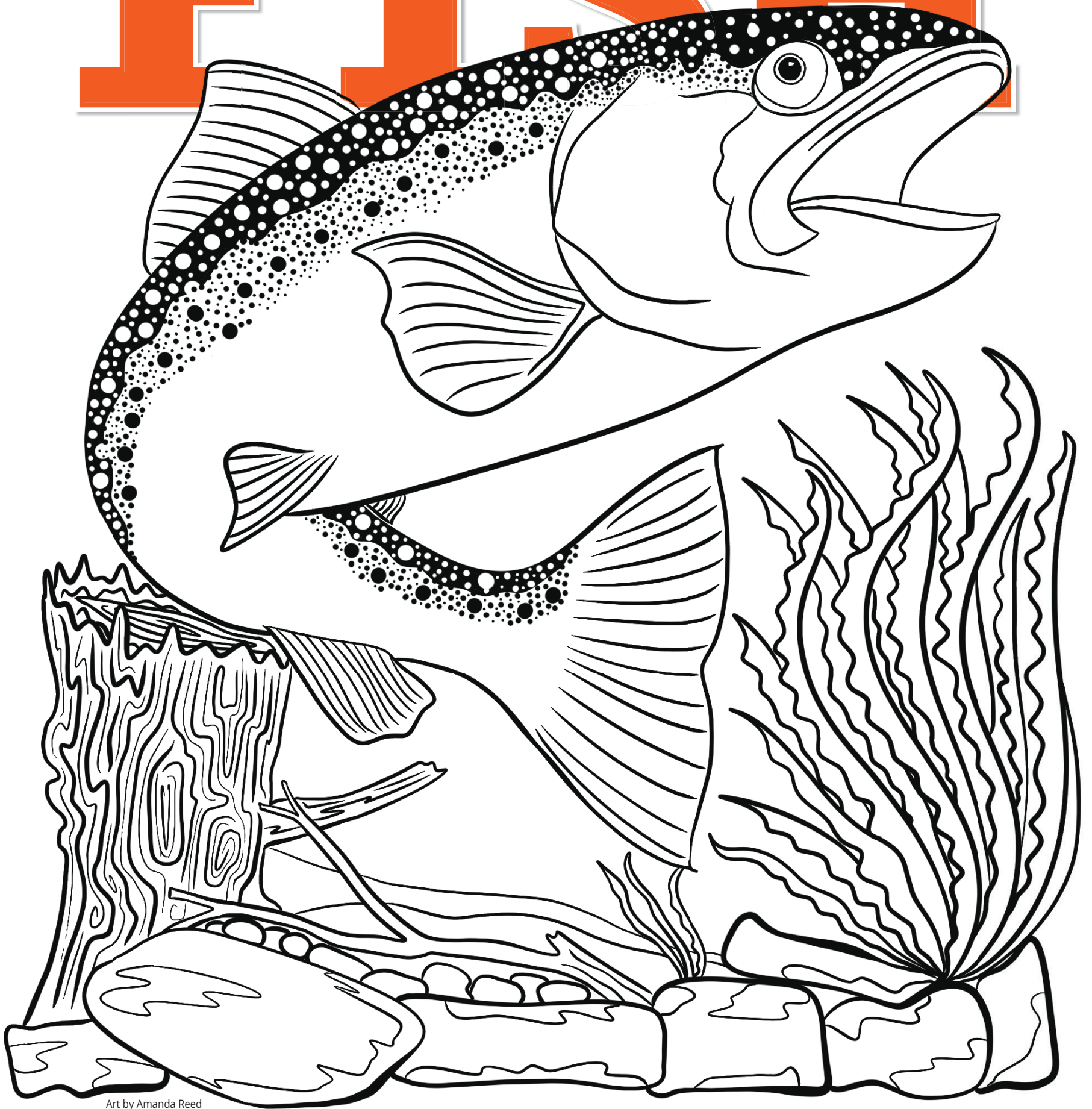


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Art by Amanda Reed

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# A tribute to Elery

*An uncle, a niece and a love of fishing*

By AMANDA OLSEN

My uncle Elery was born October 16, 1936 as one of what would eventually be 11 children. He grew up in a different time in far northern Maine, a place so remote it almost seems like another world. He was a crank, he smoked like a chimney, and he lived to be outside. It is no secret that Elery was one of my favorite people.

