



## Upcoming Events to Note on Your Calendar

- February 01 Fly Tying 6:30 Bray Conservation Area.  
February 12 Club Outing to Westover Farms Has been canceled  
February 15 Meeting 6:30 Bray Conservation Area

**Note:** RFFA Dues are due. Contact Lou to pay your dues.

## Report by Sam:

We had good turn outs for the MDC Fly Fishing & Tying clinics considering the weather conditions. We had participants from as far away as Springfield and St. Louis county.

The micro bug samples we took on the Meramec river were the best I have ever seen in over 20 years of sampling. Although we didn't do an official sample my rough estimate of 34 from two kick net sights without doing an in-depth study of all the trays, I'm sure would have pushed the score to 36+. To give you an idea of the quality of the sample, a score of 23 is considered excellent.



First Kick net sample



Amy Meier, Coordination Biologist, handing out tweezers to pick out micros.



April Sevy, Stream Team Water Quality Monitoring Coordinator, presented the water quality program.



Herb is demonstrating how to ty a Wooly Bugger.





### **Fishing Report from Sam**

Winter hatches are limited this time of year, but if you look closely, you will find small black stoneflies, midges, small black caddis and if the weather is nasty some olives hatching. Being on the water when these bugs are coming off is a good opportunity to find fish feeding. Usually, the hatches are not long in the cold of winter. So they could be limited to just a couple of hours on a warm sunny day.

### **River Conditions:**

Local streams are a little off color with the snow melt and perfect for fishing.





## Upcoming Events to Note on Your Calendar

March 01 Fly Tying 6:30 Bray Conservation Area.

March 15 Meeting 6:30 Bray Conservation Area

April 09 Tri-Lakes Exposition

Tri-Lakes Fly Fishers They are having a Fly Fishing Exposition on April 9<sup>th</sup> from 9 AM to 4 PM at the Benson Convention Center in Clinton Missouri. Admission is free. Details about the Exposition can be obtained by an email to [trilakesflyfishers@gmail.com](mailto:trilakesflyfishers@gmail.com) or by calling 417-646-5568. They also have a Facebook page: Tri-Lakes Fly Fishers. They will be having fly tiers from around the country, fishing and outdoor sporting vendors, casting instruction, a silent auction and live fly fishing seminars.

**Note:** RFFA Dues are due. Contact Lou to pay your dues.

## Report by Sam:

The turn out for the fly fishing forum at St. James Winery went well for its inaugural event. A few of the local guests seemed interested in the club and club activities. There were people that came from as far away as Wildwood and spent the afternoon chatting about fly fishing and fly tying.



Fly fishing enthusiast visiting at St. James winery watched an attempt at tying a Pheasant Tail.



Herb tying a bead head woolly bugger at the St. James Winery open forum.

### **Fishing Report by Sam**

Trout fishing has been good off and on. The Baetis days are still producing some nice hatches and the off-color water has been good for streamer fishing. So it depends on if you want to fish the smaller flies in the upper column or dredge a little deeper water for the meat eaters.

Todd is planning to do a research trip to Blackwell on Saturday for Pickerel. Hopefully he will have a report for us. Then we can plan a club outing to fish for the toothy critters.

### **River Conditions:**

Local streams are a little off color with the snow melt and perfect for fishing.

As the temps increase this week there may be a movement of warm water species to the shallows following the insects and bait fish as the water warms along the banks, especially if there are rocks along the shore that will absorb the heat of the sun.





## Upcoming Events to Note on Your Calendar

April 05 Fly Tying 6:30 Bray Conservation Area.

April 09 Tri-Lakes Exposition

April 19 Meeting 6:30 Bray Conservation Area

Tri-Lakes Fly Fishers They are having a Fly Fishing Exposition on April 9<sup>th</sup> from 9 AM to 4 PM at the Benson Convention Center in Clinton Missouri. Admission is free. Details about the Exposition can be obtained by an email to [trilakesflyfishers@gmail.com](mailto:trilakesflyfishers@gmail.com) or by calling 417-646-5568. They also have a Facebook page: Tri-Lakes Fly Fishers. They will be having fly tiers from around the country, fishing and outdoor sporting vendors, casting instruction, a silent auction and live fly fishing seminars.

