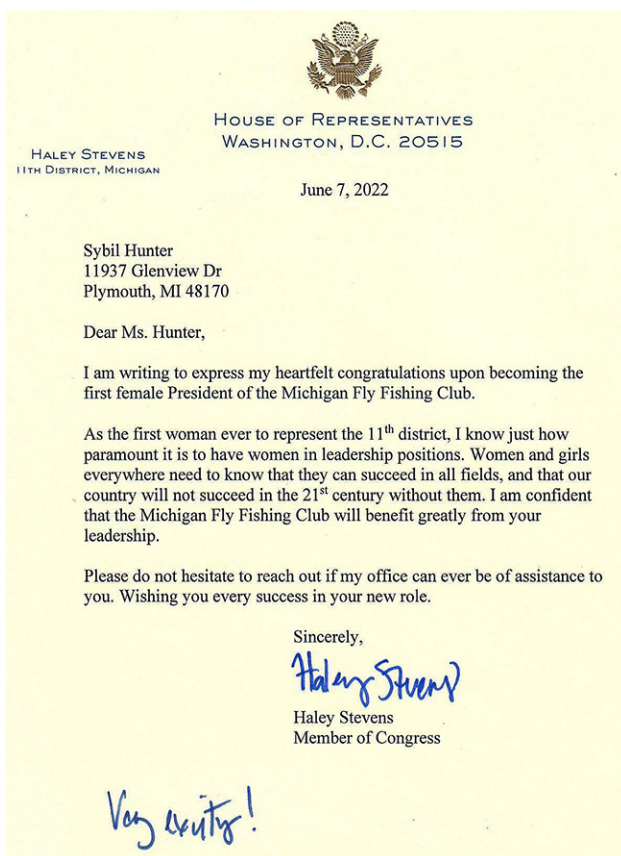
Our organization welcomes everyone, sometimes too much, sometimes not enough. But regardless of all other factors - career, ability level, the car you drive, where you live.... We have one thing that binds us all together. We fly fish.

I am proud to be a part of that, and to have served as President.

I thank and appreciate every one of you, whether we just met, whether we've known each other for years, whether we've parted ways.. only for our paths to cross again, and whether or not I've screwed up your name...



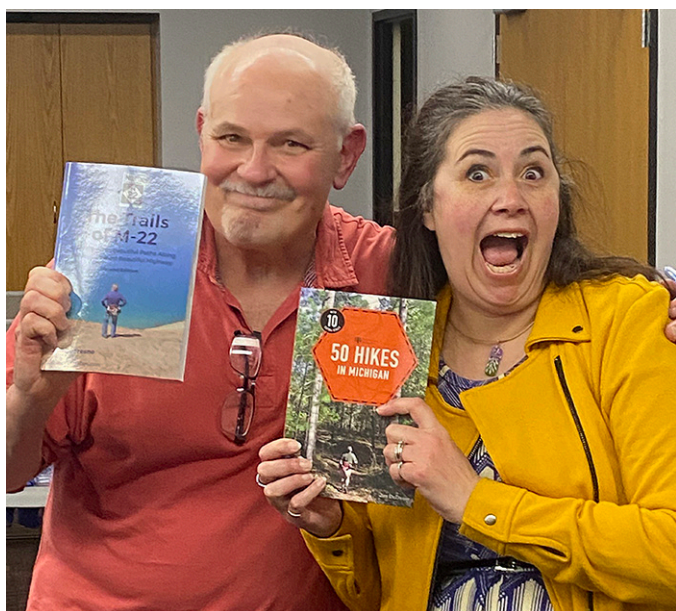
Sybil Hunter



One of the many congratulatory letters Sybil received after becoming MFFC president.

*Very exciting!*

I wish you all, tight lines.  
It's been an honor to serve, as President of the MFFC.



Jim DuFresne and Sybil Hunter at one of Jim's author events this winter. The pair have been co-editors of *The Evening Hatch* since 2020 but are taking a well-deserved sabbatical from the newsletter after this issue.

## Protect Your Favorite Trout Streams

Michigan's trout streams are under increasing threat from harmful species that affect habitat and food sources for trout and other fish. Both didymo (rock snot) and New Zealand mudsnail can be moved to new locations on waders, nets and gear. To protect our waters, be prepared and take the time to decontaminate before moving to a new river or stream.

New Zealand mudsnail populations are known to be present in the Au Sable, Boardman, Grass, Pere Marquette, Pine and Upper Manistee rivers in Michigan. Mudsnails can survive out of water for several days. Because of their small size, they are easily transported on boats, anchors and fishing gear such as waders and nets.