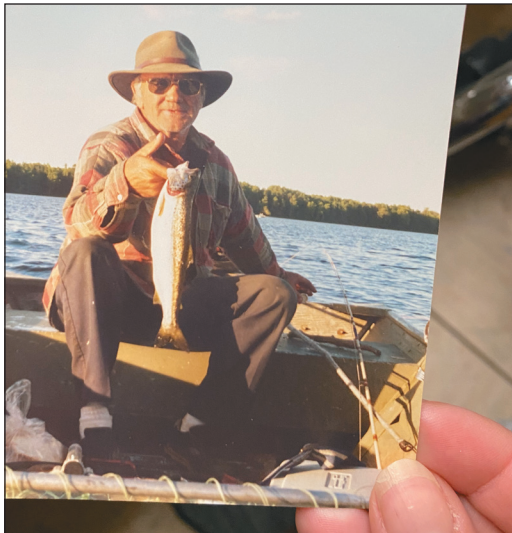
When I was a kid he would stop at my house on trips either to or from his girlfriend Lolita's place downstate. My uncle was a scrapper, a true junkman, making money from selling off old pipes and other metal garbage. He also collected treasures in his travels and made trades at the pawn shop, everything from jewelry to boxes of VHS tapes. He was like a grumpy Santa Claus, pulling up in his little beater pickup, reaching into the mess for a present that reeked of stale tobacco, distributing game meat or fresh-caught fish for dinner.

The trips with Elery that stand out for me all have something to do with the outdoors. One time he took us down a spidery network of logging roads looking for moose. I remember we found a big bull belly-deep in a swamp. We just sat on the other side of the road, watching him munch on aquatic plants. My uncle was a legend.

The biggest legacy my uncle left for me is a love of fishing. From a very young age he took me and my brother fishing all over Maine and New Brunswick. When we were small, it was stock-pond fishing with bait. I remember one trip I caught a rainbow trout by the eye and I wanted to put it back, since it didn't seem fair that I had got him that way. Elery insisted we bring the fish home, since caught was caught.

As we got older, my uncle introduced us to fly fishing. I remember when I was around eight years old, Elery let my brother and me pick out the materials, and he tied each of us our own custom fly. I can still picture it: yellow-and-black in the body, with a ruff of white near the eye. I lost that fly a few years later fishing with Elery, when a trout broke off my line.

My uncle was resourceful and didn't tolerate whiners.



Contributed photo

A photo of Uncle Elery during a fishing trip

If it was muddy or cold or uncomfortable, that just meant you should have worn better shoes and clothes. I remember him cutting up slugs for bait when we ran out of worms and making me carry my fish with a stick when we didn't have a basket or a bucket.

My best day of freshwater fishing as an adult was in 2016 when my husband and I spent a drenching morning catching stocked trout on Mast Hope Plank Road. I caught four fish under a sagging maple, flicking my line exactly where I wanted it. I can credit Elery for giving me a great example to follow. I barely felt the rain.

It was incredibly difficult to watch my uncle deteriorate in the last years of his illness. I mourned his diminished life over the course of several trips home. With each visit he seemed to shrink, to curl in on himself. In the months before Elery's death, his former caretaker, one of my other uncles, succumbed to his own battle with cancer. These losses, coupled with the precarious nature of early post-COVID life, left me feeling hollow and raw.

The last trip to Maine, ostensibly to say goodbye, my family was not allowed to come into the VA home with me to visit Elery because my kids had a cough. I went inside while they stayed outside, and we communicated through a window that only opened an inch. It was a tragic picture, Elery in a wheelchair, trembling from his medication, leaning down to shout at my family through the crack under the window. I did not travel back for his funeral a few weeks later, having just started a new job. I did write a speech, mostly about fishing, which one of my cousins read at the service.

I decided to memorialize him in a more permanent way.

When my mother told me she had gotten



Contributed photo

Amanda Olsen's uncle Elery gave her a great example to follow, and she still fishes as an adult.

a small amount of money from Elery's estate and she wanted to share it with me and my brother, I knew immediately what I was going to do with it. I had already been thinking about getting a tribute tattoo for Elery, and the extra money just made the final decision easier.

I have other tattoos, so this wasn't something new for me. I did the research and found a female artist near where I live on Long Island. It took a little while, as these things often do, but I was able to get an appointment for July 2023, right before an epic backpacking trip. I sent a picture of the finished piece to my mom, who cried and then sent it to my aunts and his daughter. They all agreed that it suited Elery perfectly.

In the tattoo on my right arm, a brook trout carries a fishing pole and wears Elery's hat and scruffy beard. A lit cigarette is perched in his fishy mouth. I don't know if my uncle would approve, but I do know it makes me think of him and smile every time I see it.



Contributed photo

"In the tattoo on my right arm, a brook trout carries a fishing pole and wears Elery's hat and scruffy beard," writes Amanda Olsen. "A lit cigarette is perched in his fishy mouth."



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# Opening Day 2024

## Changes, celebrations and more at the Catskill Fly Fishing Center & Museum

By TED WADDELL

LIVINGSTON MANOR, NY — As Opening Day of New York State's trout fishing season officially kicked off on Monday, April 1, the Catskill Fly Fishing Center & Museum (CFFCM) geared up for a series of related events to celebrate.

The museum, a nonprofit conservationist and educational organization, will offer a series of open fly-tying sessions hosted by Fly Tyers Guild founders Dave Catizone and Tom Mason in the Wulff Gallery. The annual Fly Fest was held at the Rockland House on February 24.

On April 1, anglers were out in force to test the wily trout. That will be followed on Saturday, April 6 by an opening day celebration at the CFFCM. On Friday, April 12, the center will present the Fly Fishing Film Tour '24. And at 1 p.m. on Sunday, April 13, the center will host a celebration of the life of storied fly-tier Mary Dette, who passed away on January 27.

The CFFCM was founded in 1981, and according to executive director Ali Abate, "the vision for the center was formed by a group of local angling/tying folks and families who wanted to create a gathering place for the community that would preserve Catskill fly fishing, including heritage, arts and conservation, and have active education programming.

"Elsie Darbee is credited as the visionary for what the CFFCM has become today," she added.

The present location at an old farm site along the famed Willowemoc Creek was selected a year later, but it took several years to raise the funds to build a bridge spanning the water and to start construction on the museum.

Meanwhile, the CFFCM opened in 1983 in a storefront located in neighboring Roscoe, known worldwide as Trout Town USA, and according to historical records, by 1986 plans for the future were established.

In 1984, President Jimmy Carter visited the region, and in a spare moment wet a line—a photograph of the event is on display in the museum—and a fundraising dinner was held in honor of Carter and his wife Rosalynn to help pay for the bridge.

On May 28, 1995, the CFFCM opened at its current location on the 35-acre former farm, and later in the year acquired title to Junction Pool, where the Willowemoc joins the Beaverkill.



RR photo by Ted Waddell

Catch of the century. "Big Mo" is a central feature of the Catskill Fly Fishing Center & Museum's (CFFCM) exhibits. The large sculpture, featuring a trout exploding from a crystal-clear stream to catch a fly, was created by Paul Theising, an artist who did work for the New York State Department of Environmental Protection and elsewhere. It was part of an exhibit several years ago at the CFFCM that included paintings rendered by the artist's son.

The internationally known convergence is thought by some to be the home of the Two-Headed Trout, a never-to-be-caught resident of waters that are believed to harbor strange and mysterious currents, causing migrating trout to pause in their journeys as they ponder which sparkling stream to follow.

In 1998, the museum received additional parcels of land, increasing the size to 55.66 acres along a mile of accessible no-kill water teeming with trout.

In 2012, the Wulff Gallery and Garrison/Carmichael Heritage Rod Shop were established.

Today, the CFFCM is home to the Fly Fishing Hall of Fame, the Demarest Rodmakers Gallery, the Poul Jorgensen Golden Hook Award, the Catskill Rodmakers Gathering, the Hardy Cup and annual Fly Fests.

