

LECTU

LITTLE ELKHART CHAPTER TROUT UNLIMITED

TROUT LINES



President's Message

By Mike Beachy

I do not think there is anything better than spending time along the banks of the Little Elkhart River. It does not always involve fishing. There is something therapeutic about flowing water that sucks the stress right out of me. I intended to take my father trout fishing. Dad is 82 years old and a full time Florida resident just here visiting



for a couple weeks. It had been hot for several days, not just extremely warm, but full blown Africa Hot! I figured we may be able to get a couple of hours fishing early in the morning, if the darkness of night cooled things off. Before the sun broke over the horizon I checked the water temperature, and realized it was not going to happen. The river temperature was at 70 degrees and even though it was overcast it was not going to get cooler after sunrise. Instead of fishing we did a little work on the conservation habitat project LECTU has been working on this summer.

It was getting hot, so we decided to take a break. With the sun high, we took a little walk to try to spot some trout. Equipped with polarized sunglasses, we soon spotted a small pod of browns holding in a deep run. We decided to try and toss a grasshopper out into the river in order to watch one eat. I soon caught a hopper, pinched its head and flicked it into the river. Just as a trout started to rise to the bug, a creek chub raced up and intercepted it. Disappointed with the

outcome, we proceeded to go after more grasshoppers in an effort to watch a trout come to the surface. It took us several attempts before we got to see a brown surface, but it happened. Then we couldn't stop. We were like two little kids on our hands and knees trying to gather grasshoppers in order to mess with the trout.

Grasshoppers are not easy to catch by the way. We took turns flicking out the hoppers upstream of the fish while the other hid behind a bush watching the trout. We had a blast watching the trout and even catching the grasshoppers. No fish were harmed and we got to spend some quality time on the river. I was a little disappointed that I could not get dad into a trout with a fly rod but I think we both enjoyed the day without fishing almost as much.

My father and his dad, my grandfather, were both big trout fishermen back in the 50's, 60's and 70's. Once my grandfather died my dad kind of lost some of his enthusiasm for trout fishing and went on to other things. I have brought him back to it somewhat but now that he no longer lives here trout fishing is only a once in awhile event for him. Things got a little sentimental that morning feeding hoppers to the trout. My dad expressed how proud my grandfather would have been to see what we have done to improve the trout fishing on the Little E and had he been alive he would be the first one to help. In dad's opinion the river is in better shape now than it ever was back then.

I am proud too of this Chapter and the guys who help me get things done. This Chapter is neither political or financially motivated. We do need to hold fundraisers to provide the finances required to accomplish our budgetary obligation but we really don't need any more than that so why push the issue. We have guys focused on youth education, adult education, conservation, trout population re-establishment, river access and property

owner's relations to name a few. We have an ongoing relationship with the IDNR fisheries division, most all fly fishing and trout clubs in the state, local city and county park departments and the soil and water conservation district. These are all associations and relationships that need to be developed in order to get known and recognized in order to get anything accomplished.

Thank you to all the members of this Chapter. Whether you are actively involved, only purchase raffle tickets, attend our Annual Spring Outing, attend our fly tying sessions or simply pay your dues to the National Trout Unlimited and got stuck into this chapter; it all still makes a difference. Without membership numbers, donators, participators and helpers this Chapter would not be what it is today and the Little Elkhart River would still be a degrading muddy agricultural / livestock sewer system. The River just needed someone to care about what happens to it, to protect it, improve it, to breathe life back into it and re-establish the trout it so badly needed. We do that and she will repay us with her therapeutic health.

