

WATERSHED

A Newsletter of the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association

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Fall 2009

Tie One on Wednesdays *by Danielle Aube*

On most days the Wood Pawcatuck Watershed Association's (WPWA), conference room is quiet. Documents, maps and other papers currently in use can be found scattered about the long tables surrounded by empty chairs. However, on Wednesday mornings that all changes. The literature covering the workspace is replaced with bright green foam, vises, yarns of all colors and special thread made of shiny metallic foil. The empty chairs are filled with men from all over the state who gather weekly to tie flies and share stories. The men, ranging in age from 50 to 90, all have something in common - their passion for fly fishing.

Fly fishing is an ancient angling method, most renowned for catching trout and salmon. Unlike spinner and bait rods that use a weight, fly rods use line that is heavy enough to send the fly to its target. When casting from a spinner most of the action is in the 'flick of the wrist' which easily sends the lure or bait to the desired location. On the other hand, casting a fly rod depends heavily on the method used to cast the line, not the weight of what is at the end of it. Remarkably, physics play a large part in effective casting. Most commonly used is the forward cast, where the angler rapidly lifts the rod which draws the

line back over his shoulder until it is parallel with the ground and then forward, toward the intended target on the surface of the water. This movement creates stored energy in the rod which is transferred to the line, without which, an angler would not be able to cast further than a few feet. Generally, this process is repeated several times before the angler lands his fly on the water. This is done for two reasons. Either the fisherman desires a greater distance and thus needs more time to extend the line to reach that goal or the fly being used is a 'dry fly' which requires a few more 'false casts' to sufficiently dry off the waterlogged fly. This is all a test of practice and patience and is done completely in vain if the fly lands on the surface of the water haphazardly. Albeit quite small, fish do have brains, and they know the difference between a bug that looks natural and one that does not. This is the fly fisherman's conundrum, just how to convincingly fool the fish they are trying to land.



(L to R) Tiny Baitfish, Miller's River Special and Royal Coachman Streamer. Courtesy of UFTRI

Like live bait and lures, pre-tied flies can be purchased from local

bait shops and outfitters. There are many mass produced flies that are sold at retailers all over the world. The average price for one fly is about two dollars, which does not sound like much until you're trying to fill your fly box with at least a few of every edible insect that could be in season during your fishing trip. This in contrast to a skein of yarn and a spool thread which if not already in the house, could probably be purchased for the price of several flies and which could last the fly tier the rest of his or her life! Feathers are also needed for tying, purchased from a retailer for no small fee or found during a leisurely walk in the woods. Another aggravating by-product of casting is getting hung up in the surrounding vegetation. Unlike the red and white bobbers (used for spin-casting) often seen and easily retrieved from hanging branches along riverbanks, flies are considerably harder to locate. The angler will try tugging his line to retrieve what he can of it, but it is usually missing the fly.

Not only is tying yourself the cost effective way to maintain a bountiful supply, it is also relaxing and therapeutic. So think the men who gather at the WPWA campus every Wednesday morning.

(Continued on page 2)

From the Executive Director

Fall is a beautiful time of year when many of us focus on the falling leaves, where to put them all and preparing for the upcoming winter. We shift our focus away from the rivers trading kayaks and hiking boots for skis and snow shoes. At WPWA we continue to keep our sites set squarely on the river throughout the off season. While the staff works diligently to prepare next year's calendar of events, and wrap up this year's projects, I remain focused on our ongoing river restoration projects along the Pawcatuck River. Few realize the regional significance that these monumental projects have on fish populations and river connectivity and we want you to be informed.

As part of our popular lecture series for members, a presentation will be given on Sunday January 24th to inform you on our restoration plans and progress with the hope of keeping these efforts in the forefront of your minds. NOAA's Northeast Fish Restoration Team Leader, Jim Turek, will join me in bringing to you an exciting overview of these historic projects happening right in our backyards. You won't want to miss this informative talk and opportunity to ask questions of the two key project players.

