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## President's Message

As I enter the last year of my presidency of the Merrimack River Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited, I am filled with a wide range of emotions as I think about the past three years. First and foremost, I feel proud and privileged to have been able to work with all those who have served on the Board of Directors during that time. Chris Hunt, Curtis Page, Jack Pollner and Mike Croteau have served on the Board for the entire three years of my presidency and I value their friendship and contributions they have made during that time. What is more encouraging and exciting is that I was able to welcome four new members to the Board during the last several months. Bob Bluhm, Ted Norris, Todd Nelson and George Rollend have jumped in with both feet and are actively participating in the many tasks that we need to do as a chapter. Their enthusiasm and fresh perspectives are much appreciated. I feel confident that we will have an effective and dynamic Board of Directors for several years to come.

Over the last year, three of our Board members have stepped down: Burr Tupper, Paul Belanger and Keith Belanger. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank each of them. I can't even count the number of years that Burr served on the Board. I know that this is my tenth year and he preceded me by quite a few years. He served in various capacities, including President and Treasurer and his contributions of his time and ideas were innumerable. In addition, he was very active in the NH State Council of TU. Paul Belanger was with us just a short time but was invaluable at assisting us in upgrading our audio-visual equipment. And his son Keith provided the fresh perspective of youth to the Board.

And as I'm sure you are all aware, we lost another board member, Ron Sowa, who unexpectedly passed away in late 2018. Without Ron's guidance and assistance during first several months of my presidency, I would have been lost. Ron served on our Chapter's Board of Directors for over ten years and was Chapter President from 2012 through 2016. During that time he was involved in all aspects of the Chapter's activities. His friendly demeanor, organizational skills and thorough knowledge of fly fishing are sorely missed. Ron was the driving force behind the revitalization of the FlyFish NH Show and thanks to him it has become one of the most important fishing shows in the Northeast. Not a meeting goes by that I don't think of him.

We are well along in the nomination process for our Chapter Officer Elections that will be

held during the May, 2020 chapter meeting. We will keep you posted as to who the nominees are as we get closer to that meeting. Meanwhile, if you are interested in becoming a member of the Board of Directors, we would like to hear from you. We are always interested in fresh ideas and perspectives. If you are willing to serve on the Board, please let one of the members listed above know. In the past, we have had several women serve as members and officers but there are none currently on the Board. I would like to see that remedied.

Taking a look back at the past year's activities, we had a very successful year. We had a fresh panel of speakers at our monthly chapter meetings who provided interesting and varied presentations. Our goal was to avoid any repeat speakers from recent years and I think we succeeded. Our Trout-in-the-Classroom program continued to be a great success as well.

The 2019 Fly Fish NH Show was a tremendous success. Thanks to all who attended and thanks especially to all who volunteered. Your willingness to lend a hand wherever it was

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needed and your positive attitudes certainly helped make the show the great success it was. It seemed that whenever I needed someone to help out with something, one or more of the volunteers were always there to do it. The exhibitors especially appreciated your help. I can't remember how many times that an exhibitor told me that they exhibit at many of the fly fishing shows up and down the east coast and that this is their favorite. They love the venue, the management of the venue, the setup, the attendance, the quaintness and the camaraderie. And nowhere else they go do they have such friendly volunteers helping out as much as you all did. I am very proud to be associated with a Chapter such as ours that could pull something like this off.

I got a ton of comments from the exhibitors and attendees about how they were happy that we honored Ron Sowa the way that we did. You'll be happy to learn that we collected a little over \$600 for the Ron Sowa Memorial Youth Fund which was donated to the NH TU Kids Trout Camp in his name. We hope to have a great slate of presentations again at our monthly meetings this year. I am pleased to report that three of our new Board members,

Bob Bluhm, Ted Norris and Todd Nelson, volunteered to form a Speaker Presentation Committee. They have been busy over the past few months soliciting and scheduling speakers for our 2019-2020 monthly chapter meetings. You can find the current schedule elsewhere in this newsletter. I am also excited to report that due to their hard work and fresh ideas, we will be having multiple speakers at each of our meetings, which we hope will promote increased interest and attendance. We will keep you posted on upcoming meetings on our website and Facebook page.