Stream Habitat Projects

by Mike Beachy

The Little Elkhart Chapter has been doing stream improvement projects for many years. These projects have ranged from trash collection to installation of crib structures. We have historically cut open log jams that were problematic and cleaned out newly fallen trees. This summer we have begun the task of rehabilitating a meadow section in the catch and release area. This section of the river has long been a favorite section of mine because it is open enough to really do some nice fly casting. At high to moderate flows the river moves along pretty nicely and the banks provide the needed cover to hold trout however at low flows this area gets flat and sandy. Flat and sandy is not a good combination for holding many fish and it can be unproductive. This meadow is also a pasture for the Amish owner's work horses. These gentle giants can trample the banks that high water has undercut and the stream banks collapse and erode putting more sand and sediment into the river.



After speaking with the property owner and showing him the problems the river has we agreed that something needed to be done to stop the erosion and the collapsing of the banks. We agreed to assist him reinforce his banks with a trout habitat twist to it.

LECTU has embarked on phase one of this project this summer. We have installed about 100 feet of wall along the outside gentle curve in the river. This wall is constructed from logs stacked 4 high and cabled to supporting posts that are hydraulically sunk into the river bottom. The bank side of the log wall is veneered with saw mill slab wood so the current at high flows will not cut between the logs and wash out the bank behind it. The void between the trampled natural stream bank and the log wall will be back filled with woody debris and dirt to rebuild the bank then planted with some willow starts to reinforce the dirt. The work is designed to augment the flow at low flows but be unrestrictive at high river levels.



A triangular crib structure was built at the downstream end of the wall to deflect the current away from the wall towards the opposite bank and to create some overhead cover. All along the wall the base log will provide cover from above and the current will scour out a deep run at the base of the wall. Upstream of the wall another current deflector will be built on the opposite bank to divert the current over against the wall.

Phase two will be to reinforce the next curve upstream and essentially create and accentuate the natural serpentine of the river by glancing the current from one side of the river to the other with diversion crib structures and reinforcing the outside of the curves with log walls. This should help to prevent erosion and at the same time scour out some of the sand exposing gravel and deepen a main channel.

So far this summer we have made some impressive progress. You can see the river improving right before your eyes. Every week I return to the worksite and observe the bottom getting deeper. The current has picked up even with low flows. The best part about it is the trout are starting to take notice and have already moved in.

By the time you receive this newsletter there will be one scheduled workday remaining for the summer of 2016 and that is Saturday September 17th. We meet at Riverbend Park in Middlebury at 7:45-8:00 am and travel to the work site from there. The more folks we have helping the more we can accomplish.

Knot so Fast

by Lee Troyer

As you already know, if you are going to fly fish, you will have to tie some knots in your leader rig from time to time. Nobody knows this better than float guides on big name rivers that are virtually on the water every day during the season. Most of their time is spent rowing the drift boat, but second most is tying knots in client leader rigs.

But this article is not about guides but about the average fly fisherman although we can take some queues from guides. This article is also not to show you how to tie a particular knot. That information is readily available on the internet.

Whether you are fishing dry flies, streamers or nymphs, you will find yourself tying knots to either join two pieces of mono or tying on flies to mono. How do you decide what knot to use? Most fly fishermen I have talked to primarily use knots that are easy and quick to tie. After all, while you are on the water, you want to spend your time fishing and not tying knots.

However, all knots are not created equal. Some knots are much stronger than others. Here are a few facts. Some claim their special knot retains 100 percent strength. That is a myth. All knots slip before they break. The proper way to determine the strength of a knot is with a sudden jerk rather than a steady pull. Here is one trick a guide showed me while fishing the Miracle Mile on the North Platte this spring. Rather than trimming the tag end of a knot real close to the knot itself, he leaves about ¼ inch sticking out. Since every knot slips before it fails, this will reduce the failure rate. And his logic is that if the fish cannot see your tippet, they will not see that tag end either. This made sense to me.

Let's take tying a tippet to a leader. Probably the easiest knot to tie a tippet to a leader is the Surgeon's knot with the Blood knot being a close second. If you tie a Surgeon's knot, be aware that a double surgeon's knot is

only a 73% knot while a triple surgeon's knot is 88%. A blood knot is 81%. For fluorocarbon, the Seaguar knot is a good alternative and easy to tie. The overall champion for both nylon and fluorocarbon and for both heavy and light material is the Ligature knot. However, this knot is quite difficult to tie and I don't have young enough eyes or the finger dexterity, so I don't use it. The idea here is to use the strongest knot you can tie fairly easily. If a knot is going to break, you want a knot toward the terminal end of your rig or else you may find yourself essentially rebuilding your entire rig.

Now let's talk about terminal knots where we are tying tippet material to a fly or a mini tippet ring. When I ask fly fishermen what knots they use, most say the clinch knot. I suspect the reason is because it is the easiest and fastest knot for this purpose. Some anglers use the improved clinch knot. Apparently they must think if the clinch knot is a good knot, the improved clinch knot is better. That is not true. The improved clinch knot breaks at 78% while the clinch knot breaks at 92% but with a caveat. The clinch knot is prone to slippage and unless properly tightened, it will fail in the 60% range. That is one of the reasons my guide in Wyoming leaves a short tag end on his knots. Relatively easy knots to tie are the Orvis knot, Eugene bend, Palomar knot and Duncan Loop knot. They all test relatively strong compared to line test.

The object here is to become familiar with several knots that you feel comfortable tying and use stronger knots that are more difficult to tie in your rig toward the rod tip and more expedient knots that are not as strong toward the point of your rig. The point fly is the one you will tie the most often in a one, two or three fly rig. If you break off, let it be the point fly. It is the fastest portion of your rig to replace and get your fly on the water again.

Annual Spring Outing

by Mike Beachy

The Annual Spring Outing, gathering of the Little Elkhart Chapter of Trout Unlimited was a big success. May 7th was the date of this year's tenth anniversary outing. It was very well attended by 75 to 90 members. Everyone seemed to have a good time and come away with some information about the Little Elkhart River, its fishes and our Chapter.

We tried for the first time to conduct a Trout Fishing 101 Clinic with stream side instruction and in-stream demonstrations in conjunction with the Outing. The subjects covered were nymphing, dry flies, streamers, soft hackles and jig fishing log jams. The interest and attendance at each of the clinics proved popular and informative generating questions from the attendees for each of the five instructors. A handout was given to those attending with a synopsis of the techniques for future reference.

Our featured program was from Daragh Deegan an aquatic biologist. Daragh demonstrated the electroshocking equipment that he uses when doing fish population surveys on small streams like the Little E. It proved interesting to see the variety of fish species he came up with and how each species relates to the unique habitat of a cold water stream. Daragh first identified the species then spoke about the behavior and anatomy of each fish.



Charlie Ray was on hand all morning providing fly casting instruction for anyone wishing to improve their skills. Charlie also put on a casting obstacle course contest for those wishing to participate. Tim Pote gave a fly

tying instructional demonstration for those interested in fly tying. Chef Bill Myers worked his magic feeding the multitudes lunch in chow line fashion. After lunch we held raffles and giveaways for all those taking a chance at winning prizes and bidding items in an effort to raise funds for the Chapter. This year we did very well covering the expenses required to fulfill our budgetary needs to keep the Chapter solvent for another year.

I would like to personally thank all those volunteer members who donated time and effort to make this Outing a success. You should feel proud to have accomplished this painstaking task for the good of all those who attended. I would also like to thank all those members who were in attendance at this year's Outing. I know many of you had to get up early and travel to get there. I hope you found the Outing worth the effort. We look forward to seeing many of you again at next year's Outing.

Warning to Summer Trout Fishermen

by Mike Beachy

This summer trout fishing the Little Elkhart River has become problematic. The months of July and August have been extremely hot and dry. The river level is about as low as I can remember due to the lack of adequate rainfall. The low water level coupled with air temperatures in the 90's for extended periods of time have the water temperatures pushing the limits to what is survivable for our trout.

