

# Southeast TU MN Hotline

Editorial by Carl Berberich

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## Intro To Flyfish Class in Rochester

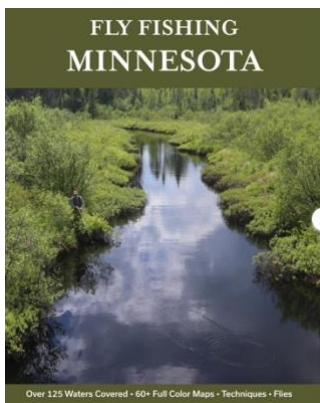
Paul Krolak of Hiawatha TU has announced that the chapter will be teaching a beginning fly fishing class again this spring with the Adult Enrichment through Community Education in Rochester. This class will start in April and runs 4 sessions (We are currently in the Winter session, and the Spring session classes are not listed online yet). We've been teaching this class for many years. It will run on Wednesday evenings at Willow Creek Middle School. This fly-fishing program has a classroom part where we explain: gear, insects, flies, tactics, and a variety of fishing methods. We also spend about an hour each session teaching casting in the gymnasium. This class is open to everyone over 18 and the website is found [here](#), where one can register for classes once the Spring classes are posted. There is limited seating for this class.

## New BWO Emerger fly pattern

I recently found that Root River Rod Co has posted a fly-tying video of me tying my BWO Emerger on their YouTube Channel. I developed this fly pattern back in 2021 as a size #20-22 Baetis mayfly emerger. How well does this fly work? Well... looking at my fishing log for 2022, it seems that I used this fly quite a bit last April (I was not available for late fall fishing and so cannot attest to its success during the fall 2022 season).

Just in the month of April (2022), I went out 10 times and caught 142 brown trout in the SE Driftless on this BWO Emerger. This was at six different locations on four different streams. Fishing this much, I had to tie 3-4 dozen BWO Emerger flies to make this happen. The most I caught on one day was 23. However, when the caddis started to hatch in the beginning of May, I then switched to fishing my caddis pattern.

One thing that I noticed while fishing the BWO Emerger last April, is that I did not see a lot of insects on the water in April. Regardless, the pattern still brought the fish to the surface. You can find the RRRCo's YouTube channel [here](#) showing this fly and many of their other videos too. They also have an online store [here](#).



## Fly Fishing Minnesota Book Publication

BTW: It looks like Carl Haensel's book "*FLY FISHING MINNESOTA*" has been printed and is now being shipped. It's a great book for fishing Minnesota! Order yours [here](#).

## HTU Chapter Members Meeting on Nov 7

By John Weiss, HTU Board member

Minnesota TU is headed for bigger and better things with more paid employees and a bigger push to implement its strategic plan, Brent Notbohm, president of the board of directors of MNTU said Nov. 11, 2022.

He spoke via ZOOM to about a dozen Hiawatha TU members, and more via remote ZOOM.

He spoke about how he got involