



# *Trout Tales*

## Rocky River Chapter Trout Unlimited

September 2010



### **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

September is finally rolling in, with cooler temperatures, I hope. A special thanks to Damon Hearne for last month program on his efforts as Southeastern Land Protection Coordinator. Our September 15th meeting at REI is our Annual Meeting. We will be electing officers at this meeting. Your vote will count but only if you are there to cast it. Please plan to attend. I want to take this time to thank the membership for allowing me the honor and privilege to be the President for the past two years. A special thanks to Bill Thomas, Tim Wilhelm and Alen Baker for their special support and encouragement during this time.

The past two years have been good years for RRTU with the Trout In the Classroom projects (we now have 4), clean-up days on Wilson Creek (headwaters and the new DH section), work on the Goose Creek Bridge project (part of the Muddy Creek Project), partnering with South Mountain State Park for stream improvements and stockings, scholarships for Rivercourse campers, Winter Fly Tying Classes, the Friends of Rocky River Program and a \$5000 donation to TU for securing the purchase of the North Mills River/Big Creek Lodge Project. Your generosity in giving of you time, talents and money have made all these projects possible.

As I reflect back on why I enjoy being a member of TU it has to be that there are no ugly places to fish for trout. If I had to pick 'one stream' that made a lasting impression on me it would be Twenty Mile Creek in the GSMNP. Twenty Mile Creek has extremely easy access and though it is tight fishing for the most part provides the angler with an opportunity to catch all three species of trout. This little creek yielded the prettiest stream born brown trout I have ever seen. This little 10 - 12 inch trout had the blue halos around the red spots and was simply gorgeous. I have not even seen another Brown that even came close. Naturally, I did not bring a camera along but the picture in my mind has not dimmed over time.

As I thought about this Presidents Message, It became clear to me that almost everyone has 'one stream' that holds a special place in their memory. Most of these were at sometime or other either endangered by logging, farming, development or being in the private sector and posted. It was through the efforts of like minded individuals that belong to groups like Trout Unlimited that stood up for conservation, a National Park System, a State Park System, National Forest and a Department of Natural Resources that make most of these 'one streams' available for us to use.

The Friends of Rocky River program raised about \$3400 in its first year. We donated \$5000 to the acquisition of 80 acres on the North Mills River this year that will now allow public access to the river for future generations. This might be the 'one stream' for one of your grandchildren some day. It is by your generosity to RRTU that we may have similar opportunities in the future to protect other streams from development or improve existing watersheds to positively impact water quality. Ask yourself, how much you would give to protect your 'one stream' and consider making a donation to the FORR program. We now have a paypal button on the bottom of the home page of our website. ([www.rockyrivertu.org](http://www.rockyrivertu.org)) that will allow you to donate securely at anytime. Your donation will help to conserve, protect or restore the next generations 'one stream'.

Thank You ,  
Jim Mabrey

### **RRTU Calendar of Events**

Sep 15 ... RRTU annual meeting: Election of officers and new board members

Sep 25 ... South Mountain State Park - Nature Days

Oct 7-10 ... Appletree trip

Oct 20 ... RRTU meeting

## Annual Elections

The nominations committee has recommended the following individuals:

**Bill Thomas** - President

**Joyce Shepherd** – 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President

**Tom Adams** – 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President

**Erin Purves** – Treasurer

**Tim Wilhelm** – Secretary

**David Hollifield** – Director

**Alen Baker** – Director

(**Dave Stakel, Steve Craig, Paul Issacs and Jonathan Miller** have not reached the end of their terms will continue as directors)

## Friends of Rocky River (FORR)

In January 2010 RRTU launched a new fundraising initiative designed to eventually become the primary source of chapter income. With over 700 members, we feel confident that modest, annual pledges from members and business affiliates can raise the capital necessary to operate the chapter and sponsor our projects. Under the FORR program, we are challenging our members, friends and affiliates to make an annual donation to fund our activities.

During the month of August, **Dave Wilson** became a friend. Thanks Dave.

## Winter Flytying Opportunity

Coming soon to your Saturday's : RRTU flytying and story telling sessions. I say story telling as a more kind way of describing the *amazing* stories regarding the ones that "got away". I know that, personally, I have never lost a fish smaller than sixteen inches.

The months of November, December, January, February, and March will have one Saturday for us to meet and enjoy tying and generally hanging around. Everyone is invited. More details in the next issue.  
**Jack McNeary** and **Tom Adams** (Jack doesn't know I wrote this - Tom)



Damon Hearne receives Rocky River's donation to the North Mills River fund from Erin Purves (Treasurer) as Jim Mabrey (President) looks on.

