

Creel Notes from the



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

Website: www.wffc.com



MMXXVI No. 4

April, 2026



Cold Day in Spring

Jim Beck, President,
Washington Fly Fishing Club

President's Riffle

Greetings, fellow anglers. Welcome to a new fishing season and a new year of outings with the Club.

It's been a little on the chilly side this Spring but we can handle it, right? This chilly weather sparks a memory I have of the Club's Lake Hannan outing in the Spring of 2024. It was a chilly day with temperatures in the mid 40's and occasional showers. It felt like the day started out chilly and got colder as the day went on. To add to the general unpleasantness of the outing, the fish were ignoring our flies. I think Mark Pratt, one of the Club's most accomplished anglers, caught only one fish. By lunchtime most of the folks on the outing were just too cold to keep fishing. I know I was. Eight or ten of the twelve anglers on the outing were too cold to continue fishing after lunch. I needed another layer of clothing to stay warm enough to keep fishing but didn't bring any additional clothing other than what I was wearing. Luckily, John Townsell had decided not to go back out on the lake after lunch so he loaned me the fleece jacket that he was wearing.



What a guy!

He loaned me the jacket right off his back! I will always remember John for this act of kindness.



This is why the Club holds outings, to build memories and relationships. So, take advantage of our Club outings. All you have to do is show up to enjoy the fun.

April Program

John R. McMillan

President of The Conservation Angler
And Fisheries Scientist



John is President of The Conservation Angler and a fisheries scientist with nearly three decades of experience studying salmon and steelhead. Raised along the Washougal River in a fly-fishing family led by his father, Bill, his fascination with wild fish began

in Pacific Northwest rivers and eventually carried him underwater—snorkeling among salmonids—into a career devoted to understanding their biology and resilience.

He has conducted research for the U.S. Forest Service, the Hoh Indian Tribe, Wild Salmon Center, and NOAA's Northwest Fisheries Science Center, where he played a key scientific role in the Elwha River dam removal project, document-

(Continued on page 2)

Inside this Issue

- ✓ Page 1.....April Program
- ✓ Page 3.....Henke, Aigner Winner
- ✓ Page 3.....Yakima River Outing On Tap
- ✓ Page 4,5...Outings, Thornton Creek
- ✓ Page 6.....No Bull from WDFW!
- ✓ Page 8.....Reeling in the Years, 2016
- ✓ Page 9.....Loose Ends

(Continued from page 1) - Program

ing fish populations before and after the dams were removed. He later served as Science Director for Trout Unlimited's Wild Steelhead Initiative.

His work focuses on the ecology and life-history diversity of steelhead and rainbow trout and how that diversity underpins population resilience. He has authored numerous peer-reviewed scientific papers, books, and essays on fish and rivers.

Since becoming President of The Conservation Angler in December 2024, John has worked to translate science into action—developing research initiatives, educating anglers, and advancing conservation solutions for wild steelhead and salmon. He lives on Washington's Olympic Peninsula with his wife, Laurel, and continues to study fish in the rivers that inspire him.

Meeting Location

Our monthly meeting will be held at **The Hall on Occidental 589 Occidental Ave S, Seattle, WA 98134**

Wet Fly and fly tying commence at 5:30, dinner 6:15, with a program commencing at 7:00.

Please sign up early on the website.

It's Still.....Not Too Late!

Corbett Lake Lodge British Columbia May 2026

Great Fly Fishing and Still Some Spots Open!

From Mike Nolan, Outings Chair



We've approximately 9 fly fishers going on the Corbett Lake Outing in May 2026. There are still two cabins, a duplex unit with adjoining door, available from Friday, May 8 to Monday, May 11, 2026 checkout. As well, one cabin is available from Monday, May 11 to Friday May 15. These units are not being held exclusively for our Club, but if you're thinking on going you should book soon. Let me know if you are going and I'll add your name to the Outings List.

Contact Ann at the Corbett Lake Lodge to reserve you cabin.

Phone: 250-378-4334, Email: corbettlake@gmail.com

Mike Nolan, (425) 754-1234

Creel Notes

...is the official publication of the Washington Fly Fishing Club. Subscription is free with membership.

President

Jim Beck

1st Vice President (Membership)

Gary Corra

2nd Vice President (Programs)

Neal Hoffberg

3rd Vice President (Christmas Party)

Jim Goedhart

Treasurer

Dale Lange

Secretary

Coreen Wilson

Ghillie 1

Peter Schuitemaker

Ghillie 2

Travis Sampson

Trustees

Jerry Kindinger,

Tom Neu, Deborah Katz,

Mike Moscynski, Robert Thorpe,

Chuck Ballard, Danferd Henke

Creel Notes Editor

batribble@juno.com

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.

