

HEIRLOOM ROD UP FOR BID!

The KVCTU Heirloom bamboo fly rod is a 7-1/2 foot rod for a #5 weight line and was made by member Eric Jeska in 1997 and gifted to Paul Tulgetske.

The bamboo came from culms belonging to Walton Powell, and this rod was steam heat-treated followed by dry air heat treating in an experiment to temper different parts of the action more or less. It worked as intended but was too laborious of a process to continue. Eric also blued the ferrules and other nickel silver components and made the reel seat spacer and hook keeper.

Paul had the generous and fabulous idea of using the rod for KVCTU banquets as a rod that could be “owned” for one year by the highest bidder and re-auctioned every year as an Heirloom Rod.

The rod comes with a logbook diary that the “owners” use to document their catches for the year that they possess the rod, which then becomes a written history of the rod and angler for generations of KVCTU members in the future to read and enjoy. Whether the stories are truth or fiction are at the discretion of the “owner” and the faith or gullibility of the reader.

Why not become part of the KVCTU living legacy and take this rod fishing next season? Preserve the memories of your victories and defeats, triumphs and trials, and fish released whether from the hand or from far away for your KVCTU friends, both present and future, to read with envy or with a chuckle.



Unsure about owning and caring for a bamboo fly rod? Don't worry! Eric has included detailed instructions on the care, assembly and disassembly, and storage of this rod.

Read about the experiences of our first two Heirloom Rod owners, Pete Mathews and Al Henderson, on the next page.

DON'T MISS KVCTU'S ANNUAL BANQUET!

BID ON THE
HEIRLOOM ROD

TONS
OF
TREASURES
AND
ADVENTURES
TO
TAKE HOME!
FABULOUSLY
FUN!

THURSDAY, MARCH 14
6:00 PM
THE FOUNTAINS

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TIE-A-THON TIME!

It's not too late to get tying for the 18th annual [Tie-A-Thon](#)!

Since 2006, over 265,000 flies have been donated to various camps and organizations. This year, Tie-A-Thon flies will be distributed to three nonprofit organizations:

[Idaho 2 Fly](#) is a group that offers retreats and workshops in Idaho for men with cancer.

[Casting for Recovery](#) offers retreats nationwide for women recovering from breast cancer.

The [Mayfly Project](#) mentors foster children through fly fishing, now held in over 50 locations.

[Sign up](#) to tie 100 flies from the list by April 20. You'll get a T-shirt or logo sticker for your efforts, not to mention a warm and fuzzy feeling!



ENJOYING THE HEIRLOOM ROD

by Al Henderson

The KVCTU Heirloom Bamboo Fly Rod was made by one of the generous and talented members of our chapter, Eric Jeska. Eric passed on this exceptional rod to another of our chapter's exceptional members, Paul Tulgetske, who (after fishing it and realizing how outstanding it is) offered it to become our own KVCTU Heirloom Bamboo Fly Rod!



Al Henderson fishing the Heirloom Rod

The KVCTU Heirloom Bamboo Fly Rod is still fairly new to our sharing and experiences. The journal that accompanies the rod has entries by Eric and Paul, as well as Pete Mathews (the first live auction winner) and me, Al Henderson, the second winner.

Pete's entries in the journal included: "It created a lovely loop that was straight with minimal waves in it and could be laid down gently, up to about fifty feet." "Relax and enjoy it. It can be an easy rod to use, comfortable like an old slipper. But the key is to relax. If you normally use a graphite or boron rod you will certainly want to go to the yard or park to practice. It will be different and take some getting used to. Be patient, let the rod tell you how it wants to be cast and it will perform for you."

"I think this is the nicest bamboo fly rod I have ever fished, including any of the eight I made over the years."

I was the second year winner of the Heirloom Rod. I think this is the nicest bamboo fly rod I have ever fished, including any of the eight I made over the years.

If you do win it at this year's KVCTU Annual Conservation Banquet live auction, fish it as much as possible and record your enjoyment in the journal. Years from now (hopefully decades) your fellow KVCTU members will enjoy reading your tales!



Nice fish, Al!

SALMON IN THE CLASSROOM by Russ Stolberg

During Christmas Break this year, my worst nightmare occurred to the salmon fry in the tank in my classroom at Mar Lee Community School The chiller malfunctioned and all 146 salmon died. This was a major problem. For two months, kindergarten through fifth grade students had watched the salmon develop from eggs to small fry. Over the same time period, sixth through eighth grade students were caring for and raising them in my classroom. The loss was devastating.



After at least ten years of running the Salmon in the Classroom program, I had to find a way to continue this invaluable program. The equipment is expensive and schools do not have extra money for programs like this. I talked with a colleague about the situation and asked if he had any suggestions about organizations that could potentially help with the problem. He mentioned the name of a member from KVCTU and the rest is history.

The Chapter graciously donated enough money to purchase a new tank, chiller, stand, monitoring system, and any other material needed for upkeep of the tank. This member also helped (really did all the work) installing the tank and setting it up for the new salmon. On February 1, I went to Wolf Lake Fish Hatchery and received 75 replacement salmon fry. Trout Unlimited saved the day and ultimately the year for the students of Mar Lee Community School!

“This program is amazing. The level of enthusiasm is contagious.”



The Salmon in the Classroom program has been around since 1997 starting with four teacher participants in its inaugural year. Currently, there are over 300 teachers actively participating in the program around the state of Michigan. The program allows students to learn about the history of our Great Lakes, native and non-native fish of the Great Lakes, and invasive species of the Great Lakes. In addition, students learn how to care for a fish tank, how to test water quality, how to responsibly feed the fish on a daily basis, etc.

Salmon in the Classroom starts around mid-November and lasts through mid-May. This year I received 150 salmon eggs on November 12 and the process began. Each year, the eggs develop into the alevins after about a month or so. This is the stage where you can see the yolk sac under their mouths. The next stage is the fry and then the parr. The parr is the stage in which they develop beautiful markings on their bodies. The last stage we see in the classroom is the smolt stage. The salmon are about four inches in length. The culminating activity is to have the seventh and eighth grade students each individually release their own salmon into the Kalamazoo River. After the release, we traditionally go to the Kellogg Biological Station for additional activities.

This program is amazing. The level of enthusiasm is contagious. As students enter class each day, most take a peek at the salmon before having a seat. The conversations and ultimate enthusiasm Salmon in the Classroom has initiated about fish of our region and fishing in general is incredible. The fish have allowed the entire school—kindergarten through eighth grade—to unite as one around the care and enjoyment of their very own salmon in the classroom.



IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

DECEMBER CHAPTER MEETING

Show & Tell Night

Our December Show & Tell night, always a crowd favorite, is when we get to hear from our fellow members about their adventures over the past year.

At this gathering Eric Jeska started us off with tales of a fly fishing vacation at an exclusive lodge in the Catskills. Eric's photography was absolutely stunning—as was the subject matter. In spite of the lodge's attraction, Eric concluded by saying he'd never trade it for what we enjoy in our own backyard in Michigan.

Paul Tulgetske shared highlights of his fishing trip in Yellowstone National Park. If you plan to visit, be sure to check with him about some fantastic fishing spots. Dynamite!

James Young spoke about the rewards and joys of raising a daughter and fly fishing together. (And if you've had the privilege of meeting Madeline, you know what a delight she is!)

Greg Potter wrapped up the evening with fun reminders of our many chapter accomplishments and activities in 2023.

Here's to another great year in 2024!



Eric Jeska demonstrating his see-in-the-dark net.

JANUARY CHAPTER MEETING



Jon Ray explaining a finer concept, while Jim Bour looks on.

Guide Night

At our January meeting we welcomed Jon Ray of Mangled Fly, a northern Michigan guide service.

Jon began the evening with a tying demonstration during our cocktail hour.

He followed with a very informative presentation on Great Lakes steelhead, focusing on what they see. We learned much about how these fish perceive colors, how temperature and light affect the colors we use in our flies, when and how to use ultraviolet materials, and how to choose both the colors and sizes that will trigger a strike. What he taught also applies to pike and smallmouth.

Book a trip with Jon! But do it soon—he's a very popular guide! jray@mangledfly.com Phone 231-631-5701.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

by Pete Mathews

FEBRUARY CHAPTER MEETING

Author/Guide Night

At February's monthly meeting, an attempted head count indicated somewhere in the neighborhood of 55 people attending. While, as usual, many of them were sporting grey (or silver) hair it was good to see a number of younger folk there.

The program was a tag team illustrated presentation by two fishermen and writers with their own specialty. That is, hunting brown trout in marginal streams with streamers, big streamers. These guys fish with "flies" that are the size of the brook trout I fish for. Their definition of marginal is "rivers that are at or above the (temperature) threshold for trout."

Jon Osborn is the author of *Flyfisher's Guide to Michigan*, 16 legendary patterns, *Northwest of Someplace*, *Another Day Afield* and other outdoor publications including *Gray's Sporting Journal*.

Allen Crater is a fisherman, blogger and writer whose first book, *Outdoors in Shorts*, has won an outdoor writers award and his second book will be published in September. Both are from Michigan and fish mostly in Michigan, although Allen has been known to venture out west to fish. Their presentation, in addition to images, included reading selections from their writings.



Allen Crater and Jon Osborn.



Chapter meetings are always fun.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

by Paul Hammond

Be sure to extend a warm KVCTU welcome to the following folks who joined our club since the last issue of Slacklines. Invite them to a meeting. Or to go fishing!

Michael Clissold
Roberto Flachier
Matthew Gansen
Jeff Lachappell
Thom Martin
Jim Mulcrone
Gerald Ross
Jason Salinaz
Eugene Sapp
Tom Walsh
Brad Wilson
Courtney Zuniga

DOWAGIAC RIVER: SW MICHIGAN'S HIDDEN SECRET

by Jon Chizmadia with Jay Anglin



Most avid fly anglers would consider Michigan as a top coldwater fly fishing destination. Take a few minutes browsing any online fly fishing forum and it won't be long until names like Au Sable, Manistee, Pere Marquette and Fox to come across your screen. This doesn't even start to consider the Great Lakes and other inland opportunities. This shouldn't come as a surprise to the members of KVCTU who have wet a fly in some of these hallowed waters. With so many outstanding opportunities throughout Michigan it's easy to overlook the opportunities that exist in our own backyard.

The Dowagiac River in Berrien County is the largest coldwater tributary to the Saint Joseph River system. The Dowagiac has a rich history and is well known for its anadromous fish that runs from the Saint Joseph River and Lake Michigan. According to Dowagiac River guide Jay Anglin, the lower three miles of the Dowagiac has some of the finest spawning gravel in the state. This habitat, combined with year-round cold water influx from a multitude of springs entering the system, creates a salmon and steelhead factory that attracts anglers from surrounding states.



Only a few dedicated anglers know about the outstanding native trout fishing opportunities that have always been present. Of those fewer are willing to talk about it. The recent removal of the Pucker Street Dam near Niles now has many conservation groups, including TU National, interested in what Anglin calls the "New Dowagiac."

The New Dowagiac has 150 fully connected miles of river and tributaries allowing resident and migratory salmonids to move throughout the system. The increased access to additional prime spawning gravel dwarfs the previous lower three-mile stretch, expanding spawning capacity. Additional fish holding cover and summertime cold water refuge also is now available thanks to the many top tier spring creeks entering the system above Pucker Street. Some of these host native resident brook trout populations.

DOWAGIAC RIVER *continued*

To collect information for ongoing conservation efforts, the MEANDRS (Meeting the Ecological and Agricultural Needs of the Dowagiac River System) Partnership, with assistance from TU National, is planning deployment of three EnviroDYI (Mayfly) sensors to collect real-time data on water temperature and quality.

The monitors, spare parts, and cell coverage are to be funded by a combination of commitments from interested conservation groups and parties, KVCTU being one of these. KVCTU has also committed to funding an additional sensor to reconnect with MEANDRS and assist in the rebuilding process of the Dowagiac.



“The New Dowagiac has 150 fully connected miles of river and tributaries allowing resident and migratory salmonids to move throughout the system.”



However, additional work is still required. As one of the finest southernmost trout streams in the region, rising water temperatures are a real threat. Constant monitoring of riparian activity and water withdrawals is a must. Fish holding cover is at a premium as well. KVCTU is in the early stages of connecting with other like-minded groups and MDNR to assist with stream projects on the Dowagiac and its tributaries to improve these requirements.

