

Creel Notes from the



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



October, 2008



President's Riffle

Fellow Fly Fishermen,

I love early October. Like I love late September I suppose.

With the leaves hanging on to their last bits of summer greenness, and the first frost of the year still clinging to the tall grasses, I joined some friends to cast to trout on a small pond early last weekend. It was just one of those really great days where a couple other club members and I caught a few nice trout and got to know each other a little better, collecting a few fond memories along the way. We can always use some of those, especially in these crazy times.

I know many of us have fond memories of WFFC Christmas Parties past. You may be surprised to see that ticket prices for the annual bash and fundraiser have gone up. The dinner cost of \$65, though, should prove to be quite worth it this year. If you've had dinner at the Seattle Tennis Club this year, I think you'll agree the food has been superb. Included with the dinner price are tickets for two drinks from the bar, and wine will be available for \$22 per bottle. Of course, you'll have your choice of Prime Rib or Salmon as usual, along with the usual trimmings and a fantastic dessert.

New this year is the ability to sign up and pay via the WFFC website. Just login to the members area and you'll find your way to the signup page. It's quick, easy, secure, and no need for check writing or stamp licking. *Gather your friends and get signed up quickly, as we will surely sell out this year with a limitation of 160 attendees.*

We know the food and drink will be great, and the atmosphere sublime, but what about the raffle prizes and auction items? Well, that's up to you! This is our biggest fundraising event of the year after all, and it's not going

to make money on its own. The club needs every one of you to make this your way of supporting your club. We're asking you to help procure at least two items. They can be gear, books, etc., or even better -- experiences. Experiences can be theater or sports tickets, fishing trips, cabin or condo stays, a photography session, or maybe even a fly tying lesson. Get creative, and if you can't come up with something you can give or do yourself, ask someone you know to help support all the good things this club does by donating his or her time and talent. Please get in touch with our party chairman, Craig Koeppler, to discuss procurement and donations. The fish will thank you.

Speaking of photography, you don't want to miss this month's guest speaker, Brian O'Keefe. He's a club favorite and if you haven't seen his new photography and video website, you *have* to check it out-- and be prepared to be blown away! You can find it here: <http://www.catchmagazine.net/>

It should be a fun meeting, hope to see you there.

Happy Fall to all!

Bill Kuper

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October Speaker: Brian O'Keefe *by Keith Robbins*

Brian has been a serious fly fisher for the past forty years. He developed an interest while spending summers in Montana with his grandparents. There he was taught the art of fly casting and fishing by a Montana dry fly purist, his grandfather, Fred Johnson.

Brian began fishing the world in 1973. Just out of high school, Brian began his adventures with a solo trip through New Zealand and Australia, and a trek into the Himalayan Mountains to fish for brown trout in Kashmir. After returning from this two-year adventure, he began guiding in the Northwest and Alaska for trout, salmon, and steelhead. At age 30, Brian began a 23-year career as a fly fishing tackle rep. As a fly fishing photographer, Brian started publishing photos while at Bellevue High School in the early 70's and continues to contribute to publications on a daily basis. He is also an accomplished fly casting instructor, earning the title of Master Certified Fly Casting Instructor from the Fly Fishing Federation. Brian has also placed in, and won, many fly casting competitions.

Brian has traveled to some of the wildest and most remote angling destinations in the world, including Bikini Atoll, the Seychelles, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Tonga, and Kashmir. He has also traveled to more accessible locations, such as the Bahamas, Belize, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Chile, New Zealand, Christmas Island, and more. In many of these locations, he again chose to venture off the beaten path, hiking, floating, sea-kayaking, or taking a Zodiac into the backcountry. Inside our borders, Brian has specialized in fly fishing the Northern Rockies, the Northwest, and Alaska. A camera goes on every trip to record the action.

Brian lives in Powell Butte, Oregon, and continues to work as an angling and outdoor photographer, having had photographs published in *Field & Stream*; *Outdoor Life*; *Fly Fisherman*; *Fly, Rod, and Reel*; *Fly Fishing Salt Waters*; *NW Flyfishing*; *Fish Alaska*; *Fish & Fly Magazine*; *Outside Magazine*; *Men's Journal*; and many others. Brian is also the photo editor of the online fly fishing magazine called *Catch Magazine* – www.catchmagazine.net. Brian's fly club presentations are legendary. With beautiful photography and an easygoing and at times funny style, Brian takes anglers on visual trips to local destinations and around the world.

When not wading a flat or shooting photos in Alaska, Brian might be found in his huge vegetable garden, or doing tractor work on his small farm, which goats, chickens, and turkeys call home.