Fly Tying Competition Winners

Henke Wins Boyd Aigner Competition

By Bill Neal, Awards Chairman



Congratulations to Dan Henke, overall winner of the 2026 Boyd Aigner Fly Tying Competition. The results were announced at the March Members' meeting. The flies from the Competition were on display then for the Members to review.

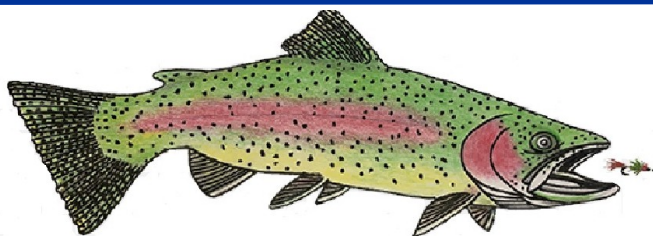
In a departure from the usual judging by the Members, the flies in this year's Competition were judged by three Club Members. They were Chuck Ballard, Gary Bergquist, and Dick Brening, all accomplished and respected tiers.

The 2026 fly patterns and the top 2 finishers in each category were:

1. **Rubber-legged stonefly nymph**, size 8, styled along the lines of the Randall Kaufman version, included features to be determined by the individual tiers--1st place Jim Beck; 2nd place David Hart (Project Healing Waters) and Dan Henke [tie]
2. **Jonny King's Splitsville caddis**, size 14, tied per the originator's recipe--1st place Dan Henke; 2nd place Jim Beck and Tom Neu [tie]
3. **Green Drake dunn**, size 12, individual tier's design—1st place David Hart; 2nd place Marcie Kindinger

Again, the overall winner was Dan Henke.

Thank you to all who participated in this year's Competition. A special thank you to the 2026 Competition judges and to Bob Burdick, for his help in running the Competition.



Outing Added To The Calendar

Yakima River Outing – October 10, 2026

From Mike Nolan, Outings Chair

The WFFC is organizing a Yakima River Outing on Saturday, October 10th, 2026. The Yakima River, recognized as Washington's only Blue Ribbon River, is a favorite destination for anglers from the Seattle area, located just a two-hour drive away. This outing offers an excellent opportunity for members to gather, share information, and enjoy a day of fishing along this renowned river.

Participants will convene at 9:00 AM near the boat launch at Canyon River Ranch, also known as Red's Fly Shop. This meeting point serves as a convenient location to connect with other WFFC members, exchange tips about the best wading spots, and prepare for a rewarding day on the water. For those interested in staying overnight, the nearby Big Pine Recreation Site offers dispersed camping accommodations.



Red's Fly Shop, located at Canyon River Ranch, opens at 8:00 AM and provides valuable local insight as well as a selection of flies for purchase. For anglers seeking a guided experience, Red's offers float-style trips for two anglers per boat. A Half Day Trip is available for \$499 (for one or two anglers), with the option to split the cost with another participant. Additionally, Red's provides a boat shuttle service for a fee. Each guest is responsible for making their own reservations in advance, and a 50% deposit is required to secure a spot with the guide service. To book or inquire further, contact Red's Fly Shop at (509) 933-2300.

A group reservation will be arranged at the Canyon River Grill for 5:00 PM, where members can relax and enjoy beverages and food following the day's fishing activities. This timing accommodates both those who float and those who wade, ensuring everyone has enough time to return to Canyon River Ranch. To help with a head count for the reservation, please sign up on the WFFC website, email outings@wffc.com, or call (425) 754-1234 to confirm your attendance.

2026 Outings

WFFC 2026 Outings Schedule

From Mike Nolan, Outings Chair



We're looking forward to you joining us on some of the club outings this year. I'll be hosting the majority of the outings, and I'm seeking volunteers to host other outings. Details are currently being finalized for river outings to the Cedar River on TBD, the Middle Fork of the Snoqualmie on TBD and the North Fork of the Stillaguamish River in November.

We've added a Yakima River Outing from the Canyon River Ranch on October 10th. The details of this Outing can be found in a separate article in this issue of the Creel Notes or on the WFFC website.

Contact me if you have a fishing outing suggestion or are interested in volunteering to host an outing. I hope to hear from you soon and email me at outings@wffc.com or call or text to (425) 754-1234.

The outings shown below will be included soon on the WFFC website.