Continue to monitor KVCTU for future involvement opportunities with the Dowagiac. With steelhead season getting into full swing, consider a trip to your local backyard destination river where the future looks awfully promising.

More information about MEANDRS can be found at [this website](#) or the [MEANDRS Facebook page](#).



SUPPORT CAMP!

Unlike many other regional camps, Youth Camp is run completely by volunteers.

If you are interested in contributing to camp, consider purchasing a 2024 donor pin.

These pins were inspired by artwork from previous campers. This year's pin features art from KVCTU's own Olivia Strombeck.

Pins can be purchased at chapter meetings for \$10, or online at tu.myeventcenter.com for \$20 (the additional fee covers shipping).



GEARING UP FOR CAMP

by Jon Chizmadia

KVCTU is once again proud to sponsor the 2024 Michigan Youth Conservation and Trout Camp.

Camp dates are June 17-21 at the Ralph A. MacMullen Center in Roscommon. Campers 13-16 years of age are encouraged to apply at michigantucamp.org by April 30th. The camp is limited to 20 participants, therefore a letter of recommendation and short essay explaining why the campers would like to attend camp is part of the application requirement.



Trout Camp is a life-changing experience!

In 1959 Trout Unlimited was founded on the banks of the Au Sable River in Grayling. Campers will visit some of the historic sites and meet many of the individuals who have contributed their life to coldwater conservation. Top fly tyers, including Tim Jacobs, Don Meyer and Hudson Phillips, will

showcase their talents by leading fly tying sessions. Campers that take to tying tend to fast-track their skills with these lessons. For campers who prefer conventional tactics the legendary Jim Bedford will teach skills in spinner building, fishing and stream etiquette.

This year's camp will once again focus on junior angler mentorship and introduce new anglers to coldwater conservation and sustainability. Camp will also cover key trout fishing techniques with fly tackle and conventional spinning gear. The intent is for entry level anglers to build the foundational skills and confidence to continue to grow into stewards and leaders in the outdoor industry. Many former campers have returned to camp as counselors, guides or other leaders in outdoor recreation space—a testament to the success of the camp over the past 27 years.

From tireless fundraising, cost for the camp will remain \$700 with all food and lodging included in tuition. Campers will also receive their own fly rod and reel combo as well as a stylish chest pack loaded with necessary gear to take home following camp. Campers can apply for full or partial assistance with tuition through their local TU chapters.



For additional information or if you'd like to volunteer as a counselor, contact the camp directors at admin@michigantucamp.org.

2024 Michigan Trout Unlimited Youth Conservation and Trout Camp



When: June 17th through June 21th

Where: Ralph A MacMullan Conference Center
104 Conservation Dr. Roscommon, MI 48653

Who: Open to everyone 13-16 years of age

For applications and info go to:
Michigantucamp.org

For questions contact:
admin@michigantucamp.org



(Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors, all equipment will be provided)

Space is limited, Please apply by April 30th

STREAM PROJECT UPDATES

by Pete Huver

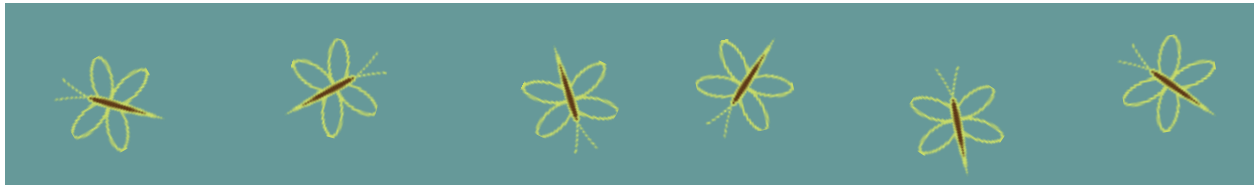
Augusta Creek—The DNR, with help from Jim Dexter, removed downed trees and debris along with beaver dam on Augusta Creek in the state-owned Gueyer Property after trapper Troy Baxter removed 9 beavers!!! Surrounding plains upstream were being flooded, causing damage. Stay tuned as we may have some additional clearing there this spring.

Silver Creek—We have Troy out on Silver Creek just starting to trap beavers there, as they've built 9 dams restricting fish passage, contributing to silt build up, and potentially changing water temperature putting resident trout at risk. We will definitely have lots of work to do on Silver Creek once the situation is under control.

