

# Creel Notes from the



P.O. Box 639, Mercer Island, WA 98040

Website: [www.wffc.com](http://www.wffc.com)



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## President's Riffle

For many of us "finnaticks" these winter months can be tough unless you are able to travel or don't mind freezing your toes off chasing steel-head where they used to live. This year I am in the latter category so when I got a call in late January to join Bob Burdick and potential member Jim Farr for one last day of fishing the Skagit before it closed for the season.



I drug out my gear and started getting ready. I hadn't touched my Spey rig since fishing the Bandon River in County Cork, Ireland in 2015 and as I was inspecting my fly line for problems it dawned on me how similar a modern fly line is to a fishing club like the WFFC. Many parts; from the Albright knot securing the backing to the reel to the nail knot securing the fly line to the backing all the way to the business end of the tippet securing the perfect fly. All must be tied correctly in order for the various bits and pieces to function as one unified and successful whole.

In like manner, our club has some key elements that must be in place for the organization to run smoothly. While many sections of the club fly line look really good this year, some critical bits are still missing (are you still with me?). We are in dire need of a 3rd VP, a Youth Committee Chairman a Club Photographer and a Creel Notes editor for the summer months.

I put out a call for help in this space last month but so far have had no response. While you all still seem enthusiastic to me perhaps you are thinking that because you served as an officer, committee member or board member in the past you really don't need to worry about stepping up anymore. Nothing could be further from the truth. We have become a very small club over the past several years.

From a recent high membership count of 183 in 2007 we have dropped almost 30% to our current total of 136 mem-

bers. We need to recycle ourselves in order to remain a viable club. The WFFC really needs your help. None of these open positions require attendance at every board meeting, outing or dinner meeting. Even the 3rd VP (Holiday Party) already has a complete project plan and experienced members waiting for the call from the Chairperson to join the committee. Please consider helping out.

We have a really dynamic team this year and I find great satisfaction working with these folks. Call me if you think you might be able to help. So now that we know what we need to do to sort out the club fly line, what are we going to do about our membership? Like having fish in the river... ok, ok, I'll stop with the tortuous analogies.

We do have good news here however. The new club website is consistently generating very qualified applicants and our 1st VP for membership is contacting all of them as well as others to join us on outings or at a dinner meeting. The Board has set a new member goal of 20 for this year and next. We feel this is a very doable number and have several promotional programs in mind that we hope to role out soon. The biggest impediment to bringing in new folks is our extremely lengthy vetting process. I'll need your help and support to suspend some of these procedures for awhile

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# Future Outings: March & April

One of the things repeatedly discussed at the board meetings of the WFFC is how to get folks interested in fly fishing and club activities. It's brought up that people want to learn about the local fisheries, and glean "secrets" from the old pros in the club. So, here it is. The biggest fly fishing secret you will ever hear. You need to GO fishing to LEARN about fishing! And the way to learn about local waters is to explore them! To that end, we will be having several day trips to local fisheries this year. Anybody can catch fish in Alaska, it takes an ANGLER to score in a west side lowland lake, or Puget Sound stream. Interested? Here we go!

March 25:

Nahwatzel Lake, Mason county. This lake lies near Shelton in the hills of the South Sound. It's about 280 acres at 460 feet in altitude. Although the lake has development on three sides, ( what local water doesn't ) it is undeveloped on the north, and the water quality is high. The lake has streams flowing into and out of the lake, into salt water. As a result, both resident and sea run cutthroat trout live here along with coho salmon and their tasty fry and smolts.

The state WDFW manages the lake as a winter fishery, so plants the lake heavily with large rainbow and brood stock in addition the the usual "squeezers". Also a mixed fishery the rest of the year, so don't be surprised by what you might catch. Keep in mind that this is still very early spring by any measure, and expect to do some probing with sinking lines and leech or beadhead wooley bugger type stuff. This is the explore and learn part. Find the weed beds, rocks and drop offs. You can check the WDFW web site and click on fish Washington, then freshwater, then Nahwatzel. You'll get a topo map of the lake and directions how to get there.

Take your boat, sack lunch, raincoat, and a couple beers. Head out 101 toward Shelton and turn left on Shelton-Matlock road. The road runs along the south side of the lake, and

past the boat launch.

Could be rainy, could be beautiful, nothing ventured, nothing gained. You might just learn a new favorite fishing spot. I will try to be at the launch by 8:30 or 9:00. Hope to see you there!

