

STREAMSIDE

Volume 20 Issue 2

Periodical Newsletter of the Dame Juliana League

Spring 2014

A Reel Tail *by Emerson Cannon*



In mid-February our club stocked French Creek. This was great for our members as we could fish this stretch early in the year. It also gives the fish plenty of time to acclimate themselves to the bug activity of the stream.....

MAYBE. In case you forgot...ha ha, this year was **c o l d!** The problems was walking to the stream in thigh high snow and fishing with frozen rod guides. Last year we had a warmer spring and in March little black stoneflies came off the water and trout rose to the surface and ate them **AND** ate my little black stonefly fly. It was great. That was last year.....

This year finally in mid-April, I fished French Creek again. There was an enormous caddis hatch. The caddis were a dark gray color and about size 16. I caught some in my hand. I had just gotten a nice fish on a black woolly bugger but really wanted to get them on a natural imitation of an insect in the stream. It seemed rather fitting. I switched over to a dark drown soft hackle which a certain club member has had huge success. My result on this day...ZIP. I did not see a single rise, a single dimple, single bulge of water. I quit and went to a San Juan

worm. Now, I know we are not in New Mexico but there are worms in local streams that do look like San Juan worms. How do I know? During the Fly Fishing Course, a stream biologist sampled Pickering Creek and low and behold, in his plastic container of life in the stream, are worms that look identical to San Juan worms. I proceeded to get a few fish on the SJW. I spoke with a guy getting a number of fish and asked him if he was getting any on a caddis. Laughingly, he told me that the day before a thick caddis hatch happened and not a single fish he saw took any caddis. He tried using some caddis flies and nothing. He switched to a SJW and eggs and caught some. He was using egg patterns and San Juan worms this day as well...and catching. This might sound snobby, nerdy whatever, but after a bit I wanted to catch a fish on something near the surface and something that was really in the water column and something that I could see.

My solution...pack it up and go to Valley Creek. I knew from speaking to a TU member last week that little [blue quills](#) would be hatching from about 11:32 AM to 1:33 PM give or take a few minutes. When I heard about this the week before I honestly did not know about a little blue quill. I looked it up and found it to be a size #18 with a dark blue body and slightly shorter wings than a BWO. No problem, I thought...I would use a #18 Blue Wing Olive emerger.

I arrived at Valley Creek right about 11:25...just in time. I went to the stream with my 2-weight and immediately saw some dimples in faster water. Right away I had fish smacking at the fly and some fish even eating it. I continued upstream to a pool with water entering and creating a bit of a back eddy. I saw a consistent dimple and cast and got this nice fish there. It took me a long time to land it in as the fish was really strong. The fish was about a 12" fish...very respectable for Valley Creek. The first fish I caught at French Creek was about 15" and did not fight as well as this fish. This was exactly what I was after...fish rising to natural items in the stream and me trying to catch them. Now I missed more than I caught but that is as much fun as well. I had fish rise so fast that I jumped, some fish that could tell it was not a blue quill but a BWO and zoom under and reject it and of course some plain old bad reflexes with me missing the fish. I continued upstream, finding fish here and

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Fall 2014 Meeting Schedule

Meetings are held at the Kimberton Fire Co. Fairgrounds Meeting Hall.
Doors open at 7:15 PM. Meeting begins at 7:30PM.

September 29 (Monday)

Featuring Paula Piatt, Sportsmen's Organizer for Trout Unlimited

The Importance of Habitat in Maintaining a Healthy Trout Fishery

October 27 (Monday)

Featuring our own Mike Ferraro

Fly Fishing for Stripers in the Surf

November 24 (Monday)

Featuring author Holly Merker

Birds on the Bank: There is More to Fishing than Fish

December 29 (Monday)

Fly Tying Roundup

Bring your vises, share your techniques or just come and watch! For beginners, equipment, materials and instruction are provided.