If you are new to the chapter or are a long time member who doesn't get to the meetings often, please come to one of the meetings. It's a great way to meet the "regulars", make new friends and engage in lively conversation about what we love to do – fly fishing. And please introduce yourself to me. I would like to make your acquaintance. Hope to see you all at one of the monthly meetings.

Tight Lines,  
*Joel Kasper*, President

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## **The monthly meetings of the 2018 – 2019 Merrimack River Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited will commence beginning October 8, 2019 and will run through May 12, 2020.**

The Board of Directors has been working throughout the summer months to arrange interesting and varied monthly presentations on different subjects pertaining to fly fishing and cold water fisheries conservation. We will also be resurrecting the MRVTU Newsletter and this website with future meeting information and trout fishing info for our members.

We have lined up a great list of presentations and new member recruitment program beginning at our first meeting on **October 8**, and running throughout our regular meeting schedule. Below is a list of presenters and topics for our **October 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting:**

- **Piscataquog Land Conservancy (PLC)**, Paul Doscher and Chris Wells will present on stream restoration and habitat-improvement projects in the Piscataquog watershed and around New Hampshire. They will also provide an overview of PLC and how its land conservation work supports healthy watersheds and cold-water fisheries.
- **Bryce Stetson** the MRVTU attendee at the Level 2 Trout Camp. Our Chapter sponsored Bryce at this past Trout Camp. Bryce will be presenting a brief overview of his experience at the camp.
- **Raffle** for assorted flies tied by our fellow MRVTU member Todd Nelson.

**Membership recruitment and rewards.** When current members bring a **new member (expired memberships of**

**3 yrs are eligible)**. MRVTU will pay the new members dues for one year which includes a free subscription to TROUT magazine. The MRVTU member who recruited the new member will receive his/her choice of a MRVTU shirt or hat.

### **Here is a list of future meeting speakers and topics: November 12**

- **Rick Little, Shadcreek Flies** <http://www.shopshadcreekflies.com>
  - Well known and respected professional fly tier.
  - Presentation: "Bugs and Smelt-Favorite Flies and Streamside Musings"

This is one of my most popular programs and is great for fly fishermen and fly tyers. It is designed to stimulate a discussion about what is a "favorite fly" and to get anglers thinking about the flies that they use and why. It is a fun, light-hearted program that includes photos of flies, fishing locations and outdoor scenery. I share some of my favorite freshwater patterns and the experiences and stream-side observations that have contributed to making these flies "favorites".

- Raffle for 8 of Rick's hand tied flies

### **December 10**

- **Annual MRVTU Social**, food, drinks, raffles and fishing trip presentations.
- **Mike Sousa, winner of last years float trip.** Mike will review his trip with words and pics.
- **Joel Kasper**, our Chapter President will review his Bonefish Bahamas fishing trip with words and pics.

**Schedule continued on back page**



I should have listened to my 9<sup>th</sup> grade math teacher who once said “you don’t realize how confusing something is until you try to explain it”. Now I spent 28 years teaching so I know what she meant but her words all came back to me as I stood at the counter of the fly shop buying things I probably didn’t need but also scoring on some priceless advice. Isn’t that why we all go to a fly shop? Is it really about product or are we trying to get an advantage on our fellow anglers by learning a new technique or finding another “hot spot”? As I counted out the payment a middle aged lady walked in and looked very puzzled, and clearly out of place, as she scanned the shop. The owner asked if she needed help and she proceeded to tell him that her husband was coming up to fly fish the next day and that he asked her to get a report. The shop owner then asked if her husband needed any flies or equipment to which she replied “no”. I suspect that had she allowed the shop owner to put together a collection, even small, of the “go to” flies the report would have been a bit more “user friendly”. It was obvious she had little experience with fly fishing as she immediately took out a pen and pad of paper and focused on the shop owner’s every word and he obviously saw this as an opportunity to really lay it on. “The river is running about fifty cfs above normal and I would suggest that he use a size ten Madame X as a stimulator with a number twenty bead head olive scud dropper back eighteen inches on a nine foot leader with three feet of six-x tippet on a eight-six five-weight four piece T three loaded with weight forward sharkskin floating line. If he’s keeping fish make sure he knows the slot limit”? When it comes to reports I am all ears as you never know when an opportunity might present itself to gathering more information. But this time I only watched the woman’s expression. Without lifting the pen off of the paper she just kept writing. She then read it back to him word for word, sort of. She thanked the shop owner and left.