The museum space showcases carefully curated exhibits of the work of some of the luminaries in the realm of fly fishing and tying: Dave Brandt, Poul Jorgensen, Theodore Gordon, the Dettas, the Darbees and Lee and Joan Wulff.

It also features an exhibit dedicated to the Masters Fly Collection, the Charmed Circle of the Catskills, and holding court over it all, a sculpture of a huge trout leaping out of the water to snatch a fly, caught mid-flight by Paul Theising.

On the topic of maintaining the legacy of tying Catskill flies, Abate said, "Preserving and maintaining the fly fishing arts is central to our mission. This includes fly tying, bamboo rod building and other arts that depict or interpret the sport, such as painting, sculpture, literature—and we want to preserve and share these art forms to teach others about the culture of Catskill fly fishing and extend its life to the next generation."

Abate explained that over the past year and a half, the CFFCM has adopted three "strategic pillars to better illustrate the core elements of our mission and programs." Those are focused on education, heritage and conservation.

"Today, we are working to grow the CFFCM to be more vibrant than ever," said Abate. "Our goal is to expand membership and visitation, create new educational programming to bring more youth, families and new anglers, and expand our donor base so that we can be sustainable for future generations.

"We are also focused on collaborating with local conservation groups and organizations, and making their visions and missions more widespread," she said.

Future plans include revamping the Wulff Gallery to present new exhibits featuring artists, and incorporating selected items from the museum's extensive archival collection.

For more information about the CFFCM, located at 1031 Old Rte. 17, or their programs, call 845/439-4810, or follow them on Instagram @catskillflyfishingmuseum.



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# Aquatic insect decline

By **TONY BONAIVIST**

**NATIONWIDE** — For those of us who regularly fish the fabled rivers of New York's western Catskills, the issue began early in the summer of 2016. That's when anglers started reporting a dramatic decline in sulphur mayfly hatches along the East Branch of the Delaware River.

At first, we believed it was related to the buildup of dead leaves along the river bottom, which had not flushed in several years. Perhaps, we speculated, the dead leaves compromised the amount of habitat available for sulphurs to survive. But when the river flushed in 2017 and then again in 2018, and the sulphurs didn't respond, we were perplexed.

Considering what we witnessed on the East Branch, there was reason to believe that problems with aquatic insect populations were likely occurring in other rivers.

Attempting some research, I found a story in *The Guardian* about how fine sediments, phosphates and powerful neonicotinoid insecticides (which are chemically similar to nicotine) were having a devastating impact on mayflies, killing about 80 percent of all eggs in some of England's finest trout waters.

After reading this, I spoke with John Tooker, an entomology professor at Penn State University, and later with Michelle Hladik a researcher for the U.S. Geological Survey in California. Both had studied that same insecticide in the U.S., and they explained that neonicotinoids are water soluble and extremely toxic to aquatic insects.

Further research revealed that it's widely used and regularly detected in U.S. waters, particularly in areas where soybean and corn production is prevalent. And to top it off, mayflies are extremely sensitive to the chemical's toxicity.

With aquatic insect declines documented in the Catskills and England, I wondered if there were issues with populations in the famous rivers of the Rocky Mountain West. To find out, I called several well-known anglers, fly shops and state agencies. Sadly, my inquiries exposed a glaring and disturbing fact: There is little long-term qualitative and quantitative bottom sampling data available

to compare existing insect populations against previous ones.

During my last trip to Montana, I made several trips to the Henry's Fork River in southeastern Idaho, so I was curious if anglers were observing changes in insect hatches along that river, and if so, I wondered what those changes were attributed to.

A friend suggested that I speak with Eric Pepper and John McDaniel, who had both fished the river for more than 30 years. "Hatches of green drakes and PMDs [pale morning duns] have declined dramatically over the years," Pepper told me.

McDaniel said that he's been monitoring hatches over the years, and he has also observed a PMD decline, along with a decrease in some caddis species. "Grasshoppers were living longer due to warmer nights, and in 2018, more rainbows were caught on grasshopper imitations than on mayfly and caddis patterns," he said. Both anglers blame erratic releases from Island Park Reservoir and warmer water temperatures for the decline in insect hatches on the Henry's Fork.

