



Trout Lines



President's Message

By Mike Beachy

Why is it nothing seems to be "normal" anymore? Perhaps I'm just showing signs of aging. The older I get the more my memories begin to run together. It seems that anything that doesn't fit the way I remember it being in the past comes through as being abnormal.

The weather conditions this spring and summer, I'm sure are not unique however they certainly didn't seem "normal". We started out this April and May with high water conditions and mild temperatures. This was great conditions for trout fishing the Little Elkhart River. It made for some tricky wading but allowed the State stocked rainbows ample opportunity to spread out and avoid the opening day hoards of bait fishermen, who trout fish one weekend a year, hoping to take home a cooler full of newly stocked rainbow trout. The river began to approach "normal" levels toward the end of June.

I left for a week long fishing trip to Colorado the first week of July and when I returned the river was low and the air temperatures had soared. This was certainly not a "normal" sudden turnaround in weather and stream conditions. The Little E water temperatures soon raised into the high 60's pushing 70 degrees in a hurry. I quit trout fishing the river entirely. These conditions stayed for nearly all of July and August without a cool down. This did not seem "normal" at all. No heavy summer rain events to cause the river to flood and no break in the heat.

Low water and high temperatures put an incredible amount of stress on trout. They eat very little and only sporadically. If you catch a trout under these conditions it will almost certainly die no matter how gentle you handle and release the fish. I try



my best not to kill trout especially those in the Little Elkhart. I am not against eating fish, in fact I love eating fish but the amount of fun I receive from catching trout is way more than the enjoyment I get from eating them. I do not want to deplete the resource I am attempting to create.

Fortunately low warm water made good conditions for smallmouth bass fishing on the Elkhart and St. Joe rivers. The break from trout fishing allowed me to re-explore some of the haunts of my youth with a fly rod. It made me realize how blessed I am to live in an area with both trout and smallmouth in close proximity and in good supply.

September entered with promise. The nights cooled the Little E to a fishable low to mid 60 degree temperature. The water level still low but "normally" begins to rise with fall rains. Brown trout will soon start to migrate upstream for their spawning ritual and become aggressive, going back on the feed.

Fall is streamer time. I really enjoy catching trout on streamers. The hits are powerful and in the Little E visual. Observing a trout charging out of cover to attack a fly is a thrill like no other. Streamers are fun to fish too. You do not need to worry about drag, mending, floatant or stealth simply cast, splash and strip. The only variable is the speed of the strip. Change it up until the trout tell you what they want.

Salmon and steelhead will soon start to run into the St. Joe River challenging the fly angler. The attraction of big fish can sometimes be overwhelming but before you abandon trout all together I would recommend a visit to the Little E for some brown trout action. Fall can be one of the most productive times of the year for trout fishing. "Normally" that is the case, anyway.

Have a great Fall.....

Deer Hunting Season 2011

PLEASE TAKE ADVISMENT!

October marks the opening of the whitetail deer-hunting season, and with that the majority of the "Catch and Release" section is deemed "OFF LIMITS" to fisherman access. It is unfortunate for trout fishermen however it is what it is.

The Little Elkhart River runs through private property for the most part. Fishermen are at the mercy of the property owners for fishing access to the river. Property owners who either hunt deer or grant hunting privileges to others do not want fishermen on their property during hunting season. A fisherman sharing the property with hunters puts deer hunting success and themselves at risk.

It is very important that during this time of year that you secure permission prior to fishing the Little Elkhart River anywhere along it's length. We as fishermen need to respect the property owners' wishes. We do not want to do anything to inflame relations with private property owners or put our life in danger by being somewhere we should not be. A fisherman trespassing has the potential to risk future access to the river outside of the hunting season.

Deer hunters hunt the majority of the properties along the catch and release section of stream. The only portion that remains open to fishermen, without the need to secure permission, is the city owned property near the town of Middlebury next to Riverbend Park.

Wearing a blaze orange hat, while fishing the river, is highly recommended. You do not want to be mistaken for a big buck creeping along the river bank. Please be extremely careful.

Elections

Yearly elections were held at the September 14th LECTU Annual meeting. The elected officers for 2011-2012 are as follows:

President- Mike Beachy
Vice President- Leonard Gustin
Secretary- Lee Troyer
Treasurer- Don Fiwek
Board of Director (3yr) - Court Walker

Indiana on the Fly

LECTU will once again be in attendance with a booth at the Indiana on the Fly Show in Indianapolis at the Indiana Fair Grounds on Saturday January 7th 2012. This is a good fly fishing show. If you are in the area come by our booth and say hello.



County Road 43 Project

Plans are underway to do a stream improvement project on the upstream end of the catch and release section starting at County Road 43 located southeast of the town of Middlebury.

This section of the Little Elkhart River has been problematic for many years. The river flow is somewhat slow in this section made worse by the buildup of sand on the bottom. There are only gentle curves in the river and little log debris to create wash outs and deeper holes. Erosion and instability of the banks has made for a wide flat sand bottom with little trout habitat. It has been noted that trout abandon this section rapidly after the high water of springtime dissipates.