**Note:** RFFA Dues are due. Contact Lou to pay your dues.

## Fishing Report by Lou:

Ah Belize. What can I say? While Missouri was still gripped by that crazy early spring weather I left my coat with Sharon at the airport and left it & the weather behind. Warm days, cool nights, wonderful food, great lodge, and fun people.

Oh the fishing? We had shots at tarpon, permit, and plenty of bonefish. Some folks were luckier than others. One lady even got her Grand Slam!! Even the day we didn't go fishing with a guide we caught fish!





Did we miss Missouri, especially the weather? No not in the least bit, LOL!!







**Project Brown Trout** is from an email I received earlier in the month to share with you



## **Project Brown Trout**

### **Background**

Over the last decade, stocked brown trout have not been doing well in the Meramec watershed. Five years ago, Gateway Trout Unlimited (GTU) partnered with Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) to better understand the high mortality rate of stocked brown trout on the Meramec River. The resulting telemetry study pointed to predation—not many browns were surviving after their initial stocking.

GTU hypothesized: would brown trout have a higher survival rate if they were hatched in the stream? Would trout born in the river exhibit characteristics that would aid in their survival compared to one born and raised in a concrete raceway?



## **The Project**

To answer these questions, GTU teamed up with Westover Farms to implement the first ever stocking of brown trout eggs in Missouri using Whitlock-Vibert Egg Boxes. Westover's clean, cold springs and Dry Creek have no pre-existing brown trout and make for an ideal laboratory stream for GTU to carry out its experiment.

What is a Whitlock-Vibert Egg box? It is a mesh box that serves as an in stream incubator. The box allows trout eggs to be placed in their natural habitat and exposed to all the elements of stream life, just like wild reproduction. Once the eggs "hatch," the box serves as a "nursery" for them grow until they move into the stream.

On December 12th, 2020, GTU and over 20 volunteers successfully planted 30,000 certified disease-free Brown trout eggs at Westover Farms. GTU was pleased with this round of stocking but learned many lessons on how to be more successful, such as where to plant boxes, what substrate to use to avoid sedimentation, and what waterflow is necessary for a healthy hatch. One brown trout catch has been reported since the first stocking.

Using its knowledge from the first round, GTU and its volunteers completed a second egg stocking on December 12th, 2021, this time planting 100,000 eggs. Early observations show a much more successful hatch and GTU expects anglers to start catching brown trout from the second stocking as early as this summer.

## **Monitoring**

Monitoring is a very important part of this project and will require angler participation. GTU and Westover will be placing signage in and around Westover explaining how to identify brown trout

and what to do if you catch one. In order to incentivize anglers to report their catch and provide GTU with the data it needs, GTU will be sending thank you souvenirs to all anglers reporting their catch.

For more information on this project, visit GTU's website ([www.gatewaytu.org](http://www.gatewaytu.org)).

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### **Fishing Report by Sam**

As the saying goes, you can lead a horse to water.... A Client pays me to take them fishing and offer advice for various things. Water conditions that they were yesterday, required concentration on specific water that didn't sweep the fly down the river at twenty miles an hour. Catching is always tough in chocolate milk but it's possible. When rivers are high, fish will hunker down on the bottom or move to the banks to avoid the heavy flow. So logically you want to fish where the fish are. Going fishless isn't what clients want or what I want, but fishing where there are no fish will produce fishless days. The clients didn't exactly go fishless, there were three fish caught. Two were excellent, an 18 ½ brown, and a 17 rainbow. All three fish were caught after the flies were brought into the soft water where they were standing about 4 feet from the bank. The fish were caught late in the day after several hours of casting into heavy currents. Usually after repeated advice for the same thing, I just save my breath and let it go. Sometimes a person just needs to find out for themselves.

### **River Conditions:**

Local streams are high and muddy but dropping and will begin to clear a little this week. Go with larger flies and fish the softer water until the streams get back down to a more normal flow. Streamers are a good choice for finding large meat eaters with this type of water.