I also left the store and as I walked to my truck I passed the woman as she stood at her car with cell phone and pad of paper in hand. She turned and asked me “before I call my husband could you help me out and explain something?” That’s what happens when you put trout stickers on your truck. Before I could even acknowledge her question with an answer she looked at her notes and said “I’m a bit confused about this fishing lingo”

“Confusing, what’s so confusing”, I thought to myself.

Before I offer an explanation to this woman let me think about this for a minute. Where should I start. Should I try to explain that as numbers get bigger things get smaller... sometimes. Or is it that as numbers get smaller things get bigger... sometimes. Then of course there are exceptions.

It got me to really thinking. She is probably right, that to a casual observer or newcomer the terminology and lingo can make your head spin. I’ve fly fished for over a half century and I guess I just take for granted what I have learned. I have always brushed aside the comments that fly fishing was too difficult to understand, that it took a simple process and made

it complex and that it created a secret culture with its’ own language. Well maybe there is

some validity to the last part of that statement. After all where else can you use “Tippet, butt section, double haul, tight loop and rocket taper” in the same sentence and have it mean something?

I looked at her notes, which had numbers everywhere, and said “let me explain this to you”. I figured if I could just get through this uninterrupted it might make some sort of sense to her, and more importantly allow me to get to the river more quickly.

*“First about the numbers: when it comes to fly sizes the higher the number the smaller the fly. So a size 10 is larger than a size 20.*

*When it comes to fly lines the higher the number the heavier the line. A 5 weight is heavier than a 3 weight.*

*When it comes to tippets the higher the number the smaller the diameter of the line. A 6x tippet is smaller than a 4x tippet.*

*And how about rods? Well, the higher the number the heavier the rod and the heavier the line it will throw. So a 10 weight rod will throw a heavier line than a 5 weight rod. You match rod weight to line weight. A 5 weight rod with a 5 weight line. Pretty simple. You can also use a 5 weight rod to throw a 6 weight line but you probably don’t want to try and throw a 4 weight line on that 5 weight rod.”* I paused and looked at her and asked, “Confused yet”? I didn’t really want an answer so before she could get a word in I started again. “Oh and speaking of tippets we’re talking about short pieces of line attached to, or part of leaders, that are attached to the fly. Do you match tippets to fly lines? No. A leader with a 6x tippet will work very well on a 3 weight line. There is no correlation. Tippets match the fish and the fly, the size of each. Small trout require small flies and small tippets. But remember small here, as in flies and tippets, means big, as in number size. So a small fly, say a #20 BWO, requires a tippet of either a 6X or the smaller diameter 7X.” “Still following?” I asked rhetorically. I was afraid to make eye contact with her as I paused and before she could even attempt to interject a comment I continued giving her a 5 minute dissertation on dry flies, wet flies, nymphs, etc, etc. I was on a roll. When I finally finished I looked at her. Her face was pale and mouth had dropped and I began to worry that I had just sent her mind off into deep space, confused and lost. She looked at me in awe and simply said “I only need to know, what is the slot limit?”.

*About the author:*

*Rick Forge is veteran NH guide who is passionate about the outdoors. He has appeared in the ESPN Outdoor Games and OLN Fly Fishing Masters Competition. During the spring and summer he is a fishing guide/fly-fishing instructor and during the winter he makes the rounds of the outdoor shows doing seminars and presentations. He is the owner of Rick Forge Outdoors and Rick Forge Productions. For more information visit his website at [www.rickforge.com](http://www.rickforge.com)*



By Scott Biron, AMFF Ambassador

**T**rolling for Landlock Salmon is a rite of passage in the northeast. As the ice disappears on the lakes, anglers brave icy water, cold winds as well as snow, sleet and rain in pursuit of these fish. Anglers usually have a short window to catch landlocks when the ice fades from the lakes and the smelt (baitfish) are running close to the shore and near the waters surface.

As the smelt in a lake go, so go the salmon. If the smelt are plentiful then the salmon will often be healthy. This spring on one outing with a friend, we were trolling in less than five feet of water and each time we passed a small feeder brook (loaded with smelt) we each had hook ups on our flies. It was in our opinion a banner day that we still are talking about.

