

LECTU
LITTLE ELKHART CHAPTER TROUT UNLIMITED

TROUT LINES



President's Message

By Mike Beachy

Fall is a bittersweet time of year to trout fish the Little Elkhart River. On the one hand the trout are out and about during the middle of the day, aggressive and wanting to take streamers. On the other hand it is the start of deer hunting season and we voluntarily close the majority of the Catch and Release section of river.

From October through the end of deer season in early January the section of the catch and release that flows through property owned by the City of Middlebury remains open for trout fishing. This section is fairly short extending from the City Well Field to Riverbend Park. There is an additional area outside of the C&R section extending from the border of the C&R through Riverbend Park and on downstream past State Road 13 to the downstream border of Kreider Park. This area outside the C&R does get pounded during the early portion of the trout season after the State plants the rainbows but after that initial onslaught it gets very little pressure. This section makes for a nice winter fish.

It is a pleasant time of year to fish. No longer are you sweating to death at midday and battling mosquitoes nor do you need to be on the river at the break of dawn to find active trout. Crisp mornings, mild days and moderate flows make for nice outings.

The larger mature adult brown trout are on the move searching for a mate and looking for favorable spawning habitat. These browns can be very territorial and aggressive and that equates to streamer time. The river generally remains stable in visibility and flow with water temperatures in the low 60's and dropping with the approaching winter. This newsletter has an article on fall-winter streamer techniques.



As fall wanes and the temperatures decrease with approaching snow and winter the trout fishing opportunity window shortens to where midday is about the only time the trout are active. Fishing is sometimes very good in December so I never give it up.

Fall is also a time to observe the other wild life associated with the river. While standing in the river last fall I had a really nice buck chase a doe on the bank right next to where I was standing. I heard something coming through the woods so I held really still and they paid no attention to me at all as they went past. Mink are also very active working the banks of the river this time of year as are raccoons and the occasional skunk. All of which I have seen time to time come right by me as I am fishing.

I generally start to see brown trout spawning redds at the end of October until Thanksgiving. This is something really neat to observe and fishermen need to be aware so you do not walk on these spawning areas. These redds are usually found in fast flow under some kind of cover like a log or low hanging branches. Natural reproducing brown trout in the Little E is something we should all be proud of.

Where are We Going

by Mike Beachy

In mid-October I was invited to speak to the Indianapolis Fly Caster's Club about the Little Elkhart River and LECTU. They are a good bunch of guys and my program was well received.

I presented a slide show depicting our Chapter's first ten years. This included our endeavor to establish a year round trout fishery on the Little Elkhart River. Prior to our efforts the river was basically a State program of put and take rainbow trout fishing that on a good year provided trout for four to six weeks at best. After the initial few weeks the hatchery rainbows would all but disappear leaving a trout population too low to make the effort of fishing for them.

To establish a year round trout fishery we needed to focus on brown trout that are better suited for the environment and set up residency. We also needed to have an area where these browns would be protected from harvest in an effort to maintain a fishable population. We influenced the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fisheries to designate the catch and release section of the river and then we started to plant 8 to 10 inch brown trout.

Behind the scenes LaGrange County took the initiative to address the water quality of the Little Elkhart River and hired Dave Arrington of LGL Associates to rehabilitate the river. Dave's project addressed the issues of barnyard runoff, over grazing of livestock on the banks and sedimentation. After putting in several million dollars of grant monies towards research and implementation of best management practices, we now have a river that runs with clean cold water. This project was very important to our ambition and was very important in the big scheme of things for trout survivability.



The next task we went after was rehabilitation of the C&R section to make for better habitat for better trout holding capacity. This was an effort to keep as many of our stocked browns in the C&R section and available to fishermen. Our efforts paid off and our brown trout population increased in the C&R. With the population increase we began to see natural reproduction of these brown trout as they matured. Not only were we catching baby browns smaller than we were stocking we observed fall spawning redds. In an effort to get more natural reproduction we started to stock some larger browns that were mature enough to spawn the first fall after stocking.