## Upcoming Events to Note on Your Calendar

- May 03 Fly Tying 6:30 Bray Conservation Area.  
May 17 Meeting at Brays 6:30 Spring Cookout – Watch for Email from Lou/Herb for further details

## Presentation Guest

Dave Wynn gave us a great presentation on building bamboo fly rods. He told us that he has built over 400 rods. It is amazing how small a hexagon piece is at the tip of a rod. It's like working with split toothpicks. He has built graphite rods but prefers the feel of cane. Dave is the manager of St. James Winery in St. James. He is an invited and welcomed addition to our club if he so chooses.



## Fishing Report by Sam

There are two fish that I will keep for eating, providing they are large enough, Crappie and Walleye.

I rarely fish for or catch Walleye anymore, there was a day way back in my past when I went to great lengths and travel, but those days are behind me. Crappie are plentiful and easily found locally. I only target them in the late fall, winter or early spring when the water is colder. The flesh is firmer in cold water and tastier. This past week was the last Crappie trip of the spring, I will wait until this fall to antagonize them again.

When fishing for Crappie there are always Largemouth Bass willing to take the same fly, as they say it goes with the territory. And on rare occasions there is an unintentional surprise guest usually in the form of a Catfish or Grass Carp. Today it was this fellow:



Probably in the four pound range. Last month it was another one but almost twice as big. All of the fish I caught were in 1-4 feet of water. The wind was in my face and was brutal, 20-35mph, so I really had to concentrate on where to let the line go calculating the wind direction and speed. Fishing on the windy side of lakes and ponds is usually productive because that's where the food is. The casting can be tough and, if it's cold or even just a little cool the wind chill can get to you.

I usually stop fishing for crappie at my friend's lake when I have 8 on the stringer. On this day I decided to keep an extra one. 8 seems to be about the right amount for two meals for us, but my wife mentioned that an extra fillet would be nice. I don't keep any Crappie from this lake unless it is at least 10 inches, preferably 11-12. I rarely catch any over 12, but occasionally there is a whopper in the 15+ range. Several small bass and smaller crappie were caught and released in the two hours I fished, all on the same fly.. chain eyes, estaz, white and grey marabou, simple.

**Cleaning Fish** *ATTENTION graphic detail follows... skip ahead if it bothers you.*

I know that we promote catch and release, but whom among us has not killed, cleaned and eaten our catch? If you find the cleaning process messy, here are a couple of things I do to lessen the blood and goo. Kill and bleed the fish where you catch it. Killing can be a sharp whack on the head. To bleed it out, take a sharp knife and cut all the gills where they connect at the throat. The bleed out takes a few minutes, so be patient. After bleeding stops remove the fish from the water and lay it out to air/sun dry. You can also lay it out at home on newspaper or whatever you don't want to keep. Flip it over to let both sides dry. Caution: don't let it dry out too much, just enough for the slime to dry. Do Not add water until you are finished cleaning the fish. Water will defeat the purpose of drying. Proceed to fillet or however you like to clean them.



Todd with a Largemouth bass that took a jig trolled with his Tenkara rod at about .05mp.

### **Fishing Report by Sam**

Another friend of mine has a 5-acre lake that he built back in the early 70s. Because the lake is in a river bottom it took several weeks to dig it out because he had to do a little at a time to allow the bottom to dry enough to keep his dozer from getting stuck. Anyway, he has stocked it with all sorts of freshwater fish including, redear sunfish, white bass, goggle eye, smallmouth, flathead catfish, blue catfish and the usual bluegill, crappie, bass, grass carp and channel cats.

He has some very large grass carp I have caught on Sneaky Pete flies. Yep they will eat flies on top water. Lou will confirm it. She caught a big grass carp on the Post a few years back on a top water foam bug.

Using the same fly I used to catch my crappie in the first fishing report I caught these from the 5-acre lake.



Redear Sunfish



White Bass

**River Conditions:**

Local streams are in excellent condition today. Water color is perfect, go bend a rod.