Next, I spoke with Cam Cofn, the owner of Blue Ribbon Flies in West Yellowstone, MT. He explained that from approximately 2008 to 2017, when the release structure on Hebgen Lake was under repair, warmer surface water was discharged into the Madison River. During that period, he noted a significant decline in pale PMDs and a variety of caddis flies.

Fly fishing photographer John Juracek, who's also based in West Yellowstone, agreed with Cofn, adding that flav mayflies—which are on the larger side—also are on the decline. They are being replaced by pink lady mayflies, which appear to tolerate warmer water temperatures better than PMDs, flavs and some species of caddis. Juracek also claimed that the white miller caddis, another species that appears to do well in warmer environments, has increased dramatically in past years on the Firehole River that runs through Yellowstone National Park, and that whitefish populations have significantly decreased throughout Southwest Montana.

When I asked if warmer water temperatures are the cause of both insect and whitefish declines, he agreed, but thought that



Photo from Big Sky Journal

A giant salmonfly feeds on the Henry's Fork river in Idaho.

additional research is required to support the theory.

The TroutHunter fly shop in Island Park, ID, referred me to the Henry's Fork Foundation, and there I had several conversations with their senior scientist, Rob Van Kirk. "PMD hatches are down in some sections of the Henry's Fork, along with whitefish populations," he said. "It was originally believed that the whitefish populations crashed in 1992, as a consequence of a large discharge of silt from Island Park Reservoir. At the time, the theory was that the silt impacted their ability to spawn."

When I suggested that it's hard to believe that silt is an issue all these years later, he agreed. "We have over 30 years of air-temperature data, which shows a 1.1 Fahrenheit increase for every 10 years, resulting in a 3.3 to 4.4 average rise for the months of April, May and June," he said. "It's seemingly small, but perhaps high enough to increase water temperatures during periods of low flow, thereby impacting some species of insects and whitefish."

My last call was to Jim Leary, an avid angler who fishes all over the West. He explained to me that salmonfly hatches on Oregon's Deschutes River are starting two to three weeks early, "ever since Portland Central Electric started releasing warmer surface water to the Deschutes River from Pelton Dam in 2012," he said.

See a correlation here between warming weather trends and insect population changes?

When I called looking for data to support the field observations provided by the anglers and fly shops I'd spoken with, Montana's Department of Fish Wildlife & Parks referred me to Montana Biological Survey's David Stagliano, who conducts aquatic insect research in the field. In an online report titled "Evaluation of Salmonflies in Montana's Rivers: Are Statewide Populations Really Declining?" Stagliano concludes that yes, salmonfly populations have declined over time due to loss of habitat, heavy metal contamination in some rivers and, in more recent years, drought, low flows and rises

in water temperatures due to warmer air temperatures.

Stagliano explained that in 2015, several Montana rivers were closed to fishing because of high water temperatures from mid-July to mid-August, resulting in an entire month of lost recreational fishing opportunities, along with lost revenues to local economies. And the 2017 Montana Climate Assessment found that the average air temperature in the state had increased between 2 and 3 degrees Fahrenheit from 1950 to 2015.

The observations provided by anglers and fly shops, along with the research conducted by the Henry's Fork Foundation and Stagliano, reveal two significant factors impacting aquatic insect populations in the Northern Rockies: lower stream flow and warming water temperatures.

Interestingly, in my more recent conversations with anglers McDaniel and Cofn, they advised me that insect populations have seemingly rebounded due to higher spring flows and lower water temperatures over the last two seasons.

That information supports my conclusion that the combination of warmer river water and lower summer stream flows are contributing to the decline of some important and desirable (from an angler's perspective) species of aquatic insects. Couple those impacts with habitat loss and insecticides, and you have a formula for significant changes in aquatic insect populations in all of America's rivers.

But while the use of neonicotinoids has increased dramatically over the years, I was not able to determine if it was used in the vicinity of any of America's famous, high-quality trout streams. That data did not appear to exist at the time of my somewhat casual research. But there's no doubt that this pesticide likely poses a significant threat to aquatic insect communities in our region.