WFFC 2026 Outings Schedule

- May 8-10 Corbett Lake B.C. Canada
- June 12-14 Sun Lakes Wildlife Area Unit
- June 27-28 Leech Lake
- July 18 Cooper Lake
- September TBD Hood Canal - Jay Deeds
- September 25-27 Big Twin Lake
- October 10 Yakima River
- October 24 Lake Hannan



"You will find angling to be like the virtue of humanity, which has a calmness of spirit and a world of blessing attending upon it."

- Izaak Walton

Conservation

I ran this story many years ago and thought I'd insert it again because I don't think people realize how wild Seattle was in the early 50's and early 60's-Ed

Thornton Creek Had Salmon Runs

It is the largest watershed drainage in Seattle metro area. It encompasses nearly 20 miles of creeks and tributaries starting in the Shoreline area of King County. Thornton Creek (North Branch) headwaters originate near Ronald Bog. The North Branch then drains approximately 4,446 acres of Shoreline and Seattle. The South Branch originates west of I-5 near the North Seattle Community College and drains approximately 2,333 acres of Seattle. The creek and its tributaries flow over 15 miles and drain approximately 7,402 acres before entering the northern end of Lake Washington at Matthews Beach Park. I spent my entire childhood living on Thornton just east of Northgate between Roosevelt Way and 15th N.E where a tributary (Victory Creek) flows into Thornton .



In the early 50's that drainage area was so wild that all us neighbor kids were kept inside while a Game Department hunter worked the creek looking for a cougar that was roaming the creek drainage (I was later told "blackie", the neighbors cat, was probably one of his victims). What is surprising to some is that Thornton had some fairly substantial salmon runs that were still active as late as 1968. As a toddler, in the early 1950's, my mom and me would watch salmon swaying in the pool right behind our house from our rear living room window.

'No Bull' From the WDFW

Cold, Clean, Connected: What Bull Trout Tell Us About Our Rivers

*From the WDFW Mar 26, 2026
All photos and Narrative from WDFW*



Bull trout are one of Washington's most unique native fish; tough, picky about their homes, and a big part of central and Eastern Washington's story. This blog post walks through what they are, why they're in trouble, and how fish biologists across the state are doing to help.

Meet Washington's bull trout

Bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) are a type of char, a close cousin of trout and salmon in the salmonid family. Their historic range spans from Alaska, British Columbia and Alberta, northwestern North America, and northern California. In Washington, bull trout are still widespread, however, their abundance, productivity, and distribution are decreased from historic conditions.

These fish look a little different than your typical trout. Bull trout have a large head, streamlined body, slightly forked tail, and bright white leading edges along their fins. Their morphology depends upon their life history and environment they live in. Bull trout can be rather robust and as large as salmon. Unlike many trout, they have light spots on a dark back-

(Continued on page 6)



This photo taken in the late fall of 1968 with the neighbor's Siamese cat feasting on an expired salmon. Thornton creek has been abused and misused throughout the 50's, 60's and 70's. Encased in culvert for part of its length at Northgate, it would periodically flows with radiant green dye (a detection method to uncover leaky sewer pipes). Builders have squeezed apartments, houses, strip malls without regards to environmental sensitivity.

In April 1977 a filling station leaked 300 gallons of gas into the creek just east of Northgate which eventually caught fire and had to be extinguished by the fire department. The resulting leak killed 15,000 Coho salmon fry prior to dissipating in Lake Washington.

On the bright side much has been done in the last 25 years to recover Thornton Creek's abused habitat, much of it done by neighborhood environmental organizations; a model recovery program for many other streams in the urban Seattle area.



Thornton Creek Above the 15h Ave Bridge

(Continued from page 5) - Bull

ground, which is one of the easiest ways to tell them apart. Their backs are usually olive green to brown, with pale yellow to reddish spots on the sides and a



light belly, especially colorful during spawning season.

People often confuse bull trout and Dolly Varden (*Salvelinus malma*) but bull trout usually have a bigger, broader head and grow larger, while Dolly Varden are more coastal and often move in and out of the ocean.

Cold-water specialists in a warming world

Bull trout are famously “picky” about habitat. Spawning begins at ~48 degrees Fahrenheit. They need cold, clean water and complex and connected habitat (free of passage barriers) — what biologists call the “four C’s.” That usually means shaded headwater streams with deep pools, clean gravel, overhanging banks, and large wood for cover.

Even small changes in temperature and sediments can be a big deal for bull trout compared with other salmonids. When we lose shade, allow fine sediment to fill in spawning gravels, or simplify streams by removing wood or filling side channels, bull trout are often the first to feel it. In that way, they act like an early warning system for the health of our mountain, rivers and lakes.