As the year winds down, we are gearing up for a complete WPWA information technology overhaul because we want you to stay up to date on all things Wood-Pawcatuck. You will soon be receiving WPWA's Annual Appeal letter. I hope that you will consider making a generous year end donation in support of our efforts to keep you better engaged and informed. Don't forget, it's tax-deductible!

-Chris Fox



Fly Tying *(continued from page 1)*

Whether discussing which flies brought recent luck on the river or the latest in tinsels and hackles, there is no shortage of conversation during these get-togethers.

Sometime two years ago, the late and sorely missed, Lawson Cary, Jr. approached the WPWA and inquired about using the conference room for this informal gathering. Given that Mr. Cary was an avid WPWA volunteer and friend we were happy to oblige. The following week the tradition took root with Cary and friend, Al Truchon, another long time WPWA volun-



Lawson Cary, Jr. (left, foreground) with fellow fly tiers, winding down a morning of fly tying.

teer, and several other men convening for a morning of fly tying.

Since that time some men have come and gone leaving a small but dedicated group, most of whom can be seen in the picture above. The participants are not exclusively WPWA members, many are proud supporters of their local chapters of Trout Unlimited (TU) and United Fly Tyers of R.I. (UTFRI), as well as the Wood River Fly Fishing Club. They hail from all over the state; travelling from as far as Pawtucket to as near as Rockville and Exeter as well as nearby Connecticut. Mostly retired, they worked for years in varying professions, some

of which include: Police Officer, Biology Teacher, Jewelry Manufacturer, Pharmaceutical Planner, Insurance Claims Manager, Organic Chemist, Electrician, Carpenter and Optometrist. As one would imagine, within a group of such diverse backgrounds, there is never a dull moment among them.

Most of them began their obsession with fishing the same way - worm dunking. As children, they were told time and time again to 'Go Out and Play', so they set out to the nearest body of water and tried their hand at one of the world's most popular sports. As years passed, they all traded in their spinners for fly rods and taught themselves the graceful art of fly fishing. Fortunately for them, trout (which is what they commonly fish for) do not live in ugly and unpleasant waters. On the contrary, they are found in some of the most spectacular and pristine rivers in the world. The men all share an impressive passion for the cold and clean water loving trout. This love has provoked them all to give freely of their time to various organizations in an effort to protect the fish and environment that they so admire. Whether they are picking up trash along a road or river side; installing horse barriers, improving a riverbank for erosion control or aiding the RI DEM Division of Fish & Wildlife by 'float stocking' they have one common goal in mind-superior habitat; which in turn means a higher quality of life for the fish they greatly respect.

Winter is the most popular time for them to spend tying flies since it is unsafe to be out on the river. Whether a Hendrickson for mid-spring or a Hexagenia for late summer, they follow patterns in anticipation of the bugs that will soon be in season. The insects that the fish dine on has not changed much over

South County Collaborative

By Rebekah Kepple, Save The Bay

The South County Collaborative (SCC) was formed in January of 2009; our meetings serve as an update on initiatives, projects and issues in the region. The group formed to avoid duplication of efforts and to foster collaboration on issues and projects relevant to all organizations. Missions of the current participants span from land to water conservation capturing everything in between.

“South County” has long been appreciated for its natural beauty, recreational and economic value. It follows suit that environmental protection would be a priority for area residents and visitors. Organizations like the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association, Salt Ponds Coalition and others offer testament to the longstanding and dynamic environmental stewardship within the region.

Save The Bay, another SCC partner, has been based in Providence, RI for nearly 40 years. They were asked by the Forrest and Frances Lattner Foundation to have an on-the-water presence in Little Narragansett Bay and the lower Pawcatuck River. In July, 2007 they opened a Westerly office and aligned thier program work in education, advocacy, habitat restoration and outreach with the needs of the community. Given Save The Bay’s respect for and appreciation of the historic and ongoing efforts in environmental leadership in South County they sought to unite other conservation groups whose common goal is protecting the local environment and natural resources.