## Upcoming Events to Note on Your Calendar

- June 07 Fly Tying 6:30 Bray Conservation Area.
- June 21 Meeting at Brays 6:30



Billy caught this Largemouth bass with a white wooly bugger.



Todd with a nice Bluegill at the Picnic



## Fishing Report by Sam

Took a trip with my youngest son down to Norfolk Lake for Stripers. Unfortunately, they were not schooling on the Shad, so it was hit and miss with singles. We did catch a variety of fish but no size. Stripers, Hybrids, White Bass and Largemouth. All on top water which was cool.



I have had some fun recently with Redear on top water. Apparently, they must be spawning because they hit my Ukraine foam bug aggressively. It is the foam bug I tied at the St. James Winery Fly Fishing Forum in February (Blue and Yellow). The Redear I was catching were nice size going about 10-11 inches but compared to the Redear in Arizona lake Havasu they were minnows.

<https://ftw.usatoday.com/2021/05/lake-havasu-yields-another-redear-sunfish-of-world-record-size>

**River Conditions:**

Local streams are in excellent condition for fishing. The streams are still above normal from recent rains and the color is great.





## Upcoming Events to Note on Your Calendar

July 05 Fly Tying 6:30 Bray Conservation Area.  
July 19 Meeting at Brays 6:30

## Fishing Report by Sam

One of the benefits of fly fishing is that you can fish for several species of fish with the same gear and all you need to do is change the fly OR not. I have on occasion caught as many as seven or eight different species on the same fly. It doesn't happen often, but it has happened a few times. Catching five species on the same fly happens on a regular basis and can be a source of entertainment for some of my clients.



Redear Sunfish on the Ukraine Fly I mentioned in last month's newsletter.



17-18 inch stream born rainbow with strong McCloud strain markings. Notice the crawfish upper left



Big largemouth bass caught early this Month. The body on this fish was smaller than it should have been for the head. After the photo we realized that it was blind in one eye... which could explain the lack of body for the head. I have caught 8 and 9 pound bass and none of them had a head and mouth this size.

**River Conditions:**

Local streams are still above normal for this time of the year, but they are steadily dropping. Dry fly fishing has been excellent if the right presentation and location of the cast is met.

Beetles and Ants have been the go-to flies in the afternoons. The Japanese Beetle has begun to show up in the flower garden which means they are probably also along the rivers eating a variety of leaves and blossoms. They seem to be particularly fond of wild grape leaves. If you can find vines, shrubs or low hanging limbs from trees hanging out over the water there is good chance a fish is there looking for an easy meal.





## Upcoming Events to Note on Your Calendar

August 02 Fly Tying 6:30 Bray Conservation Area.

August 16 Meeting at Brays 6:30

## Fishing Report by Lou

Another of my brick wall clubs had a Pond Hop on the 16th of July. We covered three private ponds in a day then had supper at a member's house in the nice AC.

I scored first bass and did alright in each pond with bluegill and bass. Just about everyone that fished caught one or the other. Our youngest member was using a 6' rod and was slaying them!! Funny thing started to happen though - at the second and third ponds the "Bennett" effect where someone would start catching fish in a certain spot and everyone just migrated towards them to catch fish too, LOL!! It was hot but we stayed hydrated, and in the shade when possible.



Lou with a few largemouth bass in the middle of July ...



Lou was putting on a show for her club members at the “Pond Hop”.

### **Fishing Report by Sam**

The Lower Wisconsin River is huge. Some stretches of the river are 2 hundred + yards wide.



The stream averages about 4-5ft deep. Average summer flow is 6000 CFS. Average speed is 2-4 mph. There are some very deep pools near the Prairie Du Sac dam, but the majority of the river is shallow. The river has a sandy bottom with very few rocks, so the crawfish population is limited. But if you can find rocks you will find smallmouth feeding on crawfish. The main forage are emerald shiners and there is a unique phenomenon that occurs on this river. Smallmouth will hunt shiners in pods much like a school of saltwater species hunt bait fish. One of the local guides has named this phenomenon “The Crash”. The smallmouth push the school of shiners to a location against a bank and then explode on them. The catching can be fast and furious if the fisherman is in the right place at the right time...BUT given the amount of water on this river it isn't easy to be at that right place at the right time. Supposedly The Crash can last from 30 minutes to an hour. SO, until you happen to come upon one of these Crashes you fish

the banks looking for cover and the downstream end of the numerous sandbars. We didn't see any crashes in the 21 miles of the stream we floated.

The primary activity on this end of the river is canoeing kayaking and camping on sandbars. The river is especially busy on weekends so a midweek trip is advised.

There are lots of sandbars and islands to park your boat and stretch your legs. The upstream end of the sandbar will be a few inches deep, but the downstream end can drop into several feet. The soft sand will give way underfoot to someone wading and drownings have occurred. There are numerous warnings to paddlers to be careful walking on the downstream end of the sandbars.

Brett and I were focusing on Smallmouth but there are also Pike, Musky and several other species that will take the same fly. Brett caught 5 different species on this trip: Smallmouth, Largemouth, Pike, Drum and Gar. I didn't catch a Pike or a Drum, locally called a Sheephead.



The Prairie Du Sac dam was releasing water while we were there so the river was cooking and muddy. The first day it was 8400 CFS and dropped to 7300 the second day, which was still about a 1000 CFS over normal flow for this time of the year. Needless to say the fishing was Tough! Fast and dirty water isn't the best conditions for fishing. Rowing against that current to allow us to get in some decent presentations wore us out. So, on the third day we decided to take it easy and fish a local lake. Warning: a good river map and GPS is required on this river. You don't want to go down the wrong side of a 100-yard sandbar and run out of water for your boat.

The Wisconsin rolling hills dotted with clean dairy farms was refreshing. There were fields of beautiful wildflowers, manicured front lawns and well-kept natural roadways with minimal mowing allowing natural beauty to paint the roadside. It was clean everywhere we went and the people we met were friendly.

**River Conditions:**

Local streams are running normal flows and looking good.... go fishing !!







## Upcoming Events to Note on Your Calendar

Sept 06 Fly Tying 6:30 Bray Conservation Area.  
Sept 20 Meeting at Brays 6:30

## Fishing Report by Sam

Lou and her buddies fished with me this week on a nice little float down the Big Piney. The trip was a donated one that sold in a silent auction as a fund raiser for Tri-Lakes Fly Fishers. Lou tagged along behind us in her yak picking off the ones we missed. It was a great day, not only because we only saw one other fisherman all day, but because the weather was good, the fishing was good and the companionship was excellent. It was an enjoyable day with some nice ladies.





The good deed for the day was rescuing a box turtle that was stuck in an eddy pool along a steep high bank. The turtle went for a ride with us to the shallow side of the river.



## Fishing Report by Sam

Brett and I took another trip north to Wisconsin on a three day smallmouth trip to fish the Menomonee River. We fished the same stretches of river and in the same format as last year. The first day on the lower stretch fishing was slow, just as it was last year on that stretch. We caught a few in the 15-16 range, but nothing larger. The second day we fished the upper section with faster currents and drop offs with some class 3 water. The fishing was very good with several 15-16s. We also put a few 18-19s in the boat. The 3<sup>rd</sup> day was back down stream below a dam that started out in some slow water, but the current picked up in the afternoon with some excellent fast water for streamer fishing. The great thing about fishing with the streamers was being able to watch the fly most of the time and see the take.



Brett entered the 20” club this trip with a dandy 20+ the afternoon of the last day. Brett was fishing a streamer when he saw the smallie drifting down stream along a rocky seam. He pulled his fly out in front of it and when it swam over to take a look he gave it a jerk, the fish hit and the fight was on. For his catch he received a hat from TightLines Fly Shop with the number 20 on the back.



I fished a plover and dropper rig most of the time and occasionally switched over to just a top water or a streamer. By the afternoon of the third day my shoulder was killing me, so I was happy to just fish for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders. The smallmouth of that region are horses plus the current make your arms and shoulders ache trying to get them landed.

**River Conditions:**

Local streams are running normal flows and looking good.... go fishing !!





## Upcoming Events to Note on Your Calendar

- Nov. 01 Fly Tying 6:30 Bray Conservation Area.  
Nov. 19 Meeting at Bennett Spring 12:00 (Freeze Your Trout Off)

## Dunk Bag and Winter Safety

### Reminder by Sam

It is always better to “have it and need it than need it and not have it.” How many times have you heard this?

As we head into the colder months it is a good time to start carrying a dunk bag with you in the vehicle. We usually are not that far from our vehicles when fishing so it will always be there if we need it. I carry it in my boat in the winter. Besides a dunk bag here are a few things to also think about:

One wading belt isn't enough in the winter. It is always better to have two that fit snug on your chest and waist creating a pocket of air. If you don't have two then the one you have should be as tight as you can possibly stand it.

Pockets on a vest or waders left open fill up immediately and add weight when trying to get out of the water. Zippered shut they take on water but not instantly. Open pockets also add drag to your momentum when swimming.

Cotton Kills... Do not wear cotton in the winter especially jeans and sweat shirts. If it gets wet it stays wet and loses the insulation. Wool or polyester (fleece) is much better for insulation. It dries faster and stays warmer even when wet.

Always dress in layers so you can adjust your comfort level easier. Just a light wind and rain resistant jacket over a couple of layers can make a huge difference.

Coffee or tea in the winter makes you pee too much, and it is very inconvenient to repeatedly take clothes off, especially if it is raining or snowing and 20 degrees. I prefer hot chocolate made with milk. I rehydrate with lots of water and Gatorade after I finish fishing. IF you must have your coffee, keep it at a moderate amount.

Only carry enough gear on you that you will use. If you know what you will be fishing with take it and leave the rest in the truck, especially if the truck is parked close. Excess boxes and anything else that you won't use adds needless weight.

In my winter “dunk bag” I keep a large towel to dry off, extra under ware, two pair heavy socks, fleece pant, fleece shirt, Heavy sweatshirt and pants to go over the fleece to help trap in the warmth, a stocking cap, mittens, an emergency reflective blanket, hand warmers, foot warmers paper towels and a fire starters. I use the paper towels to dry out the inside of the waders and jacket and help start a fire if needed.

## Fishing Report by Sam

My annual steelhead trip was very good this year as far as size goes. The average size in the net was about 10 lbs. My fishing buddy in Michigan and I had several in the 12 to 13 pound range. We didn't land any monsters. We had our hands full with the low teens much less the upper teens. The smaller ones this year were 7-9. Normally the smaller ones are about 5 to 6 pounds. In past years we caught some that were 2-3 pounds called "skippers" because they jump like crazy. This year we only hooked one skipper.



This is my Michigan fishing buddy Barry with a nice female steelhead about 13lbs

All the fish were fresh chrome colored and full of energy. They all made knuckle busting runs and several jumps. The warmer water along with log jams and the downed timber made it difficult to land them. Steelhead have a knack of heading for cover when hooked. The entire stream has dead Ash trees along the banks that have fallen in the river and log jams from land slides on the high banks.

We usually use 8 pound tippet and sometimes 6 when the water is very low and extra clear. This year we went up to 10 pound for a little extra leverage and it helped that the water was off color.

We put 23 out of 64 in the net between the two of us which was our lowest landing percentage ever in the 14 years we have fished together. Number wise we have had some tremendous years with over a hundred hook ups for the week, but that has fallen off for the past half dozen years or so.



late fall colors... note the dead trees

on the right bank and the dead tree in the water down stream.

The key for good migratory fishing is to be there when the run is going strong and the weather is overcast or rain, there is color in the water, but not muddy and the river up a bit.... this year we hit it perfect. I have no idea how many we saw going past the boat or pushing them out of holes we went over. Some stretches would have a hundred per mile then there would be stretches of the river that had very few for a mile or so. The pods seemed to stay together as they made their way up stream... on the fourth day it turned sunny so we were walking the banks looking for fish when we found 8 that we could see stacked together under a log jam... it was an impossible place to fish from both sides of the stream.

This winter will be a great opportunity to land a Steelhead of a lifetime when the water turns cold their metabolism slows and the fight is subdued. I'm sure there will be several over 20 pounds caught.

### **River Conditions:**

Stream flows are about average for this time of the year except that the Meramec river is a little low. Water color is very clear to a little off depending on the stream and the location. Great fall and early winter hatches of Olives are coming on strong.





## Upcoming Events to Note on Your Calendar

- Dec. 06 Fly Tying 6:30 Bray Conservation Area.  
Dec. 20 Meeting 6:30 Bray Conservation Area

## FYTO

This year, as far as I remember or know of, our annual Freeze Your Trout Off wasn't held at Bennett Spring. We made a last-minute decision to move it to Montauk to save travel time. Several conflicts with schedules limited participants this year, so moving the venue made it a little easier. Todd brought along a Newbie, Braden, to introduce him to fly fishing for dumb trout at the catch and release area. I spent my time practicing spey casting at the catch and release lake above the hatchery. I never got it down well enough to cast in tight quarters, but I made a lot of progress. I let Lou give it a go and she found out that it isn't that hard to throw several feet of line easily when the timing is right.



Braden's first Trout on a Fly Rod

We delayed our start time this year to 9:00, because the morning started off cold and we didn't want to fight ice in the guides. There was plenty of elbow room for everyone. When Lou



arrived, we set the table for a hardy lunch of chili and cornbread. After everyone had their fill, it was back to the water for a warm afternoon of disturbing trout and beating the water.

### **Winter Safety by Sam**

Stay Dry to stay warm. You really find out how cold it is in winter fishing after you get your hands wet. Wet hands get cold much faster than dry hands so avoid getting your hands wet in the winter. Some fishermen use waterproof gloves like neoprene to keep their hands warm and dry. They will work to stay dry and warm, but I find them to be a burden because they need to be removed to ty tippet or flies and they are hard to take off and put on. There are some Neoprene gloves that have the finger-tips open, which seem to work fine, but you can't get a heat pad in them because they are too tight. Cotton gloves do fairly well to keep you warm, but they are useless if they get wet. Wool mittens or wool gloves will help keep your hands warm even when they get wet. But just like neoprene gloves they are also bulky when you need to ty anything. Fingerless (actually, finger tipless) gloves or mittens have been the best that I have used. I have fingerless wool gloves and I also have a hybrid that is a fingerless glove with a flap that becomes a mitten if needed, also made of wool. This is my favorite when the temperature drops off the table.

The nice thing about the hybrid is that I can also insert a hand warmer, which has been a great convenience on days in the teens and below. I rarely wear gloves above 30 unless it is snowing or freezing rain.



**River Conditions:**

Stream flows are about average to a little less than average for this time of year and water clarity is excellent. Temperatures have been inconsistent, but enough low temps at night are steadily dropping the river temperatures. Warm days bring out the Olives and Midges so if you are lucky enough to be on the water at the right time you will enjoy some nice dry fly action.





## Upcoming Events to Note on Your Calendar

- Jan. 02 Fly Tying 6:30 Bray Conservation Area.  
Jan. 17 Meeting 6:30 Bray Conservation Area

## Much Needed Fishing Trip A Success by Bill Cooper

I've set a new personal fishing record. I only fished twice between September first and the end of the year. To say I've experienced withdrawal symptoms is a gross understatement. However, I did sneak off for a two hour trip to Maramec Spring Park recently. The time on the water greatly improved my mental state.

My fishing hiatus has been the result of a major life change. Dian and I are selling our place in the country that has been home for 42 years. It is truly amazing how much STUFF one accumulates in four decades. We cleaned, tossed, gave away and sold much of our once much needed goods. We don't need them anymore.

Sam Potter showed up at our auction. I giggled as I watched him walk away with an armload of rods and reels and other fishing paraphernalia. I felt certain that Sam would put every bit of that gear to good use.

I had so many people ask me about giving up outdoor gear. I had reached a satisfying decision that the time had come to downsize. That included reducing my gear inventory, too. Watching happy outdoorsmen walk away with good deals felt good. I had certainly gleaned my moneys worth from all that I possessed for decades. I can only hope that each person who made a purchase enjoys the gear as much as me over the years.

Preparing for a sale, making repairs on our home and place, and shopping for a much smaller home consumed our entire fall and much of winter. We settled on a gorgeous small home on the southwest edge of Cuba with one acre. We love it and can still have a garden and flowers. Too, we are only four miles from a boat ramp on the Meramec.

We still have a lot to do, but with the recent warming spell into the high 60s, I couldn't take it anymore. I packed my 5-weight fly rod, waders and fly pack and headed to Maramec. The sight of running, cold, clear water proved immediately refreshing. The moment resembled that of meeting an old friend whom I hadn't seen in a long time.

I sat quietly and observed the stream while slowly preparing my gear. Trout dimpled the surface steadily. I fumbled my leader and had to make several attempts to get the tippet through the tiny

eye of the #20 Griffith's Gnat I had chosen. I chuckled as I noticed a tremor of excitement in my hands. I genuinely hope I never lose the excitement I derive from experiencing the grandeur of a trout stream.

I gasped and missed the take on my very first cast. I should know better, but I had not kept my eye on the drift. I had turned my head to enjoy a momentary spectacular splash of a jumping fish upstream. Of course, the hit occurred at that very moment. A milli-second too late with the soft hook-set, I mentally flogged myself. Then I pondered the proverbial "how can a trout possibly spit a fly so fast question?"

My two hour fishing expedition vanished in a moment. The strikes, hook-ups and colorful, splashing trout served as an exilir to body, mind and spirit. Fly fishing still works wonders for me. That's success at its best.



## **Secret Fly by Sam**

When nothing else works we dig deep in the box and pull out “ole reliable”, sometimes called “My secret fly” or the “killer fly” or “my secret weapon” or my “go to” Whatever you call it, the fly has a special place in your experiences fly fishing. It was a fly that you killed them with once or twice, so you made or bought several of them for future trips to your favorite streams.... BUT if the fly is so great, why didn't you use it to begin with instead of tying on a dozen different flies before you decided to dig it out of the mothballs where it's stored. If the fly is so great, why do you have a thousand different flies in that twelve pound vest you lug around. You know the one that gives you that pinched feeling in the back of your neck after a day on the water. The one that has a hundred different gadgets...., sorry, I got off track, we will save that subject for another time. Anyway back to the special fly we all have that gets dragged out when nothing else works. If the fly is so great and never fails why don't you just have that one fly in one fly box with about a dozen others, just in case you lose a few during the day. Depending on the size of the fly, maybe you would only need a fly box the size of a pack of playing cards. AND, if you only need that one special fly think of all the fly tying materials you could save money buying... maybe you could get down to two or three or four materials and you would be set. Think about the tools... one spool of thread, one bobbin, maybe two pair of scissors, one whip finisher, if you use one.. How about hooks? You would only need one or two sizes, maybe three. Yep, one fly could really solve that overkill in fly boxes, tying materials, fly tying tools and that never ending search on the ole web trying to find the “fly that really catches um”. Time could be better spent fishing instead of tying and buying and searching and experimenting... no need trying to match the hatch anymore. OH, and how about all those books in your library, no need for them and no more wasted time reading...the book shelf can become a trophy case full of those photos of the fish you will be catching on that Secret Fly.

The next page contains a photo of “The Secret Flies” that I use for trout. Yes, I know, I should never have shown them to you, because you and everyone you know will be using them and they won't be a secret any longer. The trout will be put off by everyone throwing the same thing at them and eventually through generations of genetics they will get wise to these flies and the flies will eventually stop working, but I'm getting old and besides, it's time someone else needs to come up with secret flies to replace mine that have stood the test of time.

This is a photo of my Secret Trout Flies



You are welcome to use these anywhere I fish.

Where's the fun in having one fly?

**River Conditions:**

Stream flows are about average to a little less than average for this time of year and water clarity is excellent. Temperatures have been inconsistent to say the least. One week ago, it was 8 below zero and yesterday it was 70. Warm days with sun on the water in the winter bring out the Midges. Fish emergers prior to and during the hatch... if you don't see any activity, nymphs are always a possibility.