Muskies on the Fly

by Emerson Cannon

Well....what a winter. I normally fish all winter long but this winter deep snow made it tough to get around to the streams...let alone parking near a stream. When snow might not have been too deep...we have ice all over rocks which makes going out to a slightly remote section of a stream...falling and maybe hurting yourself...not real smart. Another happening was ice choking streams. The ice was a bunch of inches thick making it even tougher and dumber to venture around. Finally, a phenomena that I had never hear of: [anchor ice](#) occurred on local streams. It more or less means that a stream, which we usually think about freezing top down actually freezes bottom up! This occurs all the time in really cold areas but SE PA is usually not one of them. This year proved different. Another detriment to wading!

So..what is an alternative? GO SOUTH!

I fished with [Blane Chocklett](#) near Roanoke for muskies. He has a great drift boat, a jet engine and we put in at a place he knew that was clear of snow and drove downstream or upstream in a few inches of water...skimming over rocks with the jet. What a thrill of a ride! Now Blane is one of the more creative fly tiers in the world. A number of years ago he created the [gummy minnow](#).

This fly has worked all over....I have caught albies on it in NC and yellow fin tuna in Baja and trout in PA. I know others have gotten lots of freshwater fish as well. Blane's newest fly is the [Game Changer](#). And it truly is that....this fly works on all types of fish...again both salt and fresh water. It has only been out for a bit over a year but has taken lots of large fish. It has worked for me in salt water areas this past year as well!

For this excursion, we are fishing for muskies. Now, muskies are called the fish of 10,000 casts...and that is on conventional gear...add flies and you add an extra tough dimension. We were using TFO 10 or 11 weight rods...designed by Blane. You cast as close to the bank as possible...from a long distance away. The rods have an extra-long butt to enable you to do the figure 8 at the boat a bit easier. The butt is used like a swizzle stick to stir the figure 8. After you cast and retrieve, the fly re-

mains in the water near the boat as the fish slowly follow the fly, lay in wait and then...maybe...just maybe...attack the fly. This happens as you do figure 8's alongside the boat to entice the fish to hit the seemingly crippled bait. The tip top's diameter is wider than normal as are the last few guides on the rod so that you can bring the leader through the tip top easily and only have the shocker (12" of 60 lb mono) and the fly in the water as you figure 8. Also, if Mr. Musky eats...everything slides easily out again!



The fly line has a 400 grain sink tip and the flies are about 14" long...yes 14". Now Blane has designed a monster fly called a **T-BONE**. It is articulated. It works so that on the retrieve after you strip hard, and pause, the back end of the fly comes around to give the impression of a sideways profile of a crippled fish to the musky. Muskies love to t-bone their prey so this [articulation](#) takes care of that.

On the morning we fished, temperature starts out around 35 and will rise to 45. Luckily, we did not have much wind and the scenery was gorgeous. Now

muskies are very fickle in their eating. Just seeing a musky is a big deal! I went last year for 2 days. Day 1 had us see maybe 10 fish and none wanted to eat...one reason was that the 2 anglers(myself and my friend) scared some of the fish away by



doing the figure 8 in a scary way to the fish... hmmm....rookies. Other fish just decided not to eat. Very tough to predict. Day 2 was different...we pounded the waters throwing the fly as far as we could, strip pause strip pause....figure 8 and zip all day. We did not see a fish. The place has plenty of fish but...this is musky fishing. It is not difficult to sleep at night after this activity.

This year we put in after finding a ramp that was not blown out from water and mud. We started up the jet and went downstream about 1 mile. We fished a long slower deep pool. After about 20 minutes I had a nice fish follow my fly up to the boat. I did the figure 8 thing correctly I thought. The fish made one look, turned and retreated to the depths! Oh well. Who knows why. About 30 minutes later a real nice fish... 45"... followed the fish. Now when they follow, the might be 8-10' deep. I did the figure 8. The fish turned and ate it going away....fantastic. I set the hook...it sticks. The fish turns back at me...opens its huge mouth and shakes its head at me and the fly pulls out! Rats! (a translation from other comments). We

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Just Who Are The Hofer Trout?

by *Bob Ballantyne*

It wasn't too many years ago that the "big scare" arrived – whirling disease was predicted to wipe out populations of rainbow trout throughout the west.

Whirling disease, to review a little history lesson, is caused by a parasite of European origin, but it got here to the United States by a circuitous route. We sent rainbow trout to Europe, they sent some back years later as frozen rainbows, and we let the parasite get loose in American waters.

