



# Trout Lines



## President's Message

By Mike Beachy

Wow what a weird spring. We have had lots of rain and multiple days in the 90's. This is a combination that makes for a good hatch of mosquitoes and poison ivy. The good news is that the rainbow trout that the state stocked have survived well. The high water has held these trout in the stream. Opening day was a bust with really high water that was cloudy and most of the catch and keep fishermen couldn't fish. The rainbows that were stocked by the State of Indiana DNR were left untouched. There are a lot of rainbows awaiting our flies.

Even though the temperatures were high the first part of June the water temperatures remained cool. The rainbows have remained in the river and have spread out. Almost every hole and pocket holds a couple of rainbow trout. These trout have wised up and no longer act like dumb hatchery fish. The strain of rainbow the State stocks are 90% genetically steelhead and they fight like it. They jump readily and shoot up current when hooked.

It is unusual to see a trout jump in the Little "E" but one Sunday in early June I was fishing and had a rainbow jump over my fly line while fishing a nice run. It was like a high jumper attempting to clear the bar. Before I could react it jumped back over my line going the other way. I thought to



myself I should be fishing with an emerger since the trout was going airborne in such a manor. Then it took my fly. This all happened in about two seconds. Right now these fish are HOT! I have never seen anything like it.

This is the fourth year LECTU has stocked 500 brown trout into the Catch and Release area of the Little "E". Brown trout are everywhere. These trout are active and available. Last Friday I fished 6 hours and took 19 brown trout. Several were nice fish in the 15 to 17 inch class and two were really small in the 3 inch range. I am excited about both. These small fish should not be there. No one has stocked brown trout into the river that small. This means they are naturally reproduced trout and that is huge. Naturally reproducing brown trout is what we really want to achieve. The higher concentration of bigger brown trout we have in the river the more natural reproduction we should see.

what I have been observing and that is natural reproducing brown trout are successfully procreating. That is our ultimate goal. Unfortunately I don't ever see a time when we have a high enough spawning rate to self-sustain the population but natural reproduction is a good sign.

The river is clearing and the water levels have leveled out. This is a good time to be on the water fishing. Water temperatures are in the low to mid 60's and still running high. You cannot ask for better conditions than what we have right now. Anyone who wants to fish the river should be there. Do not wait until your schedule allows, make it happen. Use a black flashy size 10 beaded or weighted woolly buggers and heavy leader. Work the log jams and the deep runs. Anywhere the river is dark and you cannot see the bottom will hold fish. The best time is right now! Do not delay.

Last fall I was able to observe several spawning redds from brown trout. Due to deer hunting restrictions I was not able to survey the entire Catch and Release area but what I was able to survey left me encouraged. These small brown trout I caught last weekend verify

## Sixth Annual LECTU Spring Outing an Overwhelming Success

This year the Annual Spring Outing was well attended. Chris Wood, CEO and President of T.U., was in attendance and gave a great program about T.U. national concerns and the direction that Chris would like to see the organization take. We felt honored to have Chris at our function. We awarded Chris with an embroidered LECTU jacket as a way of thanking him.

Your donations to the Adopt-A-Trout raffle/fund were a big success. This money is specially earmarked for the brown trout stocking effort. The Winston fly rod and Able Fly reel were won by Dolle Bloss from Middlebury.

LECTU's total net outing revenue was \$2,524.55. That is enough to keep us going for another year.

LECTU thanks all those who attended, volunteered, and donated prizes. Each is important in making the Annual Spring Outing successful.

## Hot Flies for the Little Elkhart

By Mike Beachy

This spring the hot fly was a dark colored woolly bugger in a size 8 or 10. The bugger needed to be flashy and weighted. My preference is to use a 1/8 or 5/32 inch tungsten bead in black or gold, a diamond braid body and several pieces of Krystal Flash in the tail. Olive and black seem to work best and I will many times mix the colors. I favor black hackle. It is what I call the "Little Elkhart Special".