April 15,16

Dry Falls Lake: A long time favorite, which has changed a lot in the last several years. Again, an angler interested in learning and spending some time can do really well here. A LOT of big fish in this lake. The fishing in the shallows with dry lines is only a shadow of its historical greatness, but deeper fishing, with slow sinkers and big flies can really produce, especially early in the season. The chironomid fishing with strike indicators can be world class for those with a taste for it. A lot of that fishing can be 20-30 feet down.

We will gather (as usual) in the campground at Sun Lakes State park. Usually the "back loop" out of the wind. Saturday happy hour kicks in around 5:00, bring your favorite appetizer and side dish. The grill will be hot by 6:00 for the steaks. The club will provide steaks for those that sign up in advance.

I personally really like fishing here, even if it is different than "the old days". The camping is easy, and the bonfire company great. Sign up! See you there!

Dave Schorsch



Maury Skeith rests up for the onslaught on the Wenaha, Oregon in 1996

## Creel Notes

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# On the Fly

## The Meeting in Reel Time

by David Ehrich  
Editor Creel Notes

Gary Bergquist did his duty for the last time to great applause and handed the gavel to our new president, John Gravendyk, who took the reigns of the venerable WFFC for 2017. In his first act of innovation, John set the meeting agenda as a mix of awards, business, and erudition. To that end Bill Neal, awards chair, introduced Peter Baird to hand out the coveted Empty Creel award to toasting, acknowledgment, and applause.

As tradition dictates, Pete read the list of former award winners who took the moment to soak up the the glory. After these pillars of faith took applause, Pete laid down some hints about who our award winner might be and the Illuminati at my table had her name on their lips almost immediately. And so gender equity reached the Empty Creel award for the first time; congratulations Pat Becker, Ghillie and constant friendly face at the door.

And the honor spreading continued with a unanimous vote to make Jim McDonald an honorary member. Future members then enjoyed introductions of some soon to become members.

Jim Goedhart took over the mic to ask members, "How many of you have checked the new website?" And like web masters before



him, he warned members not getting the blast emails like Creel Notes and meeting announcements, to check their spam folder. Small problems are being addressed continuously.

As planned, we went back to awards with the Tommy Brayshaw Award, to recognize service to the greater fishing community. After a little background on Tommy and his amazing life story, Bill started to detail the accomplishments of this year's recipient, who after only a few details was known by all: Pat Peterman. As you would expect, Pat reflected the light of his award back on those who have helped along the way.

Next, as the first of special awards, Kris Kristofferson reminded members of the twelve hidden saints, those members who make the world work without stripes on their uniform or loads of applause. One such person is the man who dug down deep and took on the club website and just got the job done without any dust and no complaints: Jim Goedhart. Jim, like Pat, reflected the glory back on the many who have led the way.

Following in line, Ron Dion brought up Bob Burdick, noted humilitarian, to take applause for the many, many years of great programs. Then Chuck Ballard reminded members of the amazing accomplishments, especially in terms of the Christmas Party, of Carrie Oldenburg, who joined the club and hit the pavement full throttle. Her award, a Certificate of Appreciation. By the time she took the award, I was the only one at the table who hadn't risen for recognition.

The club then took on its most important work, inducting new members. Except in this case, Gil yielded to Bob Burdick the important job of warning members of the hard road ahead and the "flies you want to use" to our latest member: Kurt Zumwalt.

Some brave souls reported casting rods in cold weather, catching fish, including Doug Schaad who caught salmon off the Oregon Coast.

Committee reports were mercifully few, including my call to arms to send articles of all types, photos with captions to really snazz up the monthly magazine, and anything of interest to me at [davidehrich@rocketmail.com](mailto:davidehrich@rocketmail.com). Keep those articles short and send lots of photos. Remember, reading is a lost art, but everyone likes to look at photos.

After the break, Bob Burdick in lieu of Mike Wearne, introduced Ryan Smith who revealed loads of secrets to catch the illusive sea run cutthroat. Ryan, as you might know, manages Avid Angler, in its 41st year of business. He started off with a little history of his initial casts for those cutties near Tillamook Bay at age 17. A local boy since 2002, Ryan gave us a few clues of the inexhaustibly diverse 2500 miles of Puget Sound shoreline fishing. Spawning from January to April, these guys are in the seawater most of the year. When we find them in the

fresh water, Ryan warns us to play them gently and release them quickly because they are a vulnerable and valuable resource when they head upstream. These fish are highly mobile as they traverse ground to find food. Ryan knows so much about the business of catching sea run Cutts, the asides alone made a good speech. The gist of his slideshow boiled down to a few key principles: they are out there, they move around a lot, and they are loyal to an area for months at a time if the feed table is set.