Of course, European brown trout are resistant to the parasite, for they co-evolved with them in such waters. Rainbow trout had never naturally encountered the parasite and had no immunity to it. The parasite has a complex life cycle which involves a stage in near microscopic, sediment dwelling tubifex worms that precedes the invasion of the nervous tissue of trout.

Rainbows, however, differ from brown trout in reproductive habits. The browns are fall spawners, while the 'bows are spring spawners. It just so happens that tubifex worms are coming out of winter dormancy and dumping their spore loads into the water just as rainbow eggs are hatching. These spores get into the nervous tissue of these susceptible youngsters and create damage that, among other things, causes them to swim in circles.



Thus a prediction that Madison River rainbows were sure to be wiped out, a foreboding for the entire west. But, as nature would have it, some fish proved to be resistant and such a prediction turned out to be not so severe. The development of immunity in such a species is a common, yes common, biological phenomenon. The fear level is down considerably.

Research has also been done on this problem in Colorado where similar population declines occurred in rainbow trout populations. They are now stocking what are called Hofer trout in many of the state's waters. And just what are Hofer trout?

Well, these trout also made a circuitous route here. They originated in our Columbia River system and, as natives, were known as the Kamloops rainbows. In the late

1880s they were exported to Germany to be grown simply as food fish. And since whirling disease was common in German waters, they developed immunity to the disease. And so back they came to help save the American West's storied rainbow trout fishing.

And they came about their name as "Hofer trout," because in 1903, a German fisheries biologist named Bruno Hofer first described these German rainbows' resistance to the disease.



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there. Fish were definitely not in every run or hole but there were numerous active fish. Honestly, right around 1:30 PM...a bit after... the entire scenario ended. Not a rise, not a strike not any fish seen at all. Time to go home.

So, I thought and wondered how long does it take a stocked fish to really get with the stream's program. I know at the Tully, the fish key in on different caddis hatches and tricos and will eat nothing else. The vast majority of those fish are stocked but they do not take a long time to figure it out. On French Creek, it seems as if fish might take a bit longer...why? Is it water temperature, the freestone stream versus a spring, alkaline stream. I do not know. But I do know that I enjoyed catching fish eating insects in a stream on a fly that imitates that insect more than a more generic sometimes called "junk fly." Now am I a purist...heck no. Do I use junk flies...oh yea, but sometimes it feels better to catch fish on the almost real deal.



Muskies *is continued from page 2*

continue to drift down through the pool and in a few hours my friend hooks, sets and brings in a huge 50" female! Fantastic.

We fish for another 4 hours or so and finally a 40" male comes in, eats my fly, I set the hook...it runs around the boat maybe 3 times and I get it in the water net. The net is like a gurney you might see on a TV medical show. I slip the fish in, Blane removes the hook....pictures taken and fish is carefully placed back into the water.

Go back to room....eat dinner...in bed by 8:30 PM...exhausted. Now Day 2....float a gorgeous stretch of water...gorgeous. We cast I don't know how many times. I took a break in the late afternoon and Blane cast and had a small 24" fish on for a short time....that was it for the day!

All in all, musky fishing is something that almost gets in your blood. You really want to get one of these as they are so frustrating. The best times to go are December, January, February and the first week of March...after that they are really difficult to get! I already have my trip booked for next year...it gets in your blood. These are huge, monstrous looking fish that, if you are lucky, provide huge satisfaction. If you are not lucky, you do not feel as bad as it is just plain tough to get them to a fly eat and many others have shared your frustrations! What a challenge! A different something to try during the winter months.



Equipment Review: Patagonia Bar Boots

by John Burgos

A friend of mine recently converted his old pair of wading boots to use the [aluminum bar configuration being sold by Patagonia](#). I've seen this style of boot before, skimmed the reviews but was leery of the suggestions that these boots provided anything more than rubber or felt with studs.

We both fish the same Pennsylvania streams. You know the ones that get really slime covered and slick right as your favorite hatches appear. He just raved about them, using the term "Game Changer."