## **FLY OF THE MONTH GREY FOX VARIANT**

While I was preparing what I wanted to say about the Grey Fox Variant I can across an article in the February 2008 Ozark Fly Fishers newsletter. It pretty much said everything I intended to say but uses real words and is easy to understand. I decided to quote most of it:

“A variant fly, regardless of hackle color, is a dry fly tied with proportions that deviate from commonly accepted standards. Specifically, the hackle and tail are tied long, the equivalent of a normally proportioned fly several hook sizes larger. The fly style emerged in Yorkshire in the late 19th century, during the same period when Halford and his disciples were developing the tenets for tying and fishing the modern dry fly on classic English chalk streams. Dr. William Baigent, an ardent tier from Northallerton, provided an alternative. He studied theories of light refraction and believed that optical patterns created by long-hackled dry flies provide a better imitation of fluttering wings than conventional flies. The long-hackled flies also floated well on swift currents and were less likely to spook trout in quiet water because they settled gently on the surface. He developed about a dozen fly patterns intended to imitate common local insects. The flies

came to be known as 'variants' to indicate that their proportions deviated from conventional standards.

"The American with the most influence on the development of variants, however, was Preston Jennings. He corresponded with Baigent, and in 1935 popularized several variant patterns in his groundbreaking *A Book of Trout Flies*, essentially the first American book to include systematic identification of important aquatic insects and corresponding specific imitations. He described three long-hackled flies, the Blue, Cream, and Gray Fox Variants. All lacked wings and had bodies of gold or silver tinsel to add a little sparkle. Jennings liked to use variants when skittish fish were feeding in flat water at the tail of pools and specifically mentions using his Gray Fox Variant in this manner as an imitation of the Eastern Green Drake. This fly has a ginger tail, gold tinsel body, and a two-part hackle of ginger faced with grizzly.

"Art Flick was heavily influenced by Jennings, and among the imitative flies in his famous *Streamside Guide to Naturals and their Imitations*, includes three variant flies, all modifications of Jennings' patterns. Flick lists one of these flies, his own version of the Gray Fox Variant, as an imitation of the Eastern Green Drake, but the fly was much more than that to Art. It became his favorite fly, and he used it far more than any other as a general searching pattern.



*Ephemera guttulata*

GREY FOX VARIANT

(Photos taken from Art Flick's *Streamside Guide to Naturals and their Imitations*)

"Flick gives Preston Jennings credit for his influence but considered his own version of the fly to be superior to Jennings'. Art's Gray Fox Variant (see photo) has no wings, a ginger tail, and a mix of three different colored hackles: dark ginger, grizzly, and light ginger. Unlike Jennings' fly, the hackles are mixed together and do not form distinct color bands.

"As with all hackle, the feathers should be wrapped individually and not all at the same time. He could not

explain why, but Art firmly believed that the fly worked best if the hackles were wound in the order given above. The fly's body is made from the stripped stem of a light ginger hackle, a body style originated by Flick. The quill provides a segmented look, a natural taper, and in many regions has now superseded the use of stripped peacock quill for dry fly bodies. Art sometimes tied this fly in very large sizes, but it is also useful in smaller versions, including ones, like the fly in the photo, where the hackle is only slightly oversized.

"The hackle mix in Flick's fly provides a variegated, buggy look that is highly effective. ...the fly's utility extends far beyond its original intended use as an imitation of the Eastern Green Drake. The west slope of the Cascades is far from the Catskills and any populations of the Eastern Green Drake, but the fish feeding that day didn't seem to care. It looked just like a Western March Brown to them."

I couldn't have said the above any better, but what does the Grey Fox represent? While Flick's Grey Fox Variant was intended as a Green Drake pattern, my web searches turned up pretty much the same as what I had found on the Light Cahill but then I found this on the web site for Jerry Hadden's guide service: "No more *Stenonema fuscum* (Gray Fox). *Stenonema fuscum* (Gray Fox) is now considered to be the same as *Stenonema vicarium* (March Brown). This makes perfect sense to me, for years I've been puzzled by these insects a March Brown looked identical to a Gray Fox except for size and a slight color difference. Hey now with new DNA testing I don't have to worry about it anymore, they have been found to be exactly the same insect except for a difference in color."

So while Art Flick may have developed the Grey Fox Variant to represent a Green Drake the fly is also a good pattern for many of the flies we see on our waters.

Oh, and one other thing, it may also be called a variant just because it can be spelled as either Gray or Grey. There seems to be a good deal of variance and I haven't been able to determine with any authority what the proper spelling is.

Enjoy and may the Grey (or Gray) Fox Variant bring many fish to your net.



### Gray Fox Variant

**HOOK :** Dry Fly, 1X long, 1X fine, perfect bend , size

**12, 14, 16 , 18, 20-** Tiemco 100 or Mustad 94833

**Thread :** 8/0 Uni or equivalent in Rust Brown

**Tail :** Brown Rooster

**Body :** Ginger Quill over Olive dubbing

**Hackle :** Ginger and Grizzly Rooster hackle

**Note:** Not unlike the long directions for the Lt Cahill wing tie in, there are a lot of words here on tying in a tail. This is another key technique that will benefit on many other patterns, once mastered.

