

# The Hatch

Hi folks. The newsletter has not gone out in a couple months as summer has settled in and other activities have chewed up a lot of time. This newsletter will focus on what has been happening on the Battenkill as well as a couple other pertinent issues. For future newsletters all members are encouraged to submit articles pertaining to fishing - be it conservation oriented, experiences on waters near and far, or helpful tips to make our angling experiences pleasant.

## **BATTENKILL HAPPENINGS**

It has been a good year for the Battenkill. Ample rainfall and cool temperatures have made this an excellent season for young trout to survive. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there are more small fish in the river this year than any time in the recent past. There is also a good number of larger trout being taken, including a number of brook trout over a foot long. Hatches have been good and so has the fishing relative to the last couple of seasons.

From a habitat point of view the completion of the Wilbur Bridge bank stabilization project has been the highlight of the summer. This project was completed in mid July in four days.

This project started 4 years ago with a successful fundraiser in Manchester, which raised over \$5,000. Our Chapter was then lucky to have Sheley Stiles and Jenny Kimberly of the Bennington County Conservation District. They were absolutely instrumental in planning the project, securing landowner permission, involving key personnel from US Fish and Wildlife and the Green Mountain National Forest as well as Ken Cox and our regional Fisheries Biologists. All that is left to do is to top off the banks with tree and shrub plantings in the fall or next spring. When details are

available it is likely that volunteers will be needed to help plant the banks. Many thanks to the generosity of the Orvis Company for donating 48 man hours to the project.

In addition to all the above mentioned organizations, we would like to extend our deep thanks to the following individuals who came down to the river to lend a hand:

Steve Roy, fisheries biologist, Green Mountain and Finger Lakes National Forests, US Forest Service (designer and project supervisor)

Eric Derleth, US Fish & Wildlife Service Partners for Fish & Wildlife program (design assistance, project supervisor, funding)

Scott Wixsom, Chris Alexopolous, Green Mountain National Forest, US Forest Service

Jenny Kimberly, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Bennington County district conservationist (designer and project supervisor)

Clyde Burgess, Burgess Bros. Inc. (funding and in-kind assistance in lieu of a Superfund fine payment - please don't mention the fine in any reports you put out)

Bud Dickie, Burgess Bros. Inc. (excavator operator extraordinaire)

Chris Messier, CVPS (CVPS coordinator for the project)

Monique Monteverde, Battenkill River Steward

Danny Harrison, Ryan Shadrin, Mike Quartararo, Bill Bullock, Bruce Woodruff, all Orvis volunteers and TU members.

The Wilbur Bridge project was also the backdrop for an announcement by Senator Jeffords that \$200,000 is being secured for the purpose of assisting in Battenkill related issues.

While the allocation of the funds have not been detailed as yet it is hoped that at least a small portion of the money will go towards projects similar to that which took place at Wilbur Bridge.

The Fish and Wildlife Department are continuing the habitat survey that began this spring at the state line. The goal is to assess the lower ten miles of river. The Department also electro-shocked the stream in late August to determine what the current trout population is. With any luck we will see that the pendulum has begun to swing back in favor of a healthier number of trout in the river. This writer is cautiously optimistic.

## **REDD SURVEY PLANNED FOR OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER**

This is a Redd alert. This October and early November our chapter will be joining with the Battenkill Conservancy (NY) and the Clearwater Chapter of TU to go out on the Battenkill to locate and mark areas where the trout are spawning.

Last fall our chapter floated the Vermont portion of the river and identified numerous spawning sites. We are going to do the same this year to see if there is more activity than last year and also to identify spawning areas being used on the NY portion of river.

Please join us on one (or more) of the following days:

October 21 (rain date 22<sup>nd</sup>)  
October 28 (rain date 29<sup>th</sup>)  
November 4 (rain date 5<sup>th</sup>)

If we have enough we will also try to spend some time along major tributaries of the Battenkill to see how much activity is going on in these areas.

Please advise the following:

I can attend on the following date (s):  
I will bring a canoe with me  
I cannot attend but can provide a canoe for use during the survey

We would appreciate a response back by October 15<sup>th</sup>. You may contact either Bill Bullock or Doug Lyons at (802) 362-8637 or (800) 762-5767 x 5579 respectively.

Tentative plans are to drift the river from 10 am - 1 pm and then reconvene at the New York parking area just over the border for lunch and then perhaps some fishing.

### **ALLIANCE FORMING FOR THE BATTENKILL**

In early August members of our TU Chapter met with members of the Battenkill Conservancy (NY) and Clearwater TU in order to map out plans for watershed protection for the Battenkill. Whether one is from Vermont or New York or prefers one location of the river over another does not really matter; it is the overall health of the watershed that is of critical importance. After reviewing the site work completed at the Wilbur's Bridge Site in Vermont, the three parties met to plan a course of action for the Battenkill. Among the "action items" that came from the meeting are the following:

\* The three groups will join together to do a spawning site survey in the fall, the goal being to cover as much water in both Vermont and New York as possible, including key tributaries if possible. We are scheduled to conduct this survey on the last two Saturdays of October and the first Saturday of November (the 21st, 28th, and 4th respectively). Please contact Doug Lyons at ddelyons@aol.com or 800-762-5767 x 5579 or Bill Bullock at (802) 362-8637 or bullockb@orvis.com if you wish to participate. This was done last year and it is an enjoyable way to see the river from a different perspective

\* We will work together next spring on planting trees along the river in order to help the riparian zone of the river. One goal of the tree planting will be to bring together area students to join in this effort.

\* Potential project sites will be reviewed and applications will be forwarded to Trout Unlimited and other possible funding sources. Anyone who has seen the initial results of the Wilbur Bridge project understands just how far a little hard work can go.

\* We are in the preliminary stages of putting

together a Homewater Initiative to Trout Unlimited National. This is a wonderful program that TU has done on such notable river systems as the Beaverkill / Willowemoc watershed.

In order for the plans to work successfully we need YOU to lend a hand where possible. If you wish to participate in the spawning redd survey please let us know. If you can help in acting as a liaison with the school systems in Vermont in order to begin planning the tree planting project please let us know. We will also need at least one property owner that is willing to have his or her land planted. Are you that property owner? Do you know any property owners that would be interested in having the riparian buffer zone improved? Please let us know.

### **NEXT CHAPTER MEETING SET FOR MONDAY, NOVEMBER 6TH**

Our next chapter meeting will be at 6:30 PM on Monday November 6<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM. We will meet at the Orvis Schoolhouse (directly across from the Manchester Orvis Store). In addition to discussing current topics, we are trying to get Ken Cox and Steve Roy to report on the status of their work on the Battenkill.

We will also hold elections and have our first director's meeting of 2001/2001.

At the meetings the business of the chapter can be discussed as well as having some sort of program or presentation. If anyone has any ideas for programs please let us know - all the help we can get is appreciated.

### **FLY OF THE MONTH**

With the onset of fall one of the most consistent hatches on area streams is the tiny blue winged olive. On cloudy, cool days in particular, these flies can hatch in prolific numbers and draw the attention of trout. One of the most frustrating aspects of this hatch is figuring out exactly what stage of emergence the trout are most actively feeding. I have found that it is necessary to carry two different types of dry patterns and also a subsurface pattern to have success. All are simple ties though the hooks are small - # 22 and # 24 are often needed. The patterns I use are:

#### **Standard hackled dun**

thread - olive

tail - dun

body - grey olive dubbing, sparse

hackle - medium dun, just a few wraps are

needed

This fly seems to work when the trout are chasing wind blown flies

#### **Parachute dun**

As above except add a poly med dun wing and tie the hackle parachute style - just a few wraps are needed.

#### **Olive emerger**

This is tied like the dun except for the hackle use a wet fly grade hackle.

This fly can be used as a dropper or on its own and can be fished in or just under the surface. Sometimes a little twitch will elicit a rise.

Some of the best fishing to this hatch is on raw and windy days where you are not sure whether the clouds above are going to let go the first snow flakes of the year.

#### **RIVER REVIEW - Yakima River**

I had the opportunity this summer to fish the Yakima River in Ellensburg Washington. This is a big river in every sense and is filled with wild rainbow trout - the state manages the fishery as a no-kill, wild fishery for approximately 70 miles. The river is located about an hour and a half east of Seattle and is followed for a portion by I - 90.

The Yakima is an interesting river in that it receives significant flows from three upstream dams that hold back water during the spring in order to give Washington apple growers irrigation water during the summer months. As a result the river flows quite high during the summer and unless you know the river intimately it is necessary to drift the stream. An experienced guide is highly recommended.

When I fished the river with three other anglers in late August the high flows were beginning to recede a bit as the apple growers had less demand for water. Where we fished (above Ellensburg) the river is braided in several sections and as a result of the reduced flows we were able to fish several of these "rivers" within the river. It was very productive to get out and fish a hopper or stonefly towards the banks. Getting the fly as close to the bank as possible was necessary and also productive.

Trout on the Yakima average from about 10 - 14 inches but there are larger ones in there. In our

group the two largest fish landed were 17 or so inches long with several 12 - 15 inchers brought to hand as well.

While on the river there were few other anglers that we saw. Most of the guides spend their time in the canyon though our guides only entered the upper portion of the canyon at the end of the evening. I have been in the canyon before and do believe that for a first time visitor this is the section of river to fish.

It should be noted that the upper river, above the confluence with the Cle Elum River, is wadable at this time of year. The Yakima is loaded with little trout in through here and the Vermont Caddis proved its worth here during a brief outing on the way to Ellensburg.

If you happen to be in the Seattle area and would like to experience western style big river fishing I would strongly recommend that you give the Yakima a try. Less than two hours from Seattle, it is an easy drive along Rte I 90 to Ellensburg and the good fishing of the Yakima River.

#### **A FINAL NOTE**

As the chapter moves forward in pursuit of bigger and better things for the Battenkill and other streams in our region it is important that our membership become more involved in what is happening on our area streams. To that extent we ask that you as a TU member please do your best to help going forward. The chapter has come through in the past and as a result we now have no kill on the Battenkill along with a serious effort to find out what it is that is plaguing our precious fishery.

Where do your interests lie? Are you interested in becoming involved in work along the river? Are you interested in making the chapter an enjoyable way for anglers to get together for meetings and trips? Do you wish to become involved in an administrative capacity?

Please let us know what can be done to make this a better and more effective chapter but also remember that without your help we as a chapter are limited in what we can accomplish. With that in mind please drop either myself (Doug Lyons) or Bill Bullock a note or give us a call. My number is 800 762 5767 and my e mail address is ddcl Lyons@aol.com. Bill's contact information is bullockb@orvis.com or (802) 362-8637.

#### **CATCH AND RELEASE "HOW TO"**

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Dept offers the following suggestions in practicing safe catch and release methods:

\* Land fish as rapidly as possible using tackle that is adequate but sporting. A Fish played for too long a time may be too exhausted to recover and has an increased chance of dying after release.

\* Keep the fish in the water as much as possible and handle them with the utmost care.

\* For fish hooked in the lip, jaw, or mouth, remove the hooks gently and carefully ... never rip the hook out. Use the hook shake method: reach into the fishes mouth and grasp the hook shank with thumb and forefingers; lift the fish slightly out of the water; rotate hook shank so eyelet is down; shake gently. Longnose pliers or surgical clamps are useful for this procedure

\* Use barbless hooks, or pinch barb flat with pliers to quicken the unhooking process.

\* For fish hooked in the gills, throat, or stomach, do not attempt to remove the hook. Leave the hook in the fish by cutting the leader close to the outside of the mouth. Even if the fish is bleeding heavily, it may survive, so release it.

\* When still or drift fishing with bait, watch the line continuously and set the hook as soon as possible. This reduces the chances of the fish swallowing the hook and the need for cutting the leader and leaving the hook in the fish.

\* Before releasing an exhausted fish, cradle it in a swimming position in calm water and move it gently back and forth to force fresh water through the gills. When the fish is able to maintain an upright position on its own and is able to struggle, let it go. This process can take up to 10 minutes for large, exhausted fish.

#### **TU MEETS WITH RESOURCE MANAGERS**

On Monday the 25th of September, TU members from our chapter as well as the Clearwater (NY) TU chapter met with Jeff Reardon (New England Conservation Coordinator for TU), Steve Roy and Chris Alexopoulos of the US Forest Service as well as Shelly Stiles and Jennifer Kimberly of the Bennington County Conservation District. Shelly is also a board member of Battenkill Conservancy/ NY.

The purpose of the meeting was for the folks that

have been involved with work on the Battenkill to get together to discuss how TU might become a more active partner in working towards an improvement in the fishery. The meeting was very productive and one gets the sense that the study team that Ken Cox has put together is working with great diligence towards identifying the underlying problems that are effecting the river.

While no firm plans have been made dialogue will continue with all the parties and an opportunity for TU to become more involved in a proactive manner is very possible. If you are interested in becoming involved PLEASE make yourself known. The more people we have working together the more the organization can accomplish.

#### **BATTENKILL WATERSHED CONFERENCE HELD AT WEST MT INN**

On the same day the University of Vermont / Aikens Lecture Series held a conference on the Battenkill relating to economic and ecological stability and growth within the watershed. This was an interesting conference that brought together people from a variety of backgrounds to discuss just how the Battenkill watershed can maintain a healthy economy while at the same time preserving the unique ecological characteristics of the region.

The need for a watershed based organization is clear and it is also clear that for such a group to succeed there must be input and cooperation from all stake holders with an interest in the integrity of the watershed. How such an organization will form is less clear but the need to maintain the fishery was evident at the conference.

#### **WHO ARE WE?**

This Newsletter continuously refers to "we". You may wonder who we actually is (or are?). We are you. This is your chapter. Lets make the most of it! If you have something to contribute please do so.

#### **CHAPTER EXECUTIVE TEAM**

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