I looked in the mirror a while back and it occurred to me that I've gotten older. When did that happen? I still find myself wading the same rivers in much the same way as I have done for years. But my knees and back don't quite bend and spring back the way they used to. I don't like using a wading staff. So, I'm always looking for things that will add security while I am crossing a stream.

Well, I thought maybe it is time to add an advantage. So, I got myself a pair of these boots.

The concept with the aluminum bars is that the soft metal forms and grips around the hard rock of the stream bottom as you walk. This is counter to the added studs in rubber boots which attempt to somewhat cut into the rock on the stream bottom. So often have I skidded on large smooth rocks with these cleats!

In short, these shoes are the real deal! I first used them on Penns Creek this winter when the flow rate was just about 500cfs. For those not familiar, that level is a bit higher and more challenging than usual. Winter temperatures made it even less attractive to test that murky, cold water.

It always takes me a bit of time to get used to the flow rate and stream bottom. Though, clearly these shoes stuck. With the murky water I could not always clearly see where I was stepping. But the traction was absolutely superb. I had no incidents all day.

Now this was a brand new pair of boots. Towards the end of the day one of my ankles started to hurt a bit. I've had similar experiences with other brands of boots and the issue always went away as the boots broke in. I am expecting the same to happen here.

While walking, I could definitely feel the difference of wearing bars on the feet. I fished a fairly long day and walked what I considered a "normal" amount. I could definitely feel them, the bars did not really cause a discomfort or fatigue issue. This is absolutely no concern if you think you are fishing less than a half day. Though, I'm not sure I would recommend them if hiking (eg. Slough Creek, YNP) is on the agenda.

I am looking forward to putting these boots through all the paces this spring as my fishing ramps up.

These boots are not cheap. The list price for Patagonia boots are \$200. Though, I found a sale before Christmas that made them much more affordable. Other options include converting an older pair of wading shoes using the bar replacement kit (\$40). Lastly, Korkers also provided an aluminum bar sole for some of their wading shoes.

At this point, with one day under my belt, I would highly recommend these boots, especially on our slippery streams. Next time you see me, ask me about them.



Recap: 21st Annual Learn to Fly Fish Course

by Bob Molzahn

Our 21st Annual Learn to Fly Fish Course was held as planned on April 19...a week before we usually hold it. The YMCA pushed us to this weekend as a big event was planned on the 26th in addition to the usual kid's soccer games. It almost didn't happen however as registrations were coming in very slowly this year. Chalk it up to the brutal winter I guess. We finally ended up with fourteen eager students.

Many thanks go to our principal instructors **Bob Moser, Joe King, George Christian, Emerson Cannon, and Mike Costello** for another great job. **Mike Ferraro** got the food and refreshments together this year which was a great help. The weather cooperated once again and the earlier date spared us from all the noise associated with an adjacent field full of screaming kids and parents during the morning session. The YMCA has also been most gracious in allowing us to use this venue without charge for all twenty-one years. They have been great to work with and we truly appreciate their support.

From the comments received from the students as they were leaving I think we accomplished what we set out to do. We also were able to take in enough revenue from the registration fees to cover the cost of sponsoring two youngsters at this year's Chester County Conservation Camp.



ARTICLES WANTED!!

The next edition of **STREAMSIDE** is due out in September, 2014. If you would like to write an article, story, share a fly pattern or picture or write a poem please do so and send it by August 31, 2014

in MS Word format to

rjm1949@comcast.net.

Dame Juliana League Fly Fishers

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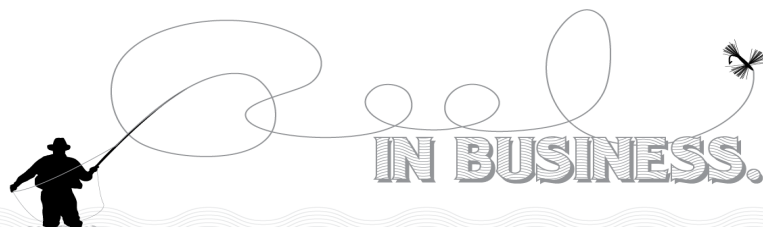
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