The SCC is an open and welcoming crowd, who would love to hear from other interested organizations, town officials, and local or visiting members of the community. Meetings are held seasonally, rotating to different organizations’ main offices.

For more information please contact Rebekah Kepple at 401-315-2709 or rkepple@savebay.org

Current SCC Members:

Save The Bay – South County Coast
Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Assn.
Salt Ponds Coalition
The Nature Conservancy, RI Chapter
& TNC Long Island Sound Program
Clean Up Stonington Harbor
Avalonia Land Conservancy
Westerly Land Trust
Westerly Municipal Land Trust
Stonington Land Trust
Weekapaug Found. for Conservation
Watch Hill Conservancy



Water Quality Data is Going Live

By Elise Torello, WPWA

On Sunday, November 1st, the Wood Pawcatuck Watershed Association, (WPWA), held the first in a series of lectures at their riverfront campus. Greg Bonyng, a RI Geospatial Extension Specialist from URI, presented information on the RI Digital Atlas (www.edc.uri.edu/atlas/). The second presenter, Elise Torello, spoke about the Water Quality Data Management Project that she is working on for WPWA. The event drew 30 listeners from around the Watershed. The attendees learned about the advancements being made regarding the decades of water quality data that will soon be available on the Internet. As part of this project Elise has worked diligently to gather, format and load the data into a database in order to present them in a more accessible and readable format for the general public. An important benefit of this project is that these data are now in a format that will en-

able WPWA to spot trends and water quality changes at each sampling site.

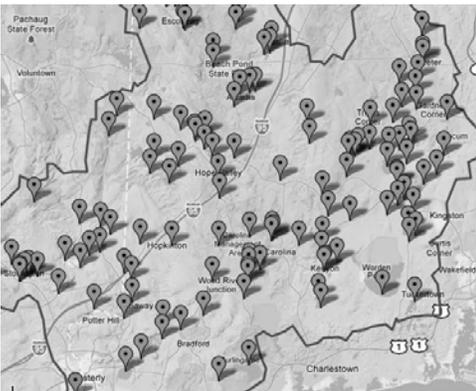
WPWA has over 20 years of valuable water quality monitoring data thanks to the dedicated sampling efforts of its volunteers. Recently, we have been working hard to make these data available to the public via the internet. Adding spatial context to the data through the use of interactive web-based maps will greatly enhance data use and visualization. Having highly visible and accessible data maps will assist WPWA in getting public recognition and support for their years of effort. However, like many volunteer monitoring groups, WPWA has limited computing capacity, technical ability, and financial resources to develop, host, maintain, and update complex information systems. Thankfully, advances on the World Wide Web have made possible the development of a web-based interactive map and data viewer which meets the needs of groups like ours yet is easy and inexpensive to develop and maintain--even for a non-computer expert.

Google Earth and other “virtual globe” products including Google Maps, Microsoft’s Virtual Earth, Bing Maps, and Yahoo! Maps are widely used and present many advantages for organizations wanting to present their data through an interactive web-based map. They provide frequently updated satellite imagery, aerial photography, terrain, and map data for the entire globe, along with many easy-to-use tools for interacting with the imagery and data. They are supported on multiple computing platforms, include additional data layers, are continually being improved and enhanced, and best of all are free. Finally, there is no software for the user to purchase or install on their web server.

Water Quality Data *(cont'd from page 4)*

The widespread use of these products has given rise to 'mashups', which integrate content from one or more services to create a completely new service. For example, Google Maps mashups combine the existing Google Maps software with data provided by non-Google end-users (you). An organization presenting their sampling sites on top of one of these products will allow a user to interface with the data in a very familiar setting.

With mashups, little time and computing skill are required to build a custom web application to display your own data. The easiest way to produce a mashup is by creating a Google Maps "My Maps". A user only needs to create a Google account to begin building their own maps using "My Maps". Sampling stations can be added to the map by visually locating the sampling site and clicking to add a new placemark. Information about each station including text, hyperlinks, photographs, and more, can then be manually added to the information balloon and displayed when the placemark is clicked by a user.



A sample jpg screen shot of the Google Maps page.

Thus, the technology is available to produce user-friendly and developer-friendly web-based mapping applications. For our WPWA project, we developed a Google Maps "My Maps" for our data presentation

as we believe that this approach will be the easiest to maintain and expand. In addition, we look forward to Google continuing to enhance their product in the future. Through a survey of likely users of our system, the most common positive feedback we received regarding our Google Maps data portal focused on the context that the aerial imagery, streets, and other landmarks provided to the sampling stations. Users found it helpful to see what kinds of land use were near the sampling stations. Several users simply found the Google Maps data portal to be fun to use.

We are currently presenting our data as a summary data table and bar chart over time for each sampling parameter and each sampling site. These data summary pages are accessed through a "data portal page" for each sampling site; the data portal page is accessed by clicking on a placemark in the Google Map and then clicking on a hyperlink inside the information balloon. Our data portal and data summary pages are all in PDF format to allow them to be conveniently printed and consistently viewed across widespread browsers and computing platforms.

The ongoing development of our project may include making "raw" data available for download. We are also considering aggregating or summarizing sampling parameter data into environmental quality indicators, environmental health indices, environmental "report cards", etc. Many members of the public, rather than being interested in data tables and plots, just want to know the answers to questions such as "Can I swim there? Can I fish there?" Data summaries can be of great value to scientists and the public but will require much time and consideration on the part of the watershed scientists to determine the most appropriate form

of data presentation, perhaps on a site-by-site basis. These summaries, when used in conjunction with Google Maps, can be a powerful and useful tool for scientists and the public to visualize and utilize our valuable WPWA monitoring data. In 2010, we plan to expand our maps to include data collected by our SCC partners.

Upcoming Events....

Saturday, December 19,
10am-12pm in Watch Hill, RI

Napatree Point Hike to welcome the winter solstice. Join Danielle Aube for a 3 mile, family hike, along the coast of Little Narragansett Bay. Participants will learn about the Great Hurricane of 1938 and get to explore an old Fort established during the Spanish-American War. **\$5m/\$10nm**

Saturdays, January, 9&16,
9am-12:30 at the WPWA campus

Build your own Fly Rod with WPWA Volunteer, Jay Boyer. Everything you'll need to assemble a 7½', 5 weight, graphite rod with a wood and aluminum reel seat. Open to ages 14 and up and limited to only 4 participants, so please register early.

*This would make an outstanding gift for any outdoor enthusiast on your list! **\$65m/\$75nm**

Saturdays, January, 30 & February 27,
9am-noon at the WPWA campus

Learn the art of Fly Tying with volunteers from Trout Unlimited and WPWA. Everything you'll need to get 'hooked' on this relaxing hobby will be provided. Open to ages 12 and up. **\$5m/\$10nm**

Pre-registration is required for all WPWA events. Call or email the office to sign up today!

401-539-9017 info@wpwa.org

**WATERSHED
KIDS
CORNER**

This edition of the Watershed Children's Page features a crossword puzzle with clues that focus on water. Please spend a few minutes with your child to help them understand the clues. Have Fun!

ACROSS

- 2. Plants that grow in fresh water are called aquatic _____, not seaweed!
- 4. _____ species do not occur naturally in an area and is likely to cause environmental harm.
- 6. An area of land where all the water that falls onto it drains out to one common outlet, such as a river.
- 7. The way water moves through the atmosphere and the earth.
- 9. Instead of throwing used batteries into the trash they should be _____.