Roster Photos to Be Taken at the October Meeting

by Jim Macdonald

Please have your photograph taken for the club roster at the October club meeting. This will be the last meeting where it will be realistic to do this before the cutoff for the 2009 roster. So, please come to the meeting and have your picture taken now!

Creel Notes

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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 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.

September WFFC Meeting *by Mike Wearne*

The speaker for the September monthly meeting was Tim Borski. Personally I was intrigued by the possibility of hearing Tim. I still remember the presentation with the dulcet tones of Billy Pate concerning deep-sea fly fishing. That was my first real exposure to deep-sea fly fishing.

I was slightly familiar with Borski from his contributions in The Redbone Journal. He provides a simple fly pattern in his Fly Paper column. I am sure that these patterns will eventually be turned into a book; we will be all richer for the opportunity. Just as Tim's WFFC presentation was casual, these patterns are presented in a casual and easy-to-follow manner.

Tim's relaxed nature was evident throughout the fly-tying demonstration. He progressed from a fundamental pattern to a variety of alternatives. The discussion of incorporating weed guards into the design was most instructive.

One comment that he made and reinforced was the appropriateness of dumping fly-tying material that is of no use. I find this hard to accept; why, I have boxes of "potential" in the basement just waiting for the proper opportunity!

The size of the flies and the potential for fishing "dirty" water to depths of three feet demonstrated the wide variety of what constitutes fly fishing in this country. I had visions of muddy ponds or backwaters festooned with garlands of Spanish Moss dropping off the mangos—far different from the high lakes of the Cascades.

I sat in the back of the room and watched the members during the presentation. It was library-quality quiet. Afterward many of the members crowded around the tying bench to inspect the sample that Tim had produced.



Tim Barry Inducted by Dick Baird at the September meeting, with Sponsor Dave Hawkinson

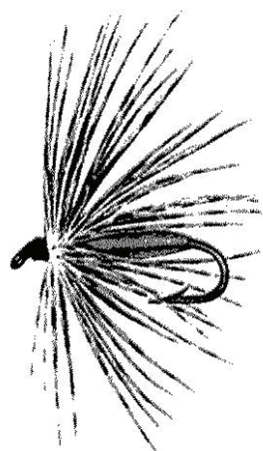
Just two more comments.....

1. A member of the club asked Tim how often he fished, and the answer was a significant drop from a previous level: over 300 days to less than 100 days (imagine fishing 100 days!). I think I know why. I checked out his website and there are photos of his son. I am guessing that his priorities have shifted.

2. Not once during his presentation did Tim mention his artwork. He is a great painter! He produces fantastic images of fish and birds. Check out his web site.



Tim Borski Presenting at the September Meeting



REPORTS

Dry Falls Outing *by Pete Baird*

Regarding Dry Falls, the bad news is the water level of the lake. I have never seen it so low!! Difficult to launch from the area to the left as you approach the lake; another 2" less of water and you won't be able to get out that way. The launch area to the right through about 50' of tules is narrow but slightly deeper. No hope of fishing the shallow portion of the lake any more. As for the deeper portion of the lake, fishing was slow for most, but I had four to ten fish to hand daily from Friday through Monday, running 9" to 18". A black #10 4X long guinea hen hackle fly worked best for me. Got fairly windy a couple of days, but little rain while on the water, overall quite nice conditions. Rising was sporadic and there were few chironomid shucks on the surface. There was some dry fly success, but rather minimal.

Dry Falls Report *by Ron Mazurek*

I'd like to say it is always wonderful to see and visit with our many long-time friends at the Dry Falls outing. Peggy and I look forward to this outing annually, as we have for the last 38 years of our association with the WFFC. During this period of time the club has fluctuated up and down regarding attendance of the Dry Falls outing, but in recent years it seems the trend is spiraling downward. This is a bit disturbing, as camaraderie, tradition, and lasting friendships are cemented by outings such as the Dry Falls gathering, whether fish catching is great or perhaps wanting. Of the majority in attendance, new faces at this outing have in general been missing for some time, as well as some of the long-time members of WFFC. I would hope that these outings, beyond the monthly meetings, would attract more of the newer club members, as I firmly believe the outings promote much of the catalyst of the club's strength, cohesiveness, and viability.

Beartooths Provide Anglers with High Lake Adventure *by David Ehrich*

Eager Brookies, Elusive Goldens, and Elegant Cutthroat Entice Anglers to New Heights

My favorite part of backpacking is the remote rendezvous. Despite all the emails, phone calls, the fancy cell phones in the glove compartment—it is always a leap of faith to heed the call and gather in as remote a town as Montana offers, Cooke City. Jennifer Salk and I found the outfitters in the late afternoon, finishing nearly a month of being trout bums from Billings to Bannock, from Rock Creek (near Missoula) to Rock Creek (at Red Lodge). Within minutes, members **Maury Skeith** and **Marv Young** pulled up. Maury had flown to Billings and Marv had just finished doctoring up on the High Line with his dearest, leaving her at the airport in exchange for a less-elegant tent mate. An hour later, the dark horse of the trip, **Mike Wearne**, skidded into the motel parking lot after two long days in the saddle.