In an effort to create trout holding habitat and prevent bank erosion the Little Elkhart Chapter of Trout Unlimited has teamed up with the St. Joe River Valley Fly Fishermen to take on this project. Plans are underway to secure the proper permits from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources to allow us to perform the needed habitat improvements.

The project will consist of cutting a number of overhanging trees that are presently there. These trees will then be trimmed of their branches and secured to the banks with cables and arrowhead type anchors. The tree trunks will serve as wing dams to redirect the current giving the river more meanders. In some cases the tree trunks will serve as erosion blockers anchored parallel against the bank. The trimmed branches will be stuffed between the logs and the bank further securing the bank from erosion.

Hopefully the river will begin to cut a meandering channel around the wings depositing the kicked up sand behind the wing, there by narrowing the main channel by constricting and accelerating the current. This action should redistribute the sand and expose the gravel underneath. Erosion blocking logs will give overhead cover for trout on the outside curves and prevent further dirt from washing into the river.

Unlike the river improvements LECTU has been doing in the past this project will require us to put logs into the river that were not naturally in the river already. The IDNR requires a written plan and a permit for this type of stream work. SJRVFF conservation chairman, John Law, has had the experience working with the DNR on these types of projects. He and SJRVFF have graciously offered to assist LECTU do this project as a way to help us get started with projects beyond the scope of what we have been allowed to do thus far.

If all goes as planned work will begin on this project the summer of 2012. Watch for details to follow. We will need as many volunteers as possible to pull off a project like this.

Habitat and River Clean Up

Low water this summer made for good conditions to do stream improvement projects on the Little Elkhart River. Our efforts concentrated on the lower northern most section of the catch and release area. We started working from the corner known as "tornado bend", at the upstream border of the City of Middlebury's water well field and continued downstream to the steel walk-way bridge in Riverbend Park. This property is entirely owned by the City of Middlebury and open to catch



and release trout fishing year round. Even during deer hunting season.

This section has some really nice deep holes but only a handful. The majority is flat and wide. These nondescript sections require us to augment them with wing dam construction helping to channelize the current for acceleration, aeration and gravel exposure. In the deeper areas we rearranged the log jams to allow water to flow through without removing trout cover. Smaller debris was removed to prevent clogging and speed the current.

There was a very large tree top that blew out during a summer storm and landed directly into the river. The tree

top was cut up and the remnants were utilized to construct trout cover. The logs were placed against an eroded bank and staked into place. The branches were then stuffed between the bank and the bunker log. This created a long undercut that will serve as trout cover in addition to erosion prevention. Several wings were created to push the current along the logs length. This tree top improvement site rehabilitated several hundred feet of river with really nice cover where nothing but wide flat, bank eroded stream existed prior. I cannot wait to fish this spot this fall and winter.

I would like to thank all the members who help with the stream

improvement projects this year. LECTU logged 88 volunteer hours toward restoring and creating stream habitat. Habitat is the key to retaining trout.

Those members deserving a pat on the back for volunteering are: Lee Troyer, Court Walker, Bob Roth, Steve Mack, Carlisle Roose, Bob Hagin, Chris Miller, Don Waldrop, Brandon Rasler, Joe King and Mike Beachy. River improvement work is a lot of fun but not always easy.

Next year we will once again be doing river habitat improvement projects. We could use your help. The more volunteers we have the more we can get done and the bigger the impact we

will have. If you were unable to make it this year we would welcome your assistance next year.

LECTU Works With Middlebury City Parks

The Little Elkhart Chapter of Trout Unlimited has been working closely with the City of Middlebury Parks on several projects. The Little Elkhart River runs directly through the city of Middlebury. The catch and release section of the Little E is just outside Middlebury. A large section of the catch and release area runs through property owned by the City of Middlebury. It only makes sense for us to have a good working relation with the City of Middlebury and Middlebury Parks.

Middlebury Parks held the second annual Riverfest Festival at Riverbend Park this past July 16th. Mike Beachy and Lee Troyer of LECTU served on the planning committee for Riverfest. The festival was designed to make local residence aware of the Little Elkhart River and the resources it has to offer. The festival had guided bird observation and identification with a special visit to a heron rookery located in the catch and release section. The Elkhart County Soil and Water Conservation District was on hand to collect aquatic invertebrates. Children and adults alike could then microscopically observe these bugs and hear how these are unique to a cold water stream. The City of Elkhart Fisheries Biologist was there to give a fish shocking demonstration. The fish collected were then identified, rainbow and brown trout included. The biologist explained how these fish coexist and how they were unique to a clean cold water stream.

A full array of exhibitors were on hand to give demonstrations and talk with folks attending the event on subjects like rain barrels, recycling, stream erosion and other like subjects. The focus was all on the environmental impact of clean water and its importance. Attendees came away with a better appreciation of the



river, its importance and just how special it is.

LECTU was there as well with a booth. We talked to a lot of folks about the trout, the river and what we are all about. Children and adults were given fly casting instructions and given a chance to try out a fly rod, many for the first time. No income was generated only good will and exposure to mostly non fishermen.