DOWN

- 1. A species that has been found living in a certain area for a very long time.
- 2. A freshwater wetland area that fills with water in the fall and is dry in summer.
- 3. The water located beneath the surface of the ground.
- 5. Using too much fertilizer could result in water _____.
- 8. Who should try to limit the amount of water they use for daily chores like showering and washing dishes?

WORD BANK Use the following list of terms to answer the crossword clues:

- a. everyone b. ground water c. invasive
- d. native e. pollution f. recycled
- g. the water cycle h. vegetation i. vernal Pool j. watershed

Watersheds come in all shapes and sizes. Sometimes they cross county, state, and national boundaries. In the United States there are over two thousand major watersheds! No matter where you are in the world, you are in one. They are the area of land where all of the water that is under it (ground water) or that falls onto it (precipitation from rain, snow etc.) goes into the same place. You could probably guess that the Wood river and the Pawcatuck river are where the precipitation ends up in the Wood-Pawcatuck watershed.

Ground water is mostly where our drinking water comes from. Even town water comes from ground water since it gets pulled up from large wells drilled way down into the ground. This means that everyone should try to use as little water as they can and be really careful when throwing away household products. Dumping poisonous chemicals down the drain instead of bringing them to the landfill is the wrong thing to do since they could get into our ground water. How would you like to be drinking a glass of nice, cold, water that's contaminated with car oil or battery acid? Yuck!

Another great reason to be careful is to protect the animals that live in the watershed. They need clean water, too. Lots of frogs and salamanders, many who lay their eggs in vernal pools, cannot exist if the water is polluted.

For more information on recycling and which chemicals need proper disposal visit the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corp.'s website at: www.rirrc.org

Answer Key No Peeking!

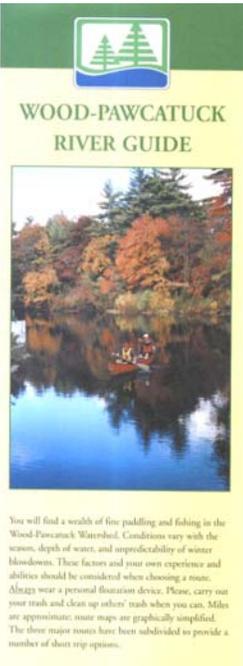
1.d; 2.j; 3.b; 4.c; 5.e; 6.j; 7.g; 8.a; 9.f;

Wood-Pawcatuck River Guide (2nd edition)

By Charlie Hickox and Elly Heyder \$5.00

Navigate the Wood and Pawcatuck Rivers from source to sea with this colorful folded map.

Walks in the Watershed WPWA's Hiking guide is currently in the process of being revised by co-authors, Charlie Hickox and Elly Heyder, and is not available for purchase at this time. The finalized 3rd edition is anticipated to be available toward the end of Fall 2009.



Quantity: _____ *Wood-Pawcatuck River Routes Map*

Add \$1.75 postage and handling per item.

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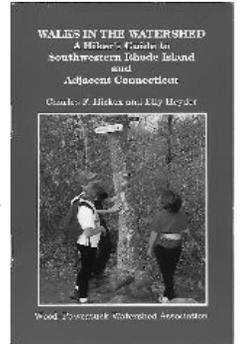
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It is your ongoing support that makes the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association a leading watershed

council in New England. Thank You!

As a local business owner or resident now is the time to show your support by sponsoring the only pocket hiking guide dedicated solely to the trails located within the watershed.



WPWA's goal is to raise \$5,000.00 by the end of 2009.
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- 12 complimentary copies of Walks in the Watershed.

Gifts of \$500 will receive:

- **All of the benefits listed above as well as...**
- The use of WPWA's fleet of kayaks for one company or family outing on the Wood river!

Gifts of \$1000 will receive:

- **All of the benefits listed above as well as...**
- The use of WPWA's river front campus and facilities for a day.
- Your Company Logo or Family name printed in 4 editions of Watershed, WPWA's quarterly newsletter, sent to members and friends throughout New England.

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