Salmon trolling anglers are very passionate, secretive and opinionated about their pursuit. They go to great lengths to protect their fishing spots and the flies they are using. Recently, I was instructing a fly tying class when someone came to me asking about the Purple Smelt fly pattern. The pattern was popular many years ago but had faded away for other more modern patterns.

I explained that my research on the fly had uncovered two interesting facts. It was an extremely effective fly pattern on Lake Sunapee in NH and it was a fly that was originated by Ora Smith a tyer from Keene, NH.

This required more research which I was happy to take on. I knew the fly pattern was listed in Dick Stewart and Bob Leeman "Trolling Flies for Trout and Salmon". Additionally, I had seen a video of Ora Smith and he mentioned the fly, its popularity and effectiveness on Lake Sunapee.

### The pattern recipe is as follows:

**Hook:** Partridge 2-6, 7 or 9x

**Tag:** Silver tinsel

**Body:** Fluorescent red floss, silver tinsel ribbing

**Beads:** On tandems flies place small cylindrical silver beads on the connecting wire

**Throat:** Red synthetic or bucktail hair as long as the hook

**Wing:** Four lavender saddle hackles

**Shoulder:** Teal flank feather

**Check:** Jungle cock

**Head:** Black

Smith was noted for using synthetic bucktail on flies and I can only guess that being a frugal tyer he had that material readily available. I use real bucktail on mine because the synthetic material available today is not the right shade of red. The fly calls for lavender saddle hackles. The few times I had seen the fly tied it was more of a deep purple not a lavender.

A friend of mine who is a local librarian and angler had a handful of old Ora Smith flies that her dad had purchased many years ago. She put together a number of them she

wanted to give me and interestingly

enough there was a purple smelt among them. The wing was the lavender color listed in the pattern recipe.

I dug through my bins looking for lavender only to come up with a few stray saddle hackles from the 1960s that had seen better days. I looked everywhere for that shade of feather and came up short. Using the few feathers I had I tied the fly, carded it and had it with me at a few tying. This is where the story gets interesting. An older angler was looking at my flies when he picked up the Purple Smelt. He looked at me and said... "where did you get this"? I explained I tied it and used a sample from the fly's originator. "The guy from Keene, NH" he asked?

I explained the story to him and then he shared much more with me. He told me that this was "THE FLY" for fishing on Lake Sunapee. In fact, he went on to let me know that the bigger trout and landlock salmon that were caught on the lake were with this fly. Then he said the fly dropped off the radar when Ora Smith died. He too felt that the lavender color was hard to find.

I have been working with Ewing Feather Birds on a series of feathers they are marketing under my name. In one conversation with them I mentioned the lavender and sent them the exact shade. They hit a homerun and matched it perfectly. I began tying with the feathers and always having a few Purple Smelt on my table at shows and presentations.

In April of this year I did a talk on salmon flies for New Hampshire Fish and Game as part of their Adventure Talk series. One of the slides I showed was of the Purple Smelt. Again, someone made mention of the fly's effectiveness and how it had disappeared from the local shops.

Then a few months later I was doing a tying demonstration at the south end of Lake Sunapee when a person came to my table and specifically asked me about the pattern. His story was that his father and grandfather had used the fly on the lake and how great it was.

Now in my mind I had too many people who had said the same thing to me for there not to be some truth to it. Often my research on older patterns would lead me to way too much hearsay to feel good about a fly's history.

The one small question in a fly tying class had lead me on a path of discovery and ending with and ample supply of lavender feathers thanks to Ewing Feather Birds. I often look at these flies and try to reason why the originator came up with it. Ora Smith was an angler first. He got into fly tying because the fellow he was buying his flies from stopped tying.

He fished Lake Sunapee and I can only guess he used this pattern. Many of Ora's flies have teal shoulders. I've always found flies with teal to be highly effective. This year I will be doing a Featured Tyer presentation at The Fly Fishing Show and I might just demonstrate the Purple Smelt.