To avoid spreading these damaging species, always Clean, Drain and Dry your waders, boots, boats and other gear between trips or before moving to a new body of water.

Disinfectants with documented effectiveness for these species include:

Products such as Formula 409 Antibacterial All-Purpose Cleaner applied to waders and gear.

Bleach: Apply a solution of one-half cup (4 fluid ounces) bleach to 5 gallons of water and let stand for 20 minutes.

Virkon Aquatic: Apply a solution of 20 grams per liter of water and let stand for 20 minutes.

# Welcome New MFFC Members; Time to Go Fishing

Boy, are we growing fast. Look who joined MFFC since the Midwest Fishing Expo last March.

Please reach out to our new members and welcome them. Contact information is available on the current membership roster, or from Jerry Deputat at [membership@mffc.org](mailto:membership@mffc.org).

New MFFC Members this year:

- |                                       |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Jack Binder<br><i>Shelby Township</i> | Matt Dalton<br><i>West Bloomfield</i> | Benjamin Lake<br><i>Ann Arbor</i>       |
| Matt Bollinger<br><i>Kalamazoo</i>    | Andrew Draper<br><i>Grosse Pointe</i> | Frank Lalone<br><i>Sterling Heights</i> |
| Michael Bono<br><i>Royal Oak</i>      | Richard Fanco<br><i>Livonia</i>       | Michael Latka<br><i>Jackson</i>         |
| John Carlisle<br><i>Novi</i>          | Carol Fink<br><i>West Bloomfield</i>  | Timothy Law<br><i>Essex, Ontario</i>    |
| Larry Carr<br><i>Grosse Pte Park</i>  | Paul Frost<br><i>Trenton</i>          | Jacob Mack<br><i>Rochester Hills</i>    |
| Sean Conway<br><i>Royal Oak</i>       | Peter Jarrus<br><i>Berkley</i>        | Steve Marciniak<br><i>Northville</i>    |
| Craig Cutler<br><i>Royal Oak</i>      | Gary Jones<br><i>Ypsilanti</i>        | Marc McGrew<br><i>St Clair Shores</i>   |

- Logan Miller  
*Grosse Pte Woods*  
Shawn Molloy  
*Farmington*  
Joseph Obrien  
*Charlotte*  
Dennis O'Brien  
*Durand*  
Michael Orzol  
*Southgate*  
Dave Pinchok  
*Grand Blanc*  
Jan Rief  
*Northville*  
Robert Roller  
*Huntington*  
David Rose  
*Detroit*  
Griffin Schager  
*Pinckney*

- Frank Seipp  
*Peoria, IL*  
Walt Siklich  
*Bloomfield*  
Melvin Siler  
*Pontiac*  
Brian Talpos  
*Rochester Hills*  
Jane Troutner  
*Carsonville*  
Brandon West  
*Farmington*  
Robert Wilmoth  
*Wellston*  
Jordan Wolf  
*Ann Arbor*  
Tony Wolf  
*Sterling Heights*  
Ron Woodall  
*Utica*

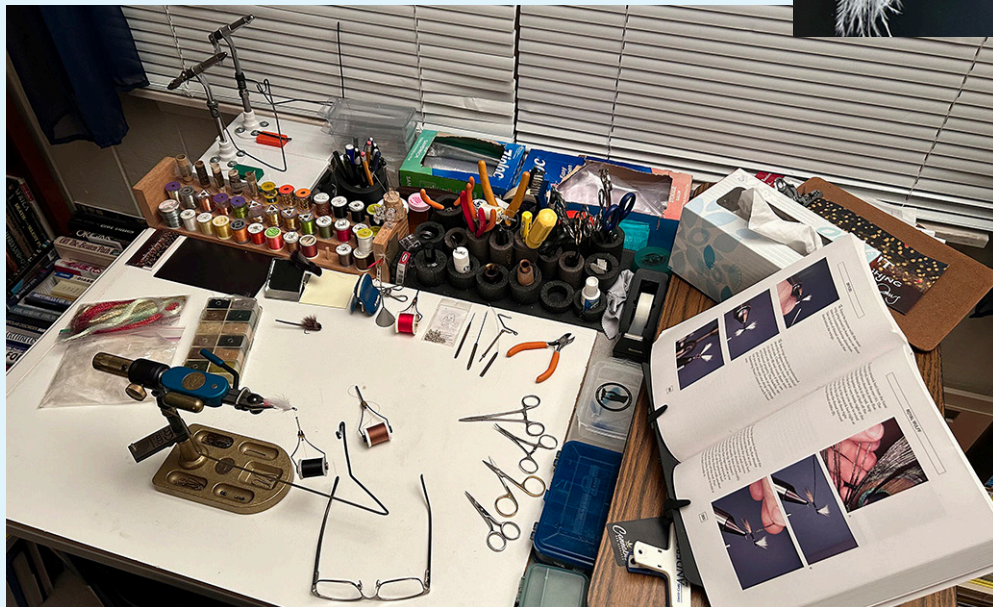
- Sandra Mrachina  
*Rochester Hills*  
Thomas Papandrea  
*Chesterfield*  
William Lukaskiewicz  
*Manistee*  
Timothy Lienemann  
*Fraser*  
Walter Kotlarczyk  
*Livonia*  
Jerald Gerber  
*Whitehouse, OH*  
Jeffrey Gillespie  
*Bloomfield Hills*  
Lenny Wroblewski  
*Byron*  
Rick Rothenbuhler  
*Grosse Pte Park*  
Samantha Queen  
*Warren*

## Fly Tyer's Desk of the Month

This month's featured tying room belongs to Greg Polina. It could be the neatest tying bench in the Club. Here's Greg in his own words about his special place in the house:

"I do my fly-tying in my upstairs room. It has a big double window on one end, and that's where my table is. Next to it is a large storage unit with many drawers where I keep my feathers and furs. It's quite comfortable and I love the natural lighting that I get. The windows face south so I always get light.

"These are my Christmas flies. They're kind of goofy-looking, and I'm pretty sure they wouldn't catch any fish, but they have caught a few family members!"



# Michigan Fly Fishing Club

# Business

## Michigan Fly Fishing Club Board of Directors Meeting

April 10, 2024

### Roll Call

Meeting called to order 7:29 p.m.

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

*Absent:* J. Aitken;

*Visitors:* T. DeFaux

**Approval of Agenda** – Agenda from 4/10/24 approved

**Approval of Minutes** – Meeting-minutes for 3/14/24 approved.

### Officer's Report

**President:** S. Hunter

- A HUGE thanks to the Expo volunteers.
- Hatch is under construction.
- Note from Casting Committee uploaded for Board review
- Mark Hendricks to be March or April 2025 speaker, doing a casting demonstration in the gym

**Vice President:** K. Lipp

Nothing to report.

**Corresponding Secretary:** J. Bada

- Total number of eblasts: 5
- Monthly meeting announcements: 4
- Special News/Announcements: 0
- Hatch publication: 1
- 363 Contacts
- 73% open rate
- Upcoming speakers: April – Steve Haywood, HFF Custom Rods; May banquet – Dirk Fischbach; June – Andrew, Motor City Anglers; July – Matt Dalton, Nu Canoe; August – TBD
- During the expo got 3 speaker commitments for fall 2024
- Misc. accomplishments: renewed annual Constant Con-

tact subscription; Working with HFF Custom Rods for flyrod building classes in June 2024

**Treasurer:** B. Green

- Treasurer's report accepted.
- 2024-2025 FY budget finalized

**Membership:** J. Deputat

- Total members at fiscal year ending July 31, 2023: 407
- 504 renewal letters mailed July 31, 2024
- Currently 411 active members
- 47 former members 2022
- 54 former members 2021
- Member surveys were mailed to 407 current members
- As of 4/10/24: 411 members paid their dues, 80% by check or cast
- 136 surveys returned (33%)
- 77 new members
- 40 new members signed up at the expo. AWESOME job promoting the Club

### Events

- Members school 4/13
- Boy Scout School 4/20
- Trout Opener 4/27
- Youth School 5/4

### New Business

- Kevin requesting job description from each Board members. Post on shared drive.
- Kevin requesting to put in request for your event budget for the upcoming year

### Old Business

- Jim DuFresne and Sybil looking for editor(s) for The Evening Hatch.
- Member retention
- New Member Guide was converted from a PDF to WORD by John Aukee

**Adjournment:** 8:52 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**

*j.aukee@yahoo.com*

**Norm Tabaka**

*ntabaka@gmail.com*

## Hatch Editors

**Sybil Hunter** Submissions

*evening.hatch.mffc@gmail.com*

**Jim DuFresne** Production

*kidven@aol.com*

## Webmaster

**Sybil Hunter** Club Webmaster

*admin@mffc.org*



# A Season in a Day *The Opener Had Rain, Sunshine, Bugs & Bloody Marys*



*A fly angler steps in the Holy Waters of the Au Sable River at Keystone Landing on the opener of the trout season.*

## By Jim DuFresne

At Louie's Landing, Cody Duims-tra was sitting in his car, eating a cold breakfast burrito while watching the rain splatter on his windshield.

At 4 a.m. the trout angler began opening day with a two-hour drive from his home near Grand Rapids to Grayling. It was drizzling when he arrived at Burton's Landing so he made a quick run into town for that burrito. When he returned, the rain had stopped, and the colors of an early morning sunrise were peeking through the trees.

Cody was in his waders and on the water in no time at all. "It was really beautiful this morning," he said.

Until the rain returned a half hour later and he decided to switch locations. Thus the cold breakfast burrito.

"I'm going to get out; I have all day," said the determined angler.

The rain became a drizzle for the MFFC Remembrance at Gates Au Sable Lodge, but members still enjoyed a Bloody Mary while huddling under the tent. By the time Al Haxton began the memorial event to those who had tak-

en their final cast, the drizzle was gone, and in the early afternoon, the sun was peaking out through patches of blue.

Opening Day 2024 was worth waiting out the wet.

Most participants—from fly shop attendants and guides to anglers eating cold burritos in their cars—agreed that the conditions before and after that magical day made for some of the best dry fly fishing in years.

The first Hendricksons were spotted on April 5 when the stream tempera-

*Continued on page 6*

## *Is That a Trout Feeding or a Raindrop Falling?*

On the first day of trout season, I was chatting with a couple of fly fishermen I had just met on the banks of the Holy Waters at Keystone Landing.

We were watching a sporadic rainfall toss large drops into the river when one of them asked, "How do you know if those rings in the middle are raindrops or a trout feeding?"

On this drizzly early morning that was the ultimate question. Rain or trout? Do we fish or not?

We watched the raindrops falling off shoreline trees and then studied the rings in the middle of the Au Sable. It was hard to tell the difference.

Later, I brought up that quandary

with Chris Hunter at the MFFC Opening Day event. He suspected that the rings of a trout rising to the surface are more elongated in their configuration.

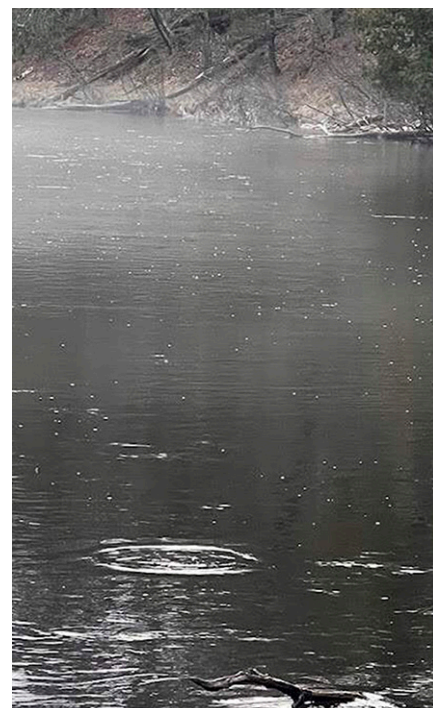
"A raindrop falling straight into the river forms rings that spread out as perfect circles," Chris surmised.

But back at the river, we realized that the rings in the middle were reappearing every so often, almost exactly in the same location.

"That's a trout feeding," said one of the anglers and they stepped into the water to find out if it was or not. But not me. I saw it was 9:10 a.m. and Rob Bulszewicz was already mixing his renown Bloody Marys for MFFC members back at Gates.



*Jim DuFresne*



*Raindrop or a trout?*

# This is How We Celebrate The Trout Opener!



## MFFC Bloody Marys: A Meal in a Plastic Cup

Above: Who's behind the bar? Who else? Rob Bulszewicz is mixing his renown Bloody Marys on Opening morning. This year the drink was a feast in a cup with two types of cheese, a slice of salami, olive, celery and a hot pepper. Right: incoming MFFC President Kevin Lipp loved it!



Above: Not everything at the MFFC Remembrance Event was doughnuts and sweet rolls. Look hard and you can see fresh fruit.



Left: Bill Cusumano and Bill Zadorsky (center) step out from under the tent when the rain stops at Gates Au Sable Lodge on Opening morning.

Above Left: John Hunter, Chris Hunter and MFFC President Sybil Hunter gear up to go fishing.

## 2024 Trout Opener; A Day of Rain, Sunshine and Bugs

Continued from page 5

ture began hitting 55 degrees, which is when a trout's metabolism wakes up from the winter. The Hennies were still around on Opening weekend. The following week, anglers were greeted with a mix of light and dark Hendricksons, black caddis, mahoganies, and even a small bouquet of stoneflies.

Light snow this winter and an early spring resulted in flows below their mean for this time of year on most trout streams. All reaches of the Au Sable and Manistee Rivers were in fine shape, and the wading was more than manageable.

In their boxes, anglers were carrying Adams and Borchers for the Hendricksons hatches, blue-winged olives, and black stoneflies, as well as black caddis in case they appear on the water and small streamers in black and olive.

"To make it all even better, a couple of mild summers and a very mild winter have left a fine distribution of age classes in the Au Sable" Andy Partlo wrote on May 3 in the *Old Au Sable Fly Shop River Report*. "We're seeing the small brook trout from last year as well as some of the 10 to 14 inch and upper teen-sized age classes of brown trout."

In other words, hit the water whenever you can this month. Whether it's raining or not.



# A New Cast *FFI Council Stages Casting School at an Old Hatchery*

## By FFI Great Lakes Council

By the looks of the Clarenceville Middle School gym on most Club activity nights, interest in fly casting is surging.

Whether its beginners trying master the basic technique of casting or more-seasoned anglers working on their sense of timing for the infamous double-haul dance, lines often are whistling from one side of the gym to the other.

That interest is why the Great Lakes Council's (GLC) offering of Fly Fishers International's (FFI) Fly Casting Development Course may be intriguing for MFFC members.

The GLC event is scheduled for Saturday, June 8, from noon to 4 p.m. at the Grayling Fish Hatchery. The event is the centerpiece of a weekend GLC outing that commences Friday, June 7, at 3 p.m. at Gates Lodge.

The outing concludes with a general GLC membership meeting at 10 a.m., Sunday. The Sunday meetings will be held in the Gates Lodge Boardroom.

FFI describes the casting develop-



*The Great Lakes Council's is holding a Fly Casting Development Course at the historic Grayling Fish Hatchery on Saturday, June 8.*

ment course as "a fun way to improve casting skills for all fly fishers in a self-paced fashion." The caster utilizing the FFI approach progresses through four levels from beginner to advanced (Foundation, Bronze, Silver and Gold).

"Our plan is to set up the Hatchery grounds with a Bronze-Level Course and a Silver-Level Course," said GLC President Mark Johnson. "The Foundation Level can be also set up quickly in the Bronze-Level Course.

"Depending on the number of people attending and their skill levels we may need to set up two Bronze Courses or two Silver Courses. They're flexible and they can be changed fairly quickly."

Johnson added, "We'll have instructional guides and the various testing forms there to record peoples' results. After completion of a level they may, if they want, send in their sheet to FFI for a recognition pin."

The use of the progressively more demanding casting levels may intimidate some, Johnson acknowledged but he tried to dispel any anxieties.

"Beginning fly fishers will find this useful as the Foundation Level and Bronze Level will help develop good casting form and learn skills such as loop formation, loop control, accuracy and changing direction, Johnson

said. "Practicing the casting at the distances on the Bronze Level will help develop the skills for casting at a rising fish. More experienced anglers will find more advanced skills in the Silver and Gold Levels,"

The skill levels were developed to help in actual fishing situations.

"One of the Silver-Level skills involves a minimum 35-foot roll cast from the non-dominant side — a right-hander rolling the cast from the left shoulder," Johnson said.

"This can be useful because in actual fishing conditions due to wind or obstacles at your back, it may be necessary to perform a roll cast off your non-dominant shoulder.

"The Fly Casting Skills Development Course was developed to assist anglers in becoming more knowledgeable and accomplished fly casters."

Johnson said the GLC will have a 10-foot canopy set up to offer a little sun and rain protection. GLC fly rods will be available there for people to use, if needed. GLC fly tying kits available for tying instruction.

The Hatchery is open to the public that day so there may be visitors that want to try to learn to cast or tie a fly. Note that the Hatchery does not have an admission charge but donations, large or small are greatly appreciated.