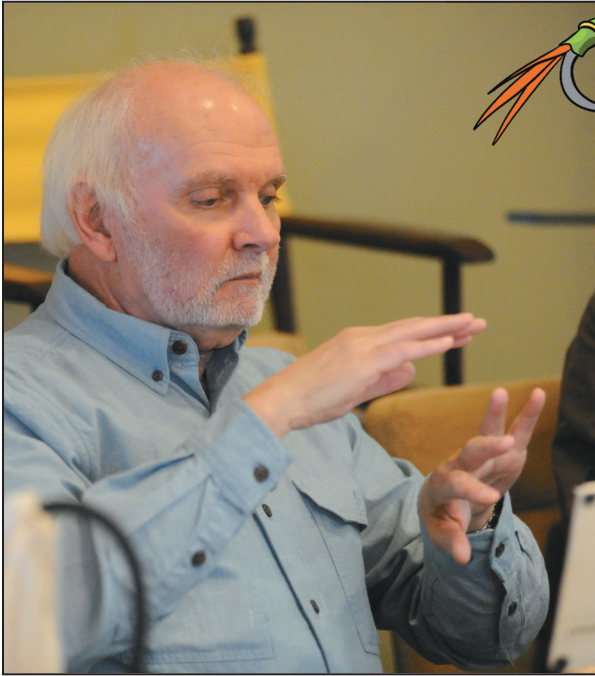
*This story was originally printed in the 2020 Fly Fishing issue of Big Sky Journal. Story and photos used with permission.*



RR photo by Tony Bonavist

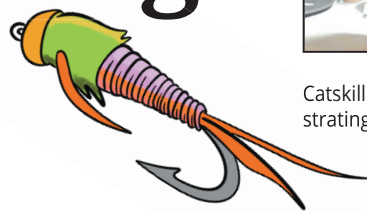
The life cycle of the little sulphur mayfly has been changed, due to the increase in the release of cold bottom-water.





Catskill Legends fly-tier Dave Catizone explains the intricate process of fashioning a realistic replica of an insect to convince a trout to rise to the surface of the local pristine waters.

# Legendary fly-tiers share their knowledge



RR photos by Ted Waddell  
Catskill Legends fly-tier Tom Mason is pictured intent on demonstrating how to create an exquisite fly to lure a trout to the creel.

By **TED WADDELL**

LIVINGSTON MANOR, NY — Back on May 23, 2023, three notables in the world of fly fishing were inducted into the honor rolls of Catskill Fly Fishing Center & Museum’s (CFFCM) Catskill Legends of Fly Fishing: Dave Catizone, Tom Mason and Bruce Concors.

This year, on Saturday, February 3, Catizone and Mason—both founding members of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild—were the center of attention at the center’s Wulff Gallery as they hosted the second in a series of mid-winter open fly-tying sessions.

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild was established in 1993 to “preserve, promote and embrace the Catskill fly-tying heritage.” The guild was originally formed by Floyd Franke and William Vinciguerra, with the additional stated goals of “working cooperatively to promote the work of present Catskill fly tyers, providing various ways for members to share information, and promoting the future development of future generations of Catskill fly tyers.”

Catizone moved to Livingston Manor in the early 1970s after being introduced to the late world-renowned fly tyer and author Poul Jorgensen at a United Fly Tyers gathering in Massachusetts. Then he studied the patterns of some of the greatest fly-tiers of the day, and according to the CFFCM, “became expert at identifying, cataloging and appraising their work, in addition to becoming an exquisite fly-tyer of both trout and salmon flies.”

As of the opening day of trout season in New York State, Catizone is a member of the center’s “Dream Team.” It is composed of volunteer activists preparing online databases to showcase the vast collection of acquisitions collected over the decades for the center’s permanent collection.

Mason moved to the Empire State from the Bay State in 1991 to “further his passion of fishing the Beaverkill, and as an avid collector of rods, reels and books,” he said. He is recognized as an outstanding fly-tier, with a collection of rare fly-tying materials.