#### Directions :

1. Select a stripped Ginger Quill for the body and begin soaking in tap water. Set aside for a later step.
2. Begin thread wraps at two to three eye lengths back from the eye and advance to the hook bend in tight, even single wraps and return in tight wraps to about one third back from the eye. Let the bobbin hang.
3. Select a brown spade hackle or any rooster hackle with long, stiff barbs. Holding the feather by the tip, stroke downward with two fingers, using gentle pressure. This will make the barbs stand at a right angle. May take two or three strokes. Select six to eight barbs, pinching the ends together in the same motion. This will trap the ends evenly (to aid in the tie-in). Once securely pinched, hold the tip with your other hand and pull the pinched barbs away from the stem. This will leave a curly part at the base of the barbs. Transfer the barbs from one hand to the other, changing the pinch from the tips to the base and holding next to the hook,

estimate the first cut for the tie in. The extended length of the tail should be approximately the same as the hook shank. The tail length on the shaft should have enough length to reach the thorax. Transfer the barbs back to the first hand and trim the base to the measured length. Hold the barbs at a slight angle downward on the tier's side of the hook bringing the thread around for a soft loop to position the barbs on top of the shank with two or three soft loops. This will enable the you to observe the length and if necessary re-trim. If no trim is necessary, advance the thread with very light pressure to the hook bend above the barb (of the hook) making sure the tail barbs stay on top of the shank. Wrap once again, toward the eye increasing pressure as you approach the cut end of the tail barbs. Return the thread to the hook bend (use decreasing pressure as you near the bend to avoid the tail "standing up"). Let the bobbin hang.

4. Dub the thread, sparse and tight with dry fly Olive dub. Allow enough thread to tie in the quill before starting dub material on to the thread.
5. Remove the Ginger Quill from the water and dry gently. Position the quill at the point directly above the barb or tip of the hook. Holding the quill at an angle tie in with firm wrap as close to the small tapered tip of a diameter reasonable for the size of the fly. Wrap the extra quill length on top of the shank, trim the excess, advance dubbed thread with single, tight wraps and let the bobbin hang at the thorax.
6. Begin wrapping the quill in single, wraps allowing slight exposure of the Olive dub, to the thorax. Tie off with firm wraps, trim the excess and let the bobbin hang. **NOTE:** It is not uncommon for the quill to split or fray while wrapping. Soaking should have avoided this, but if it does fray – start over and maybe soak longer. Usually thirty minutes is more than enough. Some tiers will use a small amount of head cement, applied to the quill with a bodkin for strength and hardness against fish teeth after it is tied in. Let it dry before the next step.

7. Select one Ginger Rooster hackle and one Grizzly rooster hackle measured for the size hook selected. Strip away about three sixteenths of the barbs at the cut end. Check at this point and compare the diameter of the hackle stems. They need to be close in thickness. Stack the two together with the shiny side up and the top one extended ever so slightly past the bottom one. Tie both in at the same time by holding at a slight angle on the tier side of the hook about one eyelength in advance of the quill finish point. Wrap firmly and trim any excess stem. Advance the thread to two or three eyelengths back of the eye and let the bobbin hang.
8. Choose the top hackle and wrap in turn that are close but also slightly open to allow for the second hackle. Maintain the shiny side toward the eye as you wrap. When the hackle reaches three eyelengths back from the eye, hold the hackle with one hand, straight up, and use the other hand to wrap the thread, trapping the hackle. Wiggle the thread as you bring it around and the barbs will separate from the stem avoiding bunches. Using the wiggle make three wraps to firmly tie in and trim the excess. Let the bobbin hang.
9. Repeat as above, wrapping the second hackle between the wraps of the first. trim the excess. Form a head with thread. Whip finish and apply head cement.

### **Please Join Me**

...in thanking our friends that have served this past year as officers and directors for the chapter. I would also like to give special thanks to **Jim Mabrey**, who as President of the chapter took on a task as daunting as herding cats.

A few years ago, Jim reluctantly allowed his name to be placed in nomination as Vice President and, even more reluctantly allowed himself to be nominated as President two years ago. I am pleased now to also announce that Jim has reached the pinnacle of reluctance and has allowed his name to be place in nomination for the office of the Vice Chair of NCTU. I am sure he will serve the state council as well as he has Rocky River.

One of the things you'll be hearing about is the planning effort that the board in now in the process of doing. They are looking at goals and objectives for the coming year(s) that will help us continue as a strong and active chapter. If there are things (programs, projects, activities, etc.) you would like to see the chapter do, I would encourage you to speak with a board member about it.

Again, thank you to all the officers and directors for their service.

(Oh, and Jim, thanks also for the help with the drain on my kitchen sink. Works great now and Mrs. Wilhelm is very happy.)

Tim Wilhelm

## **September Meeting Program: Annual Meeting and Elections**

**REI Northlake Mall  
9755 Northlake Centre Parkway  
Charlotte, NC 28216  
Wednesday September 15, 2010  
Social Time: 6:30 pm  
Meeting Starts: 7:00 pm**