I like to fish the bugger in a dangle fashion letting it work side to side in the current first then give it some twitches while swinging. If that does not elicit a strike I then strip it back with short fast strips. This technique works very well in under log jams and along the side of cover. If the water flow is fast I will even couple the bugger with a small size "B" split shot to get it down.



You can swing the bugger like you would a normal streamer across the current however most of the Little "E" has pockets of deep water and lacks in long deep runs. Short fast strips on the swing still works best for the retrieve. As a general rule the rainbows like the bugger hanging in the current where the browns like the bugger on the strip.

It is not uncommon as the season goes on to start getting short hits. You will feel the tug or see a trout flash at the bugger but they don't commit enough to get a hook up. When this starts happening I like to add another fly about 20 inches behind the bugger. I like a flashy nymph of some kind. My favorite is a generic olive bead head



flashback in a size 12 or 14. The trout seem to see the bugger as an attractor fly then commit to the nymph.

Prince nymphs and pheasant tails are another good choice of nymph.



Earlier this spring we had a lot of rain that left the river high and somewhat muddy. The trout seemed to be staying close to the bottom and unwilling to elevate to a suspended fly or perhaps they had trouble seeing it. Under these conditions there are a lot of earth worms washing into the river and drifting along the bottom. The trout I caught were fat bellied and spitting up worms. I like to fish a San Juan worm, bright pink in color and heavily weighted to bounce it along the bottom. Under muddy high water the trout will lay right out on the sand so there is no reason to concentrate on the log jam cover where you get snagged with this type of rig. I fish in the tail outs of the holes or well out in front of the holes when water conditions get bad.

As the river clears and summer approaches I start to venture out from the woolly bugger and start concentrating on natural bugs. Grass hoppers, crickets and ants have produced many a good trout especially if there is a strong wind.



Gray scuds really turn on once the weeds begin to grow in the upper

sections of the river. A hopper with a scud dropper is a good summer time combo. Crawfish patterns work great in the deep holes where there is rock and gravel. Minnow patterned streamers work well for browns in the evening as they emerge from their hiding cover and begin their nightly feeding.

The Little Elkhart has never been known for its dry fly action however as the summer heats up so does the caddis hatches. If you observe a trout taking flies off the surface 9 times out of 10 it will rise to a caddis. Caddis flies prevail in the Little Elkhart woody cover. Caddis fly worms, pupae and dries all work well either in a nymph rig or coupled as a dry dropper. Soft hackles are a good substitute for a dry fly. When the trout



are rising and I am not sure what it is they are feeding on I like to swing a soft hackle into them. They will usually take it and it eliminates the guess work of running through a vast selection of dry fly patterns in an attempt to get a take.

The old timers used to cut open a trout and examine what they are eating by looking at the stomach contents. I am a big fan of catch and release and cutting up a trout nowadays is a no no. Chubs and shiners however are eating the same thing the trout are eating so if you really want to know what the trout are eating cut open a big chub and check it out. Big chubs are certainly not in short supply as anyone who has fished it in the summer can tell you. I guarantee you will find mayfly

nymphs and caddis worms along with a multitude of other natural fish foods. Pay attention to the color and size of these bugs.

Fly fishing is all about using your knowledge of the river and its aquatic life to fool the trout into taking your offering. Most of it is common sense not magic. The trout in the Little Elkhart River are not all that selective. They are opportunistic feeders. If it is something that lives in the river and it presents itself in a semi-lifelike manor these trout will eat it.

## Summer Heat and Water Temperature

Summertime is when the Little Elkhart can begin to warm up. High air temperatures and low water can push the trout to the limits of survival. Warmer water holds less oxygen and can stress the trout. Rainbows cannot tolerate water temperature above 70 degrees for any extended length of time. Brown trout are better able to tolerate these warmer water temperatures however they still become stressed with lowered oxygen levels.



Catching trout when water temperatures are pushing 70 degrees makes reviving these fragile fish for release difficult and can often times result in fatality of the trout. Please keep this in mind when you fish the Little Elkhart River this summer. Hopefully we will continue with lots of water and a cool summer however that is not the norm. Late July through

September many times are hot dry months.