A huge shout out to Troy Baxter for all his work!



Augusta Creek cleanup work.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

[Midwest Fly Fishing Expo](#)

Sat-Sun
March 9-10

Macomb Community College
14500 East 12 Mile Road, Warren

KVCTU Annual Conservation Banquet

Thursday
March 14

535 S Riverview Dr
Parchment

[Buy Your Fishing License](#)

Monday
April 1

[MDNR](#)

KVCTU IF4 Film Tour
Tie-One-On

Sunday
April 14

8302 Portage Road
Portage

KVCTU General Chapter Meeting

Thursday
April 18

535 S Riverview Dr
Parchment

KVCTU Spring Outing

Fri-Sun
May 17-19

918 Seaman Rd
Wellston

[Scalin' Up for Summer 2024](#)

Saturday
June 8

7335 Garden Lane
Portage

[MI TU Youth Conservation and Trout Camp](#)

Mon-Fri
June 17-21

Conservation Dr
Roscommon

Wa Wa Sum Summer Outing

Thurs-Sun
July 11-14

377 Wa Wa Sum
Grayling

Damsels Fly
Women's Fly Fishing Class

Saturday
July 20

Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery
Mattawan

KVCTU BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Executive Committee

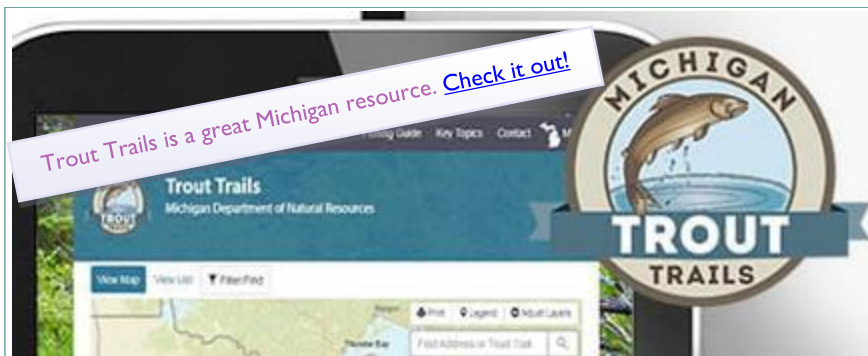
President—Emily Gundlach
Vice-President—Jim Bour
Secretary—Connie Morse
Treasurer—Char Hammond
Past President—Paul Tulgetske

Committee Chairs

Fund Management—Jerry Reed
Fundraising—Jim Bour
Member Meetings—Emily Gundlach
Membership—Paul Hammond
Slacklines—Connie Morse
Stream Projects—Pete Huver
Website —James Young
Education—Jon Chizmadia

Members at Large

Bill Comai
Leroy Heikes
Al Henderson
Pete Mathews
Teej Morse
Jim Shotwell



KVCTU BOARD MEETINGS

KVCTU Board Meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month, September through April. An additional meeting is usually held midsummer.

All members are welcome to attend board meetings.

Because locations vary, if you would like to attend a board meeting please contact board president Emily Gundlach (gundlach.emily@gmail.com) for the time and place.

Advertise in *Slacklines!*

1/6 page ad: \$30/issue

1/3 page ad: \$57/issue

Contact Emily at
gundlach.emily@gmail.com

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Slacklines

Kalamazoo Valley Chapter
Trout Unlimited
7138 Leewood
Portage MI 49024

www.kvctu.org



An advertisement for Naylor Landscape Management. It features a green background with the text "EYING YOUR NEIGHBOR'S YARD? (our work tends to get noticed)". Below this are two photos: one of a rocky stream and one of a modern house with a landscaped yard. The Naylor Landscape Management logo is on the right, and contact information is at the bottom: "Design, Installation and Maintenance of Exceptional Lawns and Landscapes. (269) 375-0084 • naylorlandscape.com".



Contributing to this issue of *Slacklines*: Jay Anglin, Jon Chizmadia, Al Henderson, Pete Huver, Eric Jeska, Pete Mathews, Russ Stolberg, Paul Tulgetske, James Young.

Please send your articles, feedback, and suggestions to Editor Connie Morse (einnocm@gmail.com)