Also a member of the “Dream Team, he has helped the

CFFCM and Catskill Fly Tyers Guild organize numerous Fly Tyers Rendezvous, Fly Fests and Fly Tyers Roundtables as well sharing his vast knowledge and expertise during the off-season open fly tying events at the Wulff Gallery.

As Ali Abate, executive director of the CFFCM, said of the organization’s mission, it was established to “preserve the heritage of fly fishing in the Catskills and educate the next generation of anglers and conservationists. Programs like ‘Open Tying’ are intended to share fly fishing with the community.”

Of Catskill Legends Catizone and Mason, “We are grateful for their time and ongoing support of our work,” Abate said. The CFFCM is located at 1031 Old Rte. 17.

For more information, call 845/439-4810 or visit [cffcm.com](http://cffcm.com).

For information about the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild, visit [www.catskillflytyersguild.org](http://www.catskillflytyersguild.org).

For more photos, visit [www.riverreporter.com](http://www.riverreporter.com).

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### Pike County Commissioners Fishing Derby is back

MILFORD, PA — The Pike County Board of Commissioners will host the annual Commissioners Fishing Derby on Saturday, April 20 from 8 a.m. to 12 noon. It will be held on Lily Pond, Schocopee Road.

This is the derby's 26th year.

Prizes, including fishing poles, tackle boxes and various baits, bobbers and lures, will be awarded to the largest trout caught in each age group.

The derby is open to children 15 and under.

There is no fee to participate. Each child must have their own registration form, signed by a parent or guardian, to participate.

Paper registration forms will be distributed within the school districts, but you can also register online at [www.pikepa.org/fishingderby](http://www.pikepa.org/fishingderby).

As soon as you arrive on derby day, visit the cabin to check in or submit your paper registration form.

Lily Pond will be stocked with a combination of rainbow, brown, golden and brook trout for the derby. Stocking of the pond will take place at 7 a.m. on April 20. All are welcome to help, the commissioners said.

To ensure a fun and safe event for all, a few rules will be enforced:

PA fishing laws and regulations will apply.

Participants must be accompanied by an adult.

Fishing is permitted anywhere on the pond.



Contributed photo

The annual Commissioners Fishing Derby is back for the 26th year on April 20 from 8 a.m. to 12 noon at Lily Pond on Schocopee Road. Pictured are young anglers Dylan DeFebo, Landon DeFebo and Liam Payne

Participants must provide their own tackle and bait, and participants must only use one fishing pole.

Each participant is allowed only one trout to be measured for the contest.

Parents, remember this event is for the children.

Refreshments will be available for purchase; they are provided by the Friends of Warrior Football.

For those unfamiliar with Lily Pond, signs will be posted directing participants to the pond.

There are still sponsorship opportunities for this year's derby. Interested parties should contact the Pike County Commissioners Office at 570/296-7613.

### Trout is stocked for Monster Trout Derby

LACKAWAXEN RIVER, PA — The merchants of the Lackawaxen River Watershed have announced the return of the Monster Trout Derby.

The merchants in the watershed sponsored 100 brown, brook and rainbow trout that will be stocked in the Lackawaxen River between Hawley and the village of Lackawaxen.

These trout are between five and 10 pounds and are tagged with a number that corresponds with the sponsoring business.

The contest is open to all anglers who have a valid PA fishing license.

There is no entry fee—just catch one of these trophy trout and bring the fish or tag (for catch and release)

to one of the weigh-in stations, which are located at Two River Anglers or the Wallenpaupack Sports Shop.

Then you'll collect a weigh-in certificate and call the sponsor that corresponds to the fish to claim an additional prize.

All fish come from the Blooming Grove Club hatcheries and were raised in the Lackawaxen River headwaters.



Contributed image

The contest runs from the opening day of the PA trout season to the last day of the fall season.

Two River Anglers is located at 106 Scenic Dr. in Lackawaxen, and the Wallenpaupack Sports Shop is located at 30 Welwood Ave. in Hawley.

For more information, call Two River Anglers at 570/685-2010.

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**ZT Elite 54" - 60"**

**Revolt 48"**

**Maverick 60"**

**Maverick HD 60"**

**Rebel 61"**



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