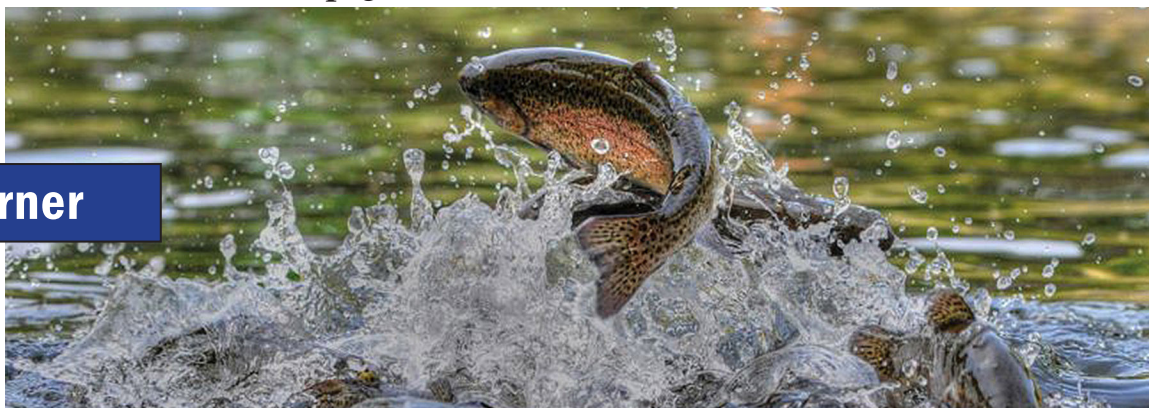
Any questions about the Casting Skills Development Course can be directed via email to [info@ffiglc.org](mailto:info@ffiglc.org).



*An instructor works with a new fly angler at last year's Fly Casting Development Course.*

Peter Albertson's

# Conservation Corner



I would like to thank our members for becoming more involved with the Conservation Corner by asking questions, sharing their thoughts on topics brought forth, and making suggestions for new conservation topics.

Your focus on Conservation Corner is greatly appreciated and extremely important for the continued enjoyment of our fly-fishing adventures.

## Conservation Topics

**Expansion of Airspace Training:** The National Guard has recently issued a "Finding of No Significant Impact" as part of its environmental assessment of its plan for a 10-fold increase in air traffic in Au Sable valley, and lowering ceilings for those flights. Anglers of the AuSable has questions. These flights clearly impact our river enjoyment.



*Anglers of the Au Sable*

**Great Lakes Now:** Saving the Conservation Crescent is now undergoing an \$18 million habitat restoration project as part of a strategy to save the crescent-shaped archipelago of islands and wetlands ecosystems of the lower Detroit River. , local conservationists coined the term "Conservation Crescent" to raise awareness of the value and benefits of these ecosystems.



*Great Lakes Now*



*The Conservation Crescent of the Detroit River*

**Captains For Clean Water:** Orvis has partnered with Captains For Clean Water, which is on the front lines of Everglades restoration, the largest ecosystem restoration project in the world.



*Captains For Clean Water*

**Conserving Public Lands:** The Biden Administration makes two big moves to conserve public lands, sparking backlash from industry. Experts say Biden is hoping to solidify his environmental record in the leadup to the presidential election. Full story in the April 23 issue of Inside Climate News.



*Inside Climate News*



*The high levels of toxic PFAS in Lake Huron's beach foam.*

**Forever Chemicals:** Citizen-led PFAS testing near a polluted former military base in Oscoda has revealed high levels of toxic "forever chemicals" in Lake Huron's beach foam, prompting calls for the state to better alert beachgoers to the danger.



*Bridge Magazine*



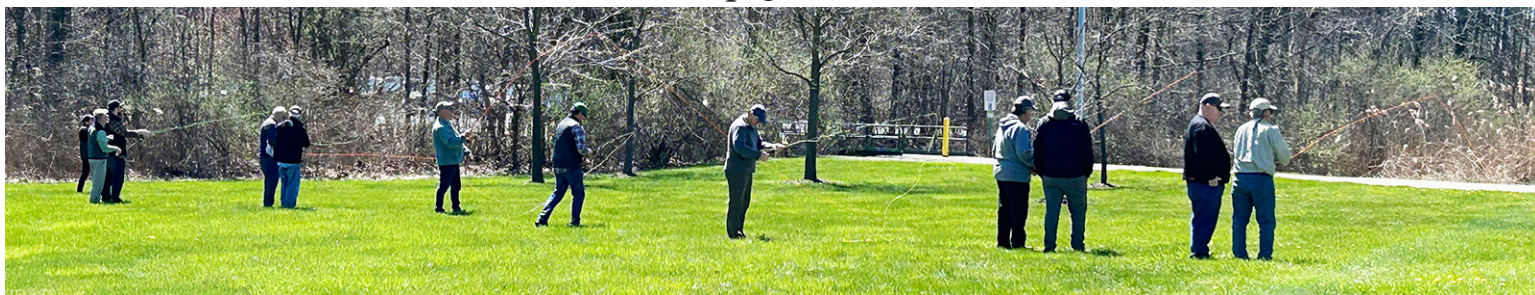
*PFAS Foam Report 2024*



*WCMU Public Radio*

In closing, please feel free to email me on the above topics or new topics to explore at [palbertsontsp@icloud.com](mailto:palbertsontsp@icloud.com). Thank you again for your time and Conservation Corner focus.