Due to the success of our brown trout reestablishment project this year the Indiana DNR planted 500 brown trout into the river outside the C&R. This is really good to see.

At the end of my presentation I was asked "What is next?" I had to think about it for a second but my

answer was several fold. First of all we need to keep up what we are doing with the brown trout stocking and the habitat improvement. If possible expand it into other sections of the river.

Secondly we need to establish good relationships with the private property owners throughout the entire river system. If this trout fishery takes off like it has over our first ten years, I can see that fishermen pressure may become an issue. The Little Elkhart River is not a large river and could get over pressured especially in the 2 mile C&R section. That means there needs to be expansion into other sections of the stream in order to spread out the pressure. Simply having more folks on the river sets us up for conflicts with private property owners and restriction of access. Restriction of access could be a very big deal in the future if we do become proactive.

The third area I would like to see LECTU expand on is more catch and release protected water on the Little Elkhart River system. History has shown catch and release restricted non-harvest fishing really works. In the two mile section we have now, we have established a year round brown trout fishery that did not exist ten years ago. Catch and release played a big role in this development. Harvesting trout from a small stream would put us back into the put and take model and that historically provides a short term fishery at best.

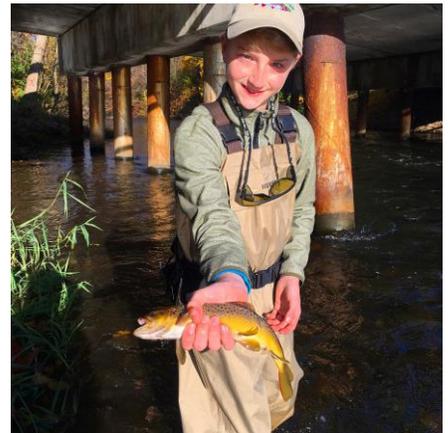
The benefits of the C&R has proliferated out beyond its borders seeding other parts of the river. I would like to see another C&R section in the lower river in order to have a "hatchery" in that portion of the system.

LECTU on the Road

The Little Elkhart Chapter of Trout Unlimited will be on the road this winter/spring with display booths at several Indiana fly fishing shows.

LECTU will be at the Great American Fly Fishing Expo in Indianapolis February 17,18 & 19 th at the Indiana State Fairgrounds. We will be in a booth in the "clubs" and fly tying section of the fly fishing area. This is the second year for this show that seems to be growing in size and attracting a lot of interest.

LECTU will also be in Fort Wayne at the Three River Fly Fishermen Show April 1. This is a one day show that has been a great little fly fishing and fly tying show.



Please stop by our table and say hello, meet some of the guys and talk some trout fishing if you are able to attend either one of these shows.

2017 Outing Date Announcement

The Annual Spring Outing is scheduled for Saturday May 6, 2106. The Outing will be held at Riverbend Park, Middlebury, Indiana. The Annual Spring Outing is the only gathering of our entire membership held the first Saturday in May. It features programs, casting instruction, demonstrations, a cook out and fundraising. More details to follow in the future.

Winter Fly Tying Sessions

Over the Winter LECTU has been holding fly tying sessions for those who wish to tie their own flies. We began as an informal group teaching each other techniques and sharing patterns. Last year we had local guys who were good tiers come in and teach us several patterns they found productive. These instructors provided materials and instructed “us” on how to tie their flies. As a group we tied flies for donation to needy fly fishing organizations like Project Healing Waters, Casting for Recovery and others through the St Joe River Fly Fishermen sponsored Tie-A-Thon. We created flies for our own fundraising event, The Annual Spring Outing in early May.

The sessions are a lot of fun and build good fellowship. We do a lot of joking around but learn a lot in the process. We share ideas, patterns and techniques. Talk always turns to fishing. When the weather discourages fly fishing it gives us all something to do.