Take the water temperature prior to fishing to see if you will be fishing during a trout stress period. Please refrain from trout fishing if the water temperature is 70 degrees or higher. Your chances of trout mortality is very high under these conditions.

If the water temperatures are in the high 60's you need to be careful and not over play a fish, keep it in the water in the net and attempt to not handle the fish any more than is absolutely necessary. Revive the trout prior to releasing it by facing the trout into the current and allow it time to "catch its breath". The trout will swim away from your support when it is rested.

Trout fishing is fun. It is even more fun when you catch trout. We need to be good stewards to our trout fishery and prevent trout mortality whenever we can. By using a little common sense we can prevent inadvertently killing our resource.

## Stream Clean Up Work Days

Several Saturdays have been reserved for summer work on the Little Elkhart River. These dates are June 4, July 23, August 13 and one to be announced in August. Meet at Riverbend Park in Middlebury at 8:00 am. Be prepared to work in the river. Old waders, gloves, long sleeved shirt, bug spray and a garden rake are helpful.

Most of the tasks performed are cleaning the river of debris where it is stacked too tightly, opening up log jams, building wing dam trout cover and cutting access trails. It is a great way to become familiar with the river and find where the holes are.

It is a lot of fun building trout cover. Creating a deflector to increase the current speed where there was nothing prior then fishing that cover a couple of weeks later and taking a trout from the area you created really gives one the satisfaction in knowing your efforts are not in vain. Some of the best holes in the river were augmented by LECTU efforts. Trout cover is foremost in retaining trout in our stream.

We need your help in this effort. The more workers we have the more we can accomplish. Mark your calendars and plan on giving LECTU a Saturday morning of your time. We will work rain or shine providing there is no lightning or tornadoes. We generally fish afterwards so bring a change of clothes and your fishing gear.

## Annual LECTU Election Meeting

To stay on top of all things going on in our chapter please attend any of our monthly meetings. Meetings are held at 7:00 pm on the second Wednesday of each month at the Middlebury Public Library.

Our Annual Meeting is slated for September 14th, Elections will be held at this time so please mark this important date on your calendar.

## Trout Fishing Reports

LECTU is attempting to keep track of fishermen's catch rate again this year on the Little Elkhart River. It is very important for us to maintain a running statistical monitor to see how the catch and release section of the Little Elkhart River is doing. We also want to compare the catch and release section to the remainder of the river.

Please report all outing catch rates on our LECTU.org web site. This is the vital information we need.

- How many hours did you fish?
- How many rainbow trout did you catch?
- How many brown trout did you catch?
- What section of river did you fish?
- Were you satisfied with your fishing experience?



These statistics are very important if we want to continue our brown trout stocking program or if we ever wish to expand areas of catch and release protected fishing. Please help us keep a running record no matter if it was a great outing or just mediocre, they all are important in the overall scheme of things.

LECTU uses the reported statistics to report to the DNR, Division of Fisheries. The statistics are vital to our trout fishery and have an effect on how the state handles stocking and regulations. Your participation is required for our Chapter to have any effect when dealing with the DNR and proposed stocking modifications.

Thank you in advance for your participation.



## Deer Season Opening Soon

A reminder to all trout fishermen on the Little Elkhart River.

The majority of the Little "E" flows through private property. A lot of these property owners hunt, lease or give permission to friends to hunt deer. These hunters take deer season seriously. Be sure to obtain permission when venturing onto the river during this time of year. It is advisable to wear hunter orange for your own safety.

The "Catch and Release" section is closed to fishermen with the only exception being a short stretch from the Middlebury Well Field to Riverbend Park at the north end. This is city property and there should not be any deer hunting taking place according to Middlebury Park Superintendent, Tom Enright.

There is public property at Riverbend Park, Middlebury City property through the town of Middlebury and Bonneville Mill County Park that is accessible to fishermen year round without requiring permission.

We do not want to inflame property owners by trespassing during this time of year. It could very well result in our inability to obtain fishing permission in the future. There is always a safety concern too. Poaching especially during archery season goes on all the time so even if you secure permission you may be walking into danger. That is why the hunter orange is suggested.

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