Besides Mike, the rest of us arrived in Montana's highest incorporated town via Red Lodge after coming down Beartooth pass on the nation's highest improved road, winding into Wyoming, and heading



Anglers and Companions at Sun Lakes State Park



High Country Anglers David Ehrich, Marve Young, Maury Skeith, and Jennifer Salk with Finn

back up the Clark Fork valley. In fact, the road passes over altitudes above 12,000', from which we could look down on the massive plateaus of lakes that draw anglers to the area and where we were to hike to by the morrow. Despite the endless rumbling of illegal exhaust pipes on thousands of Harleys returning upstream to spawn in their home waters near Sturgis, Jennifer and I felt like we were flying over the mountains and had only to parachute down to tomorrow's campsite. Alas, Jen's dog hates flying, so we drove slowly toward this strange combination of a hiker and biker's paradise.

The bikers wear chaps, have goatees (even the ladies), and drink hard and blow off fireworks outside the hotel room. The hikers wear nylon pants with too many zippers, and since they have to carry heavy packs the next day, they try to sleep. The wranglers also wear chaps, but they look better. They also sleep outside of town and put in a day's work before we even saw the saddle leave the truck.

When one travels with the esteemed Doctors Skeith and Young, one goes first class. Mike, Jen, and I walked, but because the docs had hired saddle up the hill, for a small price, so did our gear. We had the last look around 9 o'clock of our recent cowhands teetering carefully astride Widowmaker and Nutbuster leaving us in a trail of dust.

We met just off the destination lake mid-afternoon, set up camp, and enjoyed the fresh bounty that animals stronger than us bothered to carry. Camping streamside, I grilled up steaks while Jen made fresh pesto and Marv found snow for the first

round (of many) of his signature dry Mountain Martini (gin, ice, hold the rest).

We adjusted our site the next day to the banks of Russell Lake, trading remote solitude for the beauty and ease of lakeside habitation. The very same river we had camped on the night before braided into a dozen channels, feeding our lake and holding brookies in every piece of current. They averaged 6" – 8" and some got up around 11". Mike and I each caught one cutthroat, evidence of past species intervention. The key to this day was keeping Marv's pot full of fish so he could boil down his famous bouillabaisse. Maury and I each brought in a handful for the stock and another string for the meal. Jen was getting used to the idea of touching fish to get them off the hook and had no plans to start killing the poor little fellows.

After catching our wind, we headed up to Lake Ouzelle, finding more brook trout and even better scenery. After a five-angler assault on Ouzelle, Mike and I headed up to the next lake and he patiently hunted for goldens and cutts, whilst I slayed more brook trout in the outlet stream. I don't think the choice of fly made a difference, but I stayed with a caddis on top and a weighted streamer (of my own design) for fishing down low. Fortunately for Mike and I, Maury and the gang were back at the ranch resting up before making his famous trail pasta carbonara.

Fish all day, mountain Martinis, gourmet eating, and Maury's jokes around the camp fire: nice, eh? As quartermaster, I had ordered a box of wine per meal. With Marv stalking the crags for the last of the melting snow to supply us with cocktails and a good



David Ehrich at Lake of the Clouds



Maury Skieth on Widowmaker

dose of box wine, you can guess that the camp slept well.

Our intel was vague about some lakes and two of the more remote lakes, Lake of the Clouds and Lost Lake, both failed us. We never did find the lake stocked with golden trout. Nothing is sadder than watching 150 years of fishing experience flailing away at a lake that it took all morning to get up to, but that was the sad truth on Lost Lake. Lake of the Clouds gave up only one large cutt to yours truly on a weighted streamer fished from a sink tip.

But Russell always provided reprieve and if you got tired of watching them jump in the evening, you could string up the bow and get right to making sweet music.

Fossil Lake was our farthest destination. Mike, Jennifer, and I followed Jen's dog Finn up to 10,000'. We were greeted by unrivaled scenery and 30 mph gusts. Jen and Finn hunkered down with a book, Mike disappeared around the bend as was his style, and I brought out the sink tip, weighted streamer, and had the day of my life. After finding just the right twitch and casting between gusts, I brought in almost two dozen good-sized cutthroat, 11-18" with lots of fight and deceptive subterranean moves. I waded off snowfields into icy water with only shorts on, chilled to the bone and blithely unaware of the fact until I got back to the tent and was sick from the exhaustion and cold. Now, that's a good day.