# School's In Session *MFFC Is Teaching Everybody How to Fly Fish*

## **Member School**

This year's MFFC Member's School was staged at a new location - Wayne County Community College Ted Scott Campus - on April 20.

It was a resounding success, said organizer and casting instructor Chris Hunter.

"We had over 30 participants and 10 volunteers who came together to make this one day learning event a success."

"The vast majority of attendees were new members who joined the club at the expo. Thanks to all those who attended and all those who volunteered."



*Above left: Mike Matuszewski helps a member master fly tying techniques.*



*Above Right: Ron and Mary Kobish set up a wonderful lunch for 30 hungry students at the Member's School.*



*Left: Instructor Scott Freeburg assists in the fly tying portion of the MFFC Member's School.*



*Bottom Left and Right: Club members working hard to master whip finishes at the Ted Scott Campus of Wayne County Community College.*



## Youth School

### The Fish Princess

Makenna Cox attended the MFFC Youth School last year with her mother, Marissa, and had such a great time, she returned in March with her twin brother, Carter, her younger brother, Caleb, two cousins and Dad.

Meanwhile Mom enjoyed it so much she made her husband get her a fly rod for Christmas.

Youth School provides an enjoyable and positive fly-fishing experience for kids ages 7 through 16 by exposing them to all aspects of fly fishing in a single day, from stream-side safety and fishing etiquette to how a string fly rod, casting, and a bit on entomology. All materials and equipment are provided.

This year MFFC member Stephen Isgrigg was Cox's instructor at Michigan State University Toll Gate Center in Novi.

"I had a great time fishing with Makenna," said Isgrigg in an email to The Evening Hatch. "I found her polite, pleasant, responsive to instruction, and smart ... she was a joy to be with.

"She was a very good caster, and she knows how to pick the right fishing



Above: Makenna Cox with her largemouth bass.

spot," Isgrigg continued. "She caught a total of 13 fish, including sunfish, bluegill, crappie, and a largemouth bass that was probably the biggest fish in the pond.

"Thus earning her the title the Fish Princess."



Above: The Orvis book and flies handed out at the MFFC Youth School. Below: Spence Vanderhoof teaching the students about the importance of entomology in catching fish.



## Scout School

Club members came out in force – 12 of them volunteered as instructors – on April 20 to stage the MFFC Scout School at Multi Lakes Conservation Association.

Two dozen scouts attended from 10 area troops as well as Troop 396 from Jackson to fulfill the Scouting badge requirements to earn a Fly Fishing merit badge.

The Scouts were divided into three groups to master tying knots, water safety, necessary casting, and insect identification. They also had hands-on training in tying flies and casting. Finally, they went out on the dock at Commerce Township facility and fished. Five scouts caught one to complete their merit badge requirements.



Above: The 24 scouts at the 2024 MFFC Scout School.

Left: A scout with his merit badge qualifying rock bass.

Right: A scout learning how to filet and cook a fish.

Below: MFFC instructor Steve Isgrigg works with a scout to tie a fly.



# A Few Eggs *DNR collects eggs for walleye and steelhead stocking programs*

By **Darren Kramer, Scott Heintzelman and Brian Gunderman**

**Michigan Department of Natural Resources**

It's simple math really: Zero eggs equals zero fish for future stocking programs.

So, the spring walleye and steelhead egg collections by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources are critical components of the strategy for maintaining world-class fishing opportunities in the Great Lakes State.

## **Steelhead efforts**

Steelhead capture the attention of a diverse swath of anglers. To create, enhance, and supplement this amazing fishery, steelhead eggs are collected every spring at the Little Manistee River Weir in Stronach in Manistee County.

This process typically begins in March when grates are lowered on the weir structure to stop the upstream migration of lake-run rainbow trout, more commonly called steelhead. Once large numbers of steelhead have gathered below the weir, pumps are activated that flood the facility ponds and raceways, offering steelhead a passageway.