Trout are cold blooded creatures and cannot take the heat. Brown trout are more tolerant than rainbows but all trout are affected by warm water temperatures. 70-degree water temperature is at the limit of what a rainbow can stand. Warmer water cannot hold as much oxygen as colder water and that makes it tough for the trout to "breathe". Once caught trout have a difficult time reviving after the release, under these conditions. It puts too much stress on the trout. That is why we ask trout fishermen to restrain themselves and not fish when the river temperature is warm and the water level is low. I would like all summer trout fishermen carry a thermometer and check the temp prior to fishing and throughout the day. I have seen the water temperature go up as much as 5 degrees over the course of a day.



Under these weather conditions there are a lot of farmers pulling water out of the Little Elkhart River and Rowe Eden Ditch for irrigation purposes. That does not help with the water level. We also are more apt to have bacteria and algae blooms that eat up the oxygen suspended in the water. It is really easy to kill every trout caught even with careful handling.

Please take precautions when trout fishing this time of year. We have worked really hard to develop this trout fishery and we do not want to waste a fish due to negligence.

Deer Season

by Mike Beachy

October will soon be here and with it will come the beginning of the deer hunting season. LECTU has entered into an unwritten agreement with the property owners who own property along the catch and release section of the Little Elkhart River to not trout fish this section during the deer hunting season in exchange we have their permission to fish the river during the remaining portion of the year.

This is for two reasons. First and foremost is for the fishermen's safety. I do not know what it feels like to get hit with an arrow fixed with a razor broad-head or a 12-gauge slug nor do I want to find out how. I don't think any trout is worth that risk. Secondly these folks own this property and they take their deer hunting very seriously. For us to go tromping around on their private property while they are attempting to hunt, scaring the deer and whatever would most certainly make them upset. We have spent a lot of time working on the relationship between our Chapter and the property owners in order to obtain this cart blank access. The last thing we want is to ruffle the feathers of those who have granted us this access.

There is a short section of the catch and release section that remains "open" and accessible to fishermen that is owned by the City of Middlebury near the town of Middlebury. It runs from Riverbend Park upstream through the city water well field. Even when fishing this section, it is recommended that you wear a blaze orange hat during the deer hunting season for your own safety.

Please stay out of the private property areas of the catch and release from October till early January.

Dry Fly Fishery

by Mike Beachy

Trout fishing the Little Elkhart River is always related to weather. Weather dictates the river conditions, so fishing techniques need to be flexible in order to be successful. The summer season brings hot air temperatures but not always low water levels. The summer of 2015 was one of high water conditions. In June of 2015 we had a flood that brought the river water level up and out of its banks. That ended up disrupting fishing conditions from what is generally normal summer trout fishing tactics.



In a summer with moderate to high water level conditions a good nymph will kill it. Last summer was the summer of Czech Nymphing. I always knew of the technique and studied George Daniels book on Dynamic Nymphing but had not done it very much. My buddy and LECTU member Andy Kitson made it his mission to perfect it. His modified style of Czech nymphing for the Little E proved to be an efficient way to successfully and consistently take trout from the deep runs. Although new at this game Andy coached me into being a believer of this technique and it is now in my arsenal.

This summer the water level is low to very low and the heat is almost unfishable. Under these conditions you have got to be careful not to trout fish with water temps approaching 70 degrees. That restricts trout fishing to the early mornings or only in cold front situations. Water temperatures

70 degrees and above will prove fatal to trout upon being caught and released because the water oxygen levels are so low that the trout will not be able to recover. Even if the trout swims away when released they will die later because they cannot "breathe". Despite the heat this summer we have been blessed with night time cool downs and it is not unusual to arrive at the stream at sunup to find water temps in the mid 60's when the midday air temperatures the day prior were in the 90's. The Little Elkhart River water temps fluctuate quite a bit especially in the catch and release section of stream throughout the day.