Saturday August 13, Middlebury Parks sponsored a youth fishing tournament in conjunction with the Middlebury Summer Festival. Children ages 18 and under were invited to fish the private ponds owned by Das Essenhaus complex on the edge of town. LECTU was there serving as judges, measuring fish and keeping count of the fish the kids were bringing in. For several hours we were busy but it was a blast. The kids were so excited to catch fish. Laughing and screaming, parents cheering them on and taking pictures. Prizes were awarded for the most fish caught and the biggest fish in different age groups. Everyone had a good time.

Once again LECTU's role was to be there for support. Goodwill was the only thing earned, from the families taking advantage of the free fishing contest and the Middlebury Parks.

LECTU will continue to work closely with the City of Middlebury and especially the Parks Department. We both have an interest in improving the Little Elkhart River.

Beginning Fly Fishing Class

With an extremely hot and humid summer, it seemed as though conditions were never quite right to cast a line into the Little Elkhart River. Saturday August 27th brought with it a beautiful sunny day in the mid 70's, cooler water temperatures and a slight breeze. A perfect day for most of us to get back in the water, wet a line, and gear up for the wonderful fall fishing that would be just around the corner. But for four members of the LECTU it was the perfect day to attend our chapter's first ever beginning fly fishing and fly casting



class led by expert fly caster and instructor Charlie Ray.

Charlie is a resident of Plymouth, IN and a member of TU and the FFF. He works with the Plymouth Parks Department teaching youth fly fishing for their summer recreation programs as well as with the Culver Academies as their Chief casting instructor. For a beginning fly angler like myself it was the perfect opportunity to gain a good foundation of the basics by one of the best in the business.

His instruction covered fly fishing history, equipment selection, casting basics, knot tying, and situational advice for flies and presentations when fishing the Little E. In addition, Charlie taught us several practicing drills that we could do anywhere. I can assure you, I have improved my fly casting immensely. For those with more experience though, Charlie also teaches an advanced class. In the future we hope to bring Charlie back for another round of teaching.

We are very fortunate to have someone like Charlie Ray in our chapter whose passion for fly fishing and sharing that passion with others is wholly evident. Thank you Charlie for all that you do in promoting our sport and making us all better fly fishermen!

Piney Fly / Drowned Mouse

By Mike Beachy

In Late July Chris Miller and I attempted to fish the Little Elkhart River from County Road 35 to Bonneville Mill. The distance is about 2.5 miles by road, an easy walk you would think. We fished 9 hours and made it just over half way! We knew it would take an entire day and more moving than fishing. We had to fish quickly to make it out by nightfall.

I do not like to fish this way. I am a slow and deliberate type of fisherman but I compromised this day. Not every fishy spot was fished and those that we did fish only got a couple of casts then we were off to the next.

I generally fish this time of year with nymphs but with this type of quick fishing we were looking for players only. We wanted trout that would hit on the first pass. I started with a woolly bugger then switched to a Clouser minnow. Both flies produced a trout but I knew that there were trout passing on my offerings. After looking through my fly selection I decided to put on a pine squirrel zonker fly.

I do not remember where I got this pattern or even if it remotely resembles the original but it worked. I started taking browns. After my second trout in a short amount of time, I gave one to Chris and he started catching fish too. I only had four of these flies with me, 2 in natural and 2 olive color. I was using the natural color until I lost it then switched to olive and they both produced. This is a good searching

fly. It has a lot of movement in the water with a little bulk and a little weight.

I am not sure if this fly is designed to imitate a leech, a sculpin, a minnow or exactly what but it looks like a drowned mouse when it is wet. It comes to life in the water and pulsates when stripped. I fished this as a streamer with short quick strips either cross current, on the swing or dancing under cover.

Piney Fly/ Drowned Mouse

- Thread 6/0 Black
- Hook Dia-Riki #060 2x long, 1X Heavy
- Head Medium Brass Gold Cone
- Tail Pine Squirrel Zonker
- Body Pine Squirrel Zonker (natural, olive, black)
- Collar Black Hackle

Slide cone onto hook. Start thread behind eye and create a thick area to snug cone head to shank. Tie off and cut thread. Cement cone in place over spacer thread wraps and restart thread on hook shank behind cone.



Attach a short pine squirrel zonker strip for the tail about one hook shank in length with hair angled towards the back.



Attach a zonker strip by the tip directly in front of the tail. Examine the zonker strip. Generally pine squirrel zonker hair has a direction off the skin much like a cross-cut rabbit zonker. Attach skin to shank so that the hair naturally lies towards the tail as you wrap it forward.



Wrap the zonker towards the head with the skin touching tight against the last wrap but not over lapping. Stroke the hair back as you wrap as to not trap it as you go. Gentle pull hair back as you tie down the skin with thread just behind the cone.



Cover the thread wraps behind the cone with a collar of black hackle. Wrap hackle thick up inside the cone as it wraps. Tie off with a whip finish and cement behind cone to complete the fly.



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