They want structure like sand, cobble, large rocks, points, eel grass, and depth variation. Look for places where rock meets sand. Sage advice to this regard is to look at a beach in low tide to memorize the structure. Don't get too caught up with one big rock versus another. Give it a shot and move on. Tides are paramount. Avoid slack water and look for racing tides, especially outgoing tides that give the angler more and more access as the tide recedes and places where the bait gets concentrated.

As you target your area, your tide, and your structure, start to think like a river angler and find the soft water on the edge of movement. Vary your strip speed until you find success, keeping your rod tip down, line taut and moving. Interspersed with advice, Ryan highlighted a few of his favorite spots. But more than the "best beach," Ryan advised to pick your local access and get to know "your" beach.

Next Ryan moved on to flies. He likes long flies, drab colors for fall and winter, tape on eyes, and short shanked hooks (6-10) to make sure the fish doesn't swallow too much hook. He swears by a casting basket worn to the side to free yourself up for long, fast strips without banging your knuckles.

As time started to add up, Ryan moved through the slides and stories with a bit more pace and treated members to some good views of water we all have access to, fish that we can catch and views of our beautiful area we can enjoy even when the fish aren't on. As Ryan wound down and member eyes started to glaze, he put a good show of our favorite eye candy - fish in hand.

Rainbow on the Arolik, Alaska.



## Club Aims and Purposes

The purpose of this club shall be:

1. To improve and increase the sport of Fly Fishing in the State of Washington.
2. To promote and work for the betterment of trout streams and lakes.
3. To encourage and advocate the conservation and increase of trout, steelhead, and salmon in state waters.
4. To promote a campaign of education against pollution in streams, lakes or Sound waters of the State of Washington.
5. To encourage and assist others — particularly young persons of high school age—to become fly fishers and true conservationists.

# Cold Camp on Rock Creek

by David Ehrich

Most years, Spring Break means fishing pre-runoff in Western Montana. The first year we hit the Clark Fork, shacked up in Missoula, fished the Bitterroot, and then made the long haul to lower Rock Creek and the even longer haul to the upper river via Phillipsburg. We've stayed various places over the years and fished different combinations of those waters, but two things happened: I grew to love the upper river and I preferred camping to the snore-fest of shared motel rooms with noisy heaters and the smell of damp musty anglers.

I got invited to join my friends Ian and Adam Malcolm the first time in 2000. Usually we meet his father, Mike, who works at WSU somewhere near St. Regis and sometimes their little brother, Adam comes along. Different folks have rounded out the groups, mostly teachers. Over the years, as these younger men had families, the group got smaller and it has boiled down to just the Malcolms and me. The last few years, in order to save time and keep wives happy, the Seattle group flew over to meet their dad in Missoula I drove my VW camper. We would meet on the river, stay somewhere together for a few nights and then, since their trips got shorter and shorter, I started taking a couple nights on the river by myself braving cold, snow and the threat of being snow bound for a few days.

I've poured a lot of money in my Van, more than I can put in print, but the best \$50 was a Mr. Heater Portable Buddy propane heater. It effectively extended Van camping well below freezing. As long as the snow doesn't pile up, I can last out most weather. I don't sleep with the heater on, but it knocks off the chill in the morning and makes evenings, before I settle around a campfire, comfortable.

This year, Spring Break is devoted to a trip south to see my daughter's new life in LA, and I got so sad over the prospect of missing a Rock Creek trip, that I contracted a rare illness, un-described in medical journals, but familiar to many anglers. And why not, last year's trip was warm, featured 50+ days on dry flies and otherwise proved why people regularly beat a path to Rock Creek. My wife cautioned me; be prepared to be a tad bit disappointed.

I drove as far as I could get in Idaho after work Friday, and the next day got my license, flies, and the usual bad advice after breakfast in Missoula. I hit the river above the now Borenson Bridge, renamed to honor a young veteran of the Gulf War, just about two o'clock. I was joined on the river by a cabin crazy couple who had escaped from Missoula to the call of a break in the weather and



Between the tall Ponderosas, summer of 2011.

## Member

### Notification

Due to the current urgent need to increase WFFC membership and in support of the Boards goal of 20 new members this year, the following motion was adopted at the WFFC Board meeting on February 8, 2017.