Steelhead are then guided into ponds where they will ripen for egg collection. The spawning period for steelhead in streams begins in late March and continues through April. This is the same time frame that eggs are collected at the weir.

A day of egg collections begins by preparing the workspace for all the various steps that are necessary for success.

Buckets for the individual collection and buckets for transportation to hatcheries must be cleaned and labeled. Cups for collecting milt from male steelhead must be numbered to spawn one female with one male. Egg treatment and disinfection solutions must be mixed to exact recipes to ensure eggs have the best chance at fertilization and survival.

Once staffers have everything prepared at their station, it's time to bring in the fish.

Steelhead are moved from the ponds and through the raceway with a machine called a crowder, which has a basket that herds the fish and can lift them into a large tank inside the facility.



*Fertilized steelhead eggs on an egg battery before being transported to a hatchery.*

Fish are moved from the tank onto a table to determine ripeness and to sort males and females. Ripe fish are then put into a separate tank where they are sedated to assist with handling.

Eggs are removed from ripe females using a small needle that blows compressed air into the body cavity, pushing the mature eggs out of the fish and into a small bucket. Milt from a mature male is captured in a paper cup and added to the bucket of eggs.

Next, a solution mixed for fertilization is added to the bucket, and in a matter



*DNR technicians hold male and female steelhead during egg collection at the Little Manistee Weir.*

of seconds the eggs will be fertilized. Spawned fish are moved to a recovery pond before being released upstream of the weir.

On an average day, this process will happen over 200 times.

From this point, the eggs are disinfected, water-hardened and placed on an egg battery that cleans the mixed egg buckets with oxygenated river water. These are now healthy steelhead eggs ready for transport to waiting hatcheries where staff will rear the young fish over the next year.

The steelhead egg quota this year is just shy of 6 million eggs, which will support the stocking programs of Michigan, Ohio and Indiana.

## **Walleye Efforts**

Walleye fishing (and the fish fries that follow) is a quintessential part of Midwest culture. Although this species reproduces naturally in some large rivers and northern Michigan lakes, many of the popular walleye fisheries in the state are dependent on stocking. The DNR uses two donor populations to supply the eggs for statewide stocking programs.

## **Lower Peninsula – Muskegon River**

The DNR's 2024 walleye egg collection efforts began on the Muskegon River on March 26. Personnel from the South-

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*A DNR fisheries technician drives the electrofishing boat while fisheries biologists capture adult walleye in the Muskegon River.*

# DNR Collected 31 million walleye eggs on the Muskegon River this spring

*Continued from page 12*

ern Lake Michigan and Central Lake Michigan management units used an electrofishing boat to capture adult walleye downstream of Croton Dam in Newaygo County.

Walleye were transported to holding pens at the Pine Street boating access site, where a fish-processing assembly line was created. One Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery employee stripped eggs from a female walleye into a bowl. Another person collected milt from a male walleye, then added the milt to the bowl to fertilize the eggs. Both male and female walleye were released back into the river after these steps.

A third hatchery worker added the eggs to a bucket where they were mixed with a type of fine clay that coated the eggs and prevented them from clumping together. Next, the eggs were poured into a mesh bag in the river to water-harden for about an hour. This is crucial as fresh eggs are very fragile.

Finally, the eggs were loaded into buckets and transported to the Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery in Van Buren County. In total, over 31 million walleye eggs were collected from 195 male-female pairs on the Muskegon River this spring.

## **Upper Peninsula – Little Bay de Noc**

Meanwhile, in Delta County, egg take efforts were completed on April 10, 12 and 14, which were close to the long-term average dates over the past 30 years.

Staff from the Northern Lake Michigan Management Unit collected ripe female and male walleye for the egg take with trap nets and electrofishing gear in the Whitefish River.

In total, 120 pairs of walleye were spawned with approximately 13 million eggs collected. Once all walleye were spawned for the day, the fertilized eggs were transported back



*Michigan DNR fisheries technicians Alexa Curtis and Sadie Hallock collect eggs from female walleye captured in the Muskegon River.*

to the hatchery's cool-water facility and placed in incubation jars to reside until hatching.

The walleye collected on the Muskegon River and Bay de Noc this spring will remain inside the hatcheries until they reach the fry stage. At that point, they will be moved into rearing ponds located throughout the state to grow to size suitable for stocking. Many of these fish will be stocked in June when they are around 1-2 inches in length, whereas walleyes from a few ponds will be held until October and stocked at around 6 inches long.



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