A life built on movement

Not all bull trout live the same way; in fact, they’re one of the most flexible fish around. Across Washington, bull trout have different life-histories:

Fluvial: Many bull trout populations are comprised of fish that reproduce in small streams and headstreams where they rear for usually a short time and then move downstream to live in larger or mainstem rivers before returning to their natal stream to spawn. These fish range widely throughout entire river systems.

Adfluvial: In other areas, juvenile and adult bull trout spend most of the year in lakes or reservoirs, where they grow large on abundant prey, and come back to their natal streams to spawn.

Resident: Some stay put, spending their whole lives in the headwater streams where they were born.

Anadromous: A few populations move between freshwater and saltwater, similar to salmon.

Female bull trout dig nests called redds in cold, clean gravel, where eggs incubate for months before hatching. Migratory bull trout (fluvial, adfluvial, and anadromous) can cover huge distances; some may move more than 100 miles from their spawning areas and use a wide range of habitat throughout large river systems during all times of year. It’s a risky, long-distance lifestyle that only works when rivers stay connected and cold.

Big appetites and old attitudes

Bull trout eat a little bit of everything. Young fish feed mainly on aquatic insects and small invertebrates near the stream bottom. As they grow, they become mostly fish eaters, preying on juvenile trout and salmon, eggs, sculpins, whitefish, and almost anything else that swims or falls into the water.

That predator role once got them into trouble. In the past, bull trout were sometimes blamed for declines in sport fish numbers and were intentionally killed. Today, we know they’re a natural part of the ecosystem and an important native predator that coevolved with salmon, steelhead, lamprey, and other species across the region.

Why bull trout are listed

Because of all these pressures, bull trout in the lower 48 states, including populations in Washington, were listed as “threatened” under the Endangered Species Act in 1999. In Canada, they’re treated as a species of concern.

(Continued on page 7)

Key challenges include:

- Habitat degradation and changes to natural river processes.
- Increased water temperatures in rearing and spawning streams
- Barriers like dams and undersized culverts that block migration routes between spawning, rearing, and overwintering areas.
- Competition or interactions with nonnative fish in some systems, such as eastern brook trout, which compete and hybridize with bull trout (producing sterile offspring).
- Historic overfishing and directed removal in parts of their range.

Fishing rules and why they matter

You can still bump into bull trout while fishing for trout, salmon, steelhead, and other fish species in Washington's many lakes, reservoirs, rivers, streams and even Puget Sound. Bull trout and Dolly Varden are closed to fishing for and retention statewide, unless specifically listed otherwise in WDFW's Sport Fishing Rules Pamphlet. Anglers should check the latest regulations carefully, know how to identify bull trout, and release any accidental catches immediately.

How you can lend a hand

You don't have to be a scientist or an engineer to help bull trout. Everyday choices add up:

Learn your fish:

Know the difference between bull trout, brook trout, and other lookalikes so you can release bull trout quickly where required. Dolly Varden and bull trout are different species but so closely related it is sometimes very difficult to tell them apart. Unless specifically listed otherwise, eastern brook trout are not native to the Western US, and are open to fishing wherever they are found, with no limit and no minimum size. Brook trout can be distinguished from bull trout/Dolly Varden by the presence of vermiculations (wavy tracks) on their back, black spots on the dorsal and adipose fins, and often spots on the tail. In contrast, bull trout have no distinct spots on their back

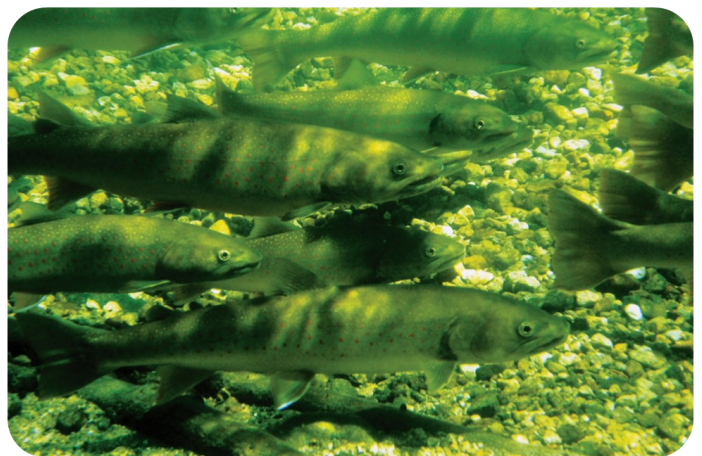
(sometimes small lines but no wiggly marks) and no spots on the dorsal, adipose, or caudal fins.