These sessions are open to anyone wishing to learn and share, no matter what your skill level is. Those wishing to participate need to bring your own vise, thread selection tools and light if normal indoor lighting is not sufficient. If you would like to share a pattern please bring enough materials for everyone to participate along with you as you demonstrate. There have been as many as 15 participants at these events. There is no charge.

The sessions are held on Saturday mornings at Keith Loutzenhiser’s home, 10475 Cottage Grove Drive, Middlebury, IN. We generally start at 9:00 am, have a lunch around noon and quit in the early afternoon, around 1:00 or 2:00. The scheduled Dates for this seasons fly tying gatherings will be November 19, December 17, January 21, February 25, March 18 and April 15.

Keith would appreciate an RSVP so he has an idea on how many folks will be attending. You can contact him by phone or text message at (574) 524-5140 or by e-mail at keithloutzenhiser@yahoo.com. You can attend without an RSVP too if you decide at the last minute to come out and tie.

Featured Fly “The Haymaker”

by Mike Beachy

I have always been a big fan of Charlie Craven. In my opinion he is one of the modern-day innovators of trout flies and fly tying. In the fall 2016 addition of Fly-Fisherman Magazine this fly was featured by Charlie as a swimming nymph streamer he utilized as a trailing fly behind a larger streamer. I tied several of these and tried them on the Little Elkhart when the river was high and muddy. I was getting a lot of short hits on my Clouser type streamer. The additional Haymaker trailer was getting the majority of the fish. The weight of the fly gets it deep very quickly and yet it has a small profile. I did find that the combination weight of the two flies was in many cases too much so I dropped the front fly and used the Haymaker by itself. I was pleasantly surprised at the results. I generally like a streamer that has a lot more flash. The Haymaker essentially has none. It does have rubber legs and in theory they are supposed to put out a vibration that gets the trout’s attention. Perhaps that was what makes this fly successful.



Hook- Size 8 Mustad 9671 Streamer Hook
Bead- Tungsten 5/32 Gold (4mm)
Lead- .25 Lead Wire
Tail- Marabou
Legs- Fine Rubber
Body- Medium Variegated Chenille
Collar- Hen Hackle Feathers
Thread- Any small diameter thread to match collar

Colors: Black Marabou, Black Hen Hackle, Black Legs and Dark Olive/Yellow Variegated Chenille are my favorite. You can experiment with various color schemes, sizes and weights. This imitates a swimming creature and nothing in particular.

I fished the Haymaker as you would a conventional streamer but I also used it like a heavy nymph at times twitching as it drifted downstream with the flow through a deep spot. It is both a tiny streamer and a large nymph.

It is an easy tie and a fly that I would recommend having in one's arsenal of options. I will most likely experiment with some additional flash in the future but I cannot argue with it the way Charlie described it be tied.

Step 1) Pop on bead head and wrap lead wire ½ way down shank of hook, about 10 wraps.



Step 2) Tie in marabou tail about a shank length long starting just behind the hook point. Tie down to the beginning of lead wraps. Tie in first set of rubber legs in front of tail and wrap down one leg on each side of the tail extending slightly longer than marabou. Strip off some fluff from chenille and tie in strings at tail.

Step 3) Tie in 2 sets of legs-first set at junction of lead and marabou and another at about the mid lead section. Leave legs long to aid in the next step, we will trim later.



Step 4) Wrap chenille forward tightly against itself. Watch legs so they do not get caught up in chenille as you go. Pull legs at straight angles to the hook shank as you wrap chenille through the legs. Tie off chenille just short of bead head.

Step 5) Tie in two hen saddle hackle feathers by the tips with the curve facing the shank. Lift the married feathers up and with damp fingers pull hackle fibers back from shaft. Make two wraps around the shank behind bead like a soft hackle fly. Secure with thread wraps and snip excess. Fibers should be a little shorter than chenille body length.



Step 6) Tie off, cement then trim rubber legs a little longer than hen hackle fibers.

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