# Visit, Fish, & Picnic on 1.6-Mile Stretch of Ammonoosuc River Proposed for Conservation Acquisition On Saturday, October 12th

The NH Trout Unlimited Council is working with the Society for the Protection of NH Forests (“Forest Society”) and the NH Fish & Game Department to conserve 1.6 miles of a most beautiful section of the Ammonoosuc River in Bethlehem, NH. It is an “untouched” part of the river, carefully protected by being mostly in a river canyon. Copied below is a portion of a summary of the project written by the Forest Society:

*The Ammonoosuc (“small narrow fishing place” in Abnaki) is one of the largest rivers in the northern White Mountains, originating in Lakes of the Clouds on Mt. Washington’s western slope and flowing westward to the Connecticut River in Woodsville. With scenic vistas and key coldwater fisheries in its upper reaches, the Ammonoosuc still harbors wild brook trout as well as rainbows and browns.*

*To permanently protect important trout habitat and enhance angler access, the Forest Society seeks to acquire 260 acres that include frontage on the main stem of the Ammonoosuc River and seven feeder streams. One of those, Haystack Brook, has particular importance as a thermal refuge from higher summer temperatures in the main stem, and as prime spawning habitat for brookies.*

*The upstream end of this forested property starts on the opposite side of the river from the NH Fish and Game angler access parking lot on Rt. 302, two miles west of Twin Mountain. The Forest Society will construct an additional parking area three quarters of a mile further west, off Rt. 302, with a short trail down to an old railbed, thus providing full access to the river from the north. For access to the river from the south and Rt. 3, the Forest Society will accommodate three-season (non-winter) public parking and access at the existing entry to the southerly 180-acre portion of the property, where woods roads and trails lead to the interior and the river. This is where hunters may want to access superb habitat for upland game, deer and moose. Some Trout Unlimited members envision the potential for this property to host future TU programs such as Trout Camp for kids and the Healing Waters program for veterans.*

On Saturday, October 12th, from 10 am to 2 pm, the NH TU Council and the Ammonoosuc Chapter will hold an “Open House” on this property and riverside, so all NH TU members can see this beautiful area for themselves. This will also be an opportunity for members to fish in this section of the Ammonoosuc River as well in other nearby streams. The Ammo Chapter will host a simple hot dog cookout for attendees. A non-meat alternative can also be offered if requested. Tom Howe, Senior Director of Land

Conservation for the Forest Society and a TU member, will be available to answer questions about the project. If you can’t join us that day but want to learn more, go to: <https://forestsociety.org/project/ammonoosuc>

The event will take place rain or shine; shine would be much better! Fishing will be done for this event under the following conditions: fly fishing, single-hook/single-point barbless hook, catch-and-release, and under other NH Fish & Game regulations. **Please notify Art Greene (afgreene@roadrunner.com) before October 5 if you’re planning to attend and, if so, your approximate arrival time, how many in your group, and whether you’d like to fish-this will help with our logistics. Because of very limited parking presently available, carpooling is encouraged!**

## Directions-

**From the South:** From I-93 Northbound, take Exit 35 for Rt. 3-North to Twin Mountain. Go 10.3 miles on Rt. 302 to the center of Twin Mountain, at the junction of Rts. 3 and 302. Turn left onto Rt. 302-West and go 3.2 miles. Watch on your left for a dirt road and gated entry marked with balloons and the NH TU Council banner.

**From the West:** From the center of downtown Bethlehem, at the junction of Rts. 302 and 142, go east on Rt. 302 for 5.0 miles. Watch on your right for a dirt road and gated entry marked with balloons and the NH TU Council banner.

**From the North or East:** From Twin Mountain and the junction of Rts. 3 and 302, go west on Rt. 302 for 3.2 miles. Watch on your left for a dirt road and gated entry marked with balloons and the NH TU Council banner.

**From All Directions:** Turn off Rt. 302 into the marked entry where you’ll receive directions on where to park.

**We hope you’ll join us on October 12th to check out this fabulous place and project!**

**Merrimack River Valley Chapter  
Trout Unlimited**

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**January 14**

- **Bill Holleran from Red Brook Tenkara.**
  - Bill will discuss the various aspects and history of the Tenkara fly fishing, equipment, flies and technique.
- **Raffles for free stuff**

**February 11**

- **Tom Villemure, MRVTU member**
  - Tom will talk about his recent trip to Yellowstone

**March and beyond:**

**More great speakers and free stuff.**

**Say tuned !!**

Meetings are held at: **Sweeney Post of the American Legion 251 Maple Street, Manchester, NH.**

Guests and potential members are always welcome.

Sweeney has a cash bar and food for members available.

The regular meeting starts at 7:00 pm, doors open at 6:30 pm and usually lasts until around 9:00 pm.

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**9:00AM to 4:00PM**

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