Respect cold-water streams: Keep vehicles and camp structures out of river channels, avoid stacking rock dams, which can block fish passage, and leave streamside vegetation in place.

Support restoration: Consider volunteering at local projects that restore side channels, remove barriers, and add shade and wood to streams.

Get involved: Groups like Mid Columbia Fisheries and the Yakima Bull Trout Working Group rely on partnerships, volunteers and community partners for outreach, monitoring, and stewardship.

Bull trout are a demanding fish — they ask for the coldest, cleanest, most connected habitats Washington can offer. That's also the kind of habitat that benefits salmon, steelhead, and people who depend on healthy rivers. When we look out for bull trout, we're really looking out for the whole watershed and for future generations who will learn to spot those light spots on a dark, flashing side in a clear Washington stream.



Bull Trout School—WDFW Photo

“The traveler fancies he has seen the country. So he has, the outside of it at least; but the angler only sees the inside. The angler only is brought close, face to face with the flower and bird and insect life of the rich riverbanks, the only part of the landscape where the hand of man has never interfered.”

- Charles Kingsley

Reeling in the Years



Andy Hall Memorial - Hi Hium Lake B.C. (Nearly 10 Years Ago)

Andy Hall was a former member, now deceased, who cherished Hi Hium Lake so in his honor the club had a week of fishing at the Circle w Fishing Camp on Hi Hium Lake in 2016.

Some of the members below are now gone from us but it was pleasure watching some truly remarkable fly fisherman most willing to share their approaches: flies, location, casting, leader setups, and some fly fishing gear I never knew existed.

Personally, I learned more about fly fishing on this trip than any other outing I ever attended and actually got to know some of the members of our club whereas it was hard to get to know folks at just the club meetings. - (Ed)



The Andy Hall Memorial Group—Hi Hium Lake June 2016

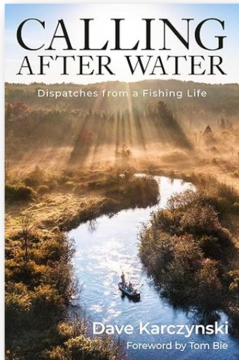
(L to R Standing) Hugh Jennings, Tom Neu, Ron Mazurek, Walt Swanson, Don Barton, Bob Young, Rich Gaspar (L to R kneeling) Ron Tschetter, Alan Jennings, Mike Wearne, Pete Baird



Book of the Month

Calling After Water: Dispatches from a Fishing Life

By Dave Karczynski (Author), Tom Bie (Foreword)



Dave Karczynski fishes—and writes—with both eyes wide open to the magic of water. With the trademark blend of adventure, humor, and insight that has made him one fly fishing’s most widely published authors, this collection of nineteen essays charts Dave’s journey as he casts his way from the quiet streams of the Upper Midwest to the far corners of the earth—and back again. Readers will tramp across Patagonia with a shamanic brook trout whisperer, raft through the Himalayas in search of golden mahseer, hunt native brown trout in the Bohemian highlands, and revel in the promise of a Northern Michigan spinner fall. With prose that alternately flashes like the sides of a leaping salmon and glitters like riffle water on a summer morning, *Calling After Water* is one of those rare books that delights its readers as much as it invites them to reflect on their own love of fly fishing.

Fly of the Month

Sure Fire Midge

Dressing:

Hook: Mustad Heritage C49 X Barbless # 18

Tying thread: Sheer 14/0 black

Trailing shuck: UV enhancer grey

Abdomen: Black tying thread

Post: Small foam cylinder white

Hackle: Natural black cock

Thorax: Black superfine dubbing



One of those simple patterns that never seems to fail. This little black midge with a trailing UV shuck is, as the name suggests, a foolproof choice when the fish are on anything small and black. The upside down hackle gives this midge a slightly lower profile when presented. Best in sizes from 16-24.
- Barry Clark

Recipe of the Month

The Good Doctor’s Smoke Salmon Cheese Spread!

From Dr. Hugh Clark

Smoked Salmon Cheese Spread:

Ingredients :

- 8 oz cream cheese
- 4 TBSP mayonnaise
- Generous TBSP horse radish
- 2 TBSP lemon juice. fresh or bottled
- 2 Shakes Tabasco
- 4-6 oz smoked salmon or smoked trout minced up with knife.

Warm cream cheese in microwave for 15-20 seconds to soften, then thoroughly mix all ingredients.

Equally good on crackers or 1/4 inch thick slices of English cucumber or 2 inch pieces celery. Store in frig for up to a week.