Mike left a day early so on our last day, Jen and I packed up the gear for the horses, and hiked out with our rods in hand while the doctors two waited for the escalator ride downhill, aka Nutbuster and Widow-

maker. We fished a lovely little part of Russell Creek, with Jen taking top rod for the day and yours truly scaring away good trout from every riffle. I made up for it by having a cold beer waiting for the crew and clients back at the stable. As the younger of the two wranglers said (and these were the only words he said), "Sure cuts the dust, much obliged."

We headed back into town back among the roar of the Hell's Angels, got a room far enough off the road to promise a little sleep, and took a long-awaited shower. Marv didn't have any trouble finding ice and we didn't have any trouble putting it to good use.

This horse travel has its advantages: fresh steak, box wine, and a light pack. But I will gladly heft up a full load for another week next August in the Bear-tooths, because I just got started finding lakes—I've got about 500 left to go.

North Umpqua River, Sept. 14th - 19th

by Rocco Maccarrone

We made our annual pilgrimage to the storied and hallowed waters of the North Umpqua River, leaving Seattle on Sunday, Sept. 14th. For this trip, our party included fellow WFFC member **Robert Tovar**, Fred Kohout (Redmond), Greg Larson (Bend, OR), and Jim Bolin (Morgan Hill, CA). In past years, we made camp at Bogus Creek Campground. This year we opted for Susan Creek campground, downriver a couple of miles. Susan Creek has hot showers for guests. We were lucky and found a couple of the prime sites open and avail-



Robert Tovar on the North Umpqua

(Continued from page 6)



Fred Kohout on the Rock Shelves of the Umpqua

able, and quickly assembled a camp that would make Zane Grey envious.

For the week, the weather was absolutely perfect ... cool in the evenings for a good night's sleep ... warm, shirt-sleeve, sun-soaked during the days. Highway 138, which parallels the North Umpqua, was closed to all traffic about 12 miles upriver from Steamboat due to an active forest fire that had jumped the road. For this reason, there was very little traffic on the road during our stay. Made it nice and quiet. FYI, Highway 138 is the main route connecting I-5 to Crater Lake. The fire did cause the river canyon to be somewhat smoky and hazy on most days.

As for the fishing ... very poor! Tovar was high stick for the trip, landing two nice steelhead, both natives. One was a chrome-bright beauty of about 10-12 pounds caught out of the Boat Hole. He was swinging flies on a spey rod. You need to ask him what the lucky fly was. Yours truly had one fish on for about 3 seconds and then came unpinned in Middle Mott. A couple of other quick tugs was about it for the group. The fish were there as the Winchester dam counts showed well over 5,000 fish in the river. But this trip is not about fish landed. It is the pursuit on a beautiful river, good camping, good food, good spirits, and good friends.

2008 Christmas Party Reservations

by Craig Koepler

This year, members have two and only two options when making reservations for the Christmas party:

- You may use the reservation form included with this month's Creel Notes.
- You may now reserve your place and those of your guests via the member's area of the WFFC Web site, using your credit card in a secure manner that we've set up via the PayPal system. This is the preferred method of payment and we think you will find it to be quick, easy, and secure.

Please note that reservations ***will not be accepted*** at the October or November monthly meetings.

Thank you.

Methow River Opens for Steelhead

by Jim van de Erve

The steelhead season on the Methow River opened October 12th and by plan will remain open until March 31st. The river will be open from its mouth to the confluence with the Chewuch River in the town of Winthrop. Anglers are allowed to keep two marked hatchery steelhead a day, with selective gear rules being in effect except for motorized vessels being allowed. The closing date may depend on the incidental impact of the hatchery catch on wild steelhead.

The Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife has indicated that "the second straight year of high returns of steelhead to the upper Columbia River" has allowed the river to open. WDFW said that "at Priest Rapids Dam, sampling indicates this year's returning upriver run exceeds spawning escapement and broodstock requirements and is the second-largest return in the past 15 years. Up to 9,282 marked, hatchery steelhead are expected to return to the Methow, Okanogan and Similkameen rivers."

The Methow Valley News quoted Shane Magnuson of the Upper Columbia Guide Services in Pateros as saying that "people are catching fish from six to 13 or 14 pounds."



Washington Fly Fishing Club
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Stamp
here

October, 2008

Meeting Announcement



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

The Wet Fly hour begins at 5:30 PM and dinner is served at 6:45 PM.

This month: Brian O'Keefe

Come hear this angling photographer, fly casting instructor, and worldwide fisherman.