Section II, Article 3 of the bylaws of the WFFC is hereby amended by deletion of all of the provisions thereof in the entirety and replaced with the following language:

"The Board of Trustees shall determine the qualifications and procedures for Club membership as it may from time to time deem appropriate."

The intent of this amendment is to streamline the admissions to membership process at certain times when deemed necessary by the board to keep the club at a membership level that will support operations and ad-

### President's Riffle continued

in order to get our numbers back where they belong. Hope you will support if these plans end up requiring a membership vote.

More good news. We concluded the budgeting process at the last board meeting and all is in great shape. The budget will be presented for your approval at the February Dinner Meeting. Should be a great evening as Bill Neal will be presenting the balance of our WFFC Awards followed by Molly Semenik and her talk on 25 Best Off the Beaten Path Montana Fly Fishing Streams.

Spring is just around the corner and I cant wait to see what Outdoor Chairman Dave Schorsch has up his sleeve for our March 25 outing. Wherever it is I'm going and I'm taking a friend!





fishing their favorite stream. So like any “nice guy” I beat it right up to some promising holes and staked out the good water before they could get set up.

I rosined up the bow and got right on familiar water looking for nymph action on a combo stone fly and San Juan worm - what I think of as fishing ugly. But about 4 o'clock I started to hear slurping and even some fully throated rises, so I switched to a March Brown and gray emerger and got some action in soft water. I hooked 8, landed 6, a mix of Browns, Cutts and a Bow. I probably played that hand too long, but who can resist swinging dries on a snowy river in mid March. One big guy took a lot of line, but wiggled off pretty quickly. Probably a Mighty Whitey. We shared our light success as the three of us packed up around six o'clock, them to their warm cozy home and me to a cold camp down river. I wistfully considered the Inn at Phillipsburg, cowboy bars and a good steak. Still I turned away from the comforts of town to my rustic perch along the river.

I always look for a site along the river in what we call Mile Post 33, a NFS, “rule light” environment. Some years, I've had competition and shared the best sites with fellow anglers and occasionally, someone down on the luck who seems to have moved in for the spring. This year, the place was empty and I chose the most snow free site. I hacked the ice out of the fire pit, built up a nice fire for later, and considered years past. Besides Spring Break, I've met Ian and the boys at the Flats in several summers. Month long fishing trips in Montana have begun and ended here. My daughters got their first fish on the fly just off the camp site. One year, while the powers that be considered the fate of my job, I let the fall colors, warm days, and big Browns sooth my angst.

This year heavy news had reached me when I stopped in Missoula; a good friend, husband and father of two teenage girls had died from a skiing accident just that early morning. Fishing had quieted my nerves for a while in the afternoon, but as I settled into camp, a deep depression came over me like the cloudy cold that was settling over the valley for the night. I walked around camp trying to grasp something to help me put things in perspective.

I remembered romantic nights with gentle summer breezes cooling off the van, pot luck dinners mixed with tall tales from the river, roaring drunken fires, days fishing with good friends, but none more important than the sunny summer afternoon I asked Jennifer to marry me by the riverside in 2011. We were talking about what we needed to buy next



time we got to a store, and I think my words went something like, “not to change the subject too much, but Jennifer, would you marry me?” I may not remember the exact words, but I remember the spot between two towering Ponderosa Pines, looking across the river at the setting late summer sun. I think I even heard a fish rise, but I knew better than to look away from her eyes at that moment.

So I toasted to that happy moment, turned around and toasted to my friend and asked greater powers to watch over his family and help then move on over time. A river that has frustrated me, excited me, and soothed me over the years added a chorus to my thoughts.

Summer camp  
with the  
Malcolms *above*,  
a view from  
upper Rock  
Creek just east  
of the Bohrnsen Bridge with wary mountain goats checking out the anglers,

*below.*  
All Photos D.  
Ehrich





**Washington Fly Fishing Club**  
**P.O. Box 639**  
**Mercer Island, WA 98040**

**February, 2017**



**Meeting Announcement**

**Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month at the Seattle Tennis Club, 922 McGilvra Blvd. E.**

**This month's program is on February 21. The Wet Fly hour begins at 5:30 PM and dinner is served at 6:45 PM.**

**This month: Join us for the second half of the Awards Banquet as well at an entertaining program with speaker Molly Smenik, who recently authored the guide book titled *25 Best Off-the-Beaten-Path Montana Fly Fishing Streams*. Ms. Semenik is a member of the IFFF Casting Committee Board of Governors and member of Trout Unlimit-**