I do a lot of nymph fishing during the summer by dabbing a nymph under log jams with a technique I call "Jig

fishing”. At low water the only hiding spots in the river are in and under the cover. In the Little Elkhart that cover is woody debris. Trout flock to log jams. I generally walk the banks from log jam to log jam and focus on this technique. It is a good way to target these hiding trout. This year I was doing that however I started to walk the river rather than travel down the bank and noticed that there were a lot of trout sitting out in mid river utilizing little to nothing holds. In other words I was spooking a lot of trout. These trout were holding in very shallow water nearly impossible to nymph in because they were in and around sticks and logs and not even in the deepest part of the runs like I would expect to find at low water conditions.

I have never relied on dry fly fishing in the Little Elkhart although I have taken trout on dries when I see one feeding on top. This year I decided to have a go at all these trout I was spooking and never fishing for. I started using a little black foam beetle and working the river in an upstream fashion. Moving upstream at a slow pace I would fan cast the river as far as I could cast in and around the trees and branches. I was amazed at how many trout I was taking on the dry fly and in extremely shallow areas. I have now changed out flies and a parachute madam X is working great. I believe that in the later summer as the terrestrials get bigger a madam X can imitate about anything like a caddis, grasshopper or spider. I stick with a small size like a size 12-14. One advantage to fishing dries is that if you place fly line conditioner on your fly line and leader it will float nicely right over underwater snags and the trout really seem to respond.



I fish with an 8 foot 4-weight rod with a 5 weight floating fly line. The rod is fast action and the added weight of the line helps it to load faster and cast easier. The 8-foot length helps to make long accurate casts with tight loops required to shoot the fly under tree limbs hanging down towards the water surface. I use a 9 foot 5X tapered mono leader and most of my casts are not making a gentle landing. Many times I get a take as soon as the fly smacks the surface. I believe it imitates a terrestrial falling from a tree overhead or a hopper taking a stray flight path.

Casting a dry fly can be very frustrating on the Little Elkhart River because of all the overhead trees and snags where you need to back cast. I look at it like playing miniature golf, playing off the obstacles. It does make you a better caster if you can maintain your composure when you get hung up over and over again. A person's success with a dry fly is very much coupled with their ability to cast accurately without making a bunch of false casts. A bad cast, hitting the water during false casts and too much movement while taking up your casting position will alert these wary fish.

Of course all the eats are visual and that makes for an exciting moment. My guide buddy in Colorado says that one trout on a dry is worth three on a nymph. I'm not completely sold on that but taking trout on the surface is certainly a fun way to fish when the river is low and the summer temperatures allow for trout fishing

Brown Trout Stocking

by Mike Beachy

For the past 9 years the Little Elkhart Chapter of Trout Unlimited has been stocking the catch and release section of the Little E with brown trout. This year proved to be a bit of a challenge due to heavy rains we received in mid-May. The rain made for soft soil and difficulty getting the hatchery truck close to the river. Our delivery finally happened in early June when things dried out. This year our brown trout came from Crystal Springs Hatchery in Muskegon Michigan. The funding for the trout came from the Adopt-A-Trout fundraising campaign we ran last winter and spring.

500 browns that were 8 to 10 inches in length were planted in three separate locations over the 2-mile section of catch and release. In addition, 100 “larger” browns were also planted. Those trout averaged around 16 inches with several being unexpectedly large. These larger trout were placed with the hopes of jump starting a bigger breeding population.

Each year we are finding more and more evidence of natural reproduction happening in the Little Elkhart. Sighting spawning redds in the fall was the first clue. Catching small browns in the 4 to 5-inch range was the second. There is some stocking of brown trout being done by the Elkhart Conservation Club but they have now started to hold their trout until about 6 to 8 inches prior to stocking and they are stocking areas far from the catch and release section both above and below.

This year for the very first time that I can remember the Indiana Department of Fisheries stocked 500 brown trout into the Little Elkhart River about 7 inches in length. These trout were planted about 8 miles downstream of Middlebury. The brown trout came from a Federal Hatchery in Tennessee and are the same trout the DNR uses to stock the Brookville Tailwater system in southern Indiana. This was a welcome sight. We have expressed the stocking of brown trout by the IDNR as opposed to rainbow trout for many years. Even though these trout were not raised in Indiana hatcheries we welcome these in addition to the state stocked rainbows. Without our brown trout stocking success, I do not believe the Little Elkhart River would have been considered as a brown trout stocking site.



All of these brown trout stockings are good for the fishery. I wish we didn't have to stock at all however we must remember we live in Indiana not Colorado. We are lucky to have a cold water stream to trout fish in at all. Hopefully with better habitat, cleaner water and more fishermen practicing catch and release trout fishing we will get a self-sustaining fishery someday.

Middlebury Summer Festival Youth Fishing Derby

by Court Walker

On Saturday August 13, 2016, the Middlebury Summer Festival Youth Fishing Derby was held at the Essenhaus pond. This event, sponsored yearly by the LECTU, gives kids up to age 15 the chance to compete for various prizes, including the largest fish caught and the most fish caught in a designated age group, as well as a grand prize for the most fish caught overall. The competition was fierce this year from all of the age groups with some great catches! This year's winners were:

0-5 Year Age Group	Austin Miller	30 fish total
	Austin Miller	10"

largemouth bass

6-10 Year Age Group	Jay Gingerich	33 fish total
	Trevor Miller	16.5"

largemouth bass

11-15 Year Age Group	Aaron Cripe	27 fish total
	Alec Hershberger	13"

largemouth bass

This year's grand prize winner was 6 year old Jay Gingerich. Jay tore it up this year by landing 33 fish in 2 hours! He took home the tournament grand prize which was a rod and reel combo. Congratulations Jay! A big thank you goes out to Tom Enright and Jim Cameron from the Middlebury Parks Department for their tireless effort and dedication in organizing and promoting this event! And many thanks too to LECTU volunteers Wayne Andrews, Mike Beachy, and Bill and Penny Myers for serving as honorary judges. We couldn't have done it without you!



Amigo: My Friend

by Court Walker

On June 11, 2016, fellow LECTU chapter members Keith Loutzenhiser, Director of Youth Education, Don Fiwek and me had the privilege of teaching fly casting to a group of young men involved in the Camp Amigo "E3 – Survival Skills For Life" program at Camp Amigo in Sturgis, MI. The E3 program is a partnership between Amigo Centre, Goshen Middle School and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Elkhart County. Each year, eighteen at-risk boys who are entering the 6th grade are accepted into the E3 program from each of the seven Goshen elementary schools. Engaging, Empowering and Equipping these young men for success is what the E3 mission is all about.

This year, five boys along with their mentors, and program director Cheryl Mast, came to learn about the various aspects of fly fishing. Keith Loutzenhiser put on a great talk about fly patterns and the food sources for fish that they imitate, while Don Fiwek pointed out each corresponding fly. While many of the boys had some experience with fishing, they really enjoyed this part of the class because they had no idea what makes up the primary diet of a fish, and were surprised that they ate more than "worms and other fish." A large part of our time was spent with them on the basics of fly casting. While three hours isn't exactly a





huge block of time to explain to someone (young or old) how to cast, they all took to it pretty naturally after some good natured coaxing, snagging and tangling. Before long however, the guys were managing to get the line out there pretty good. Itching to try their new skills on the water, we had each one select a fly that they wanted to try out. We tied on for them, they donned their safety glasses and off to the channel we went. The day was hot and the sun was bright, but nothing could match their intensity that day! While no one landed a fish, there were some hits and close calls. Even more prevalent that day was the sound of laughter and excitement. Sounds that I think many of these young guys don't very often get to hear or express quite as often as some of us do. But for a brief time that day, they did. We all did. And LECTU is going to be a part of this program as long as they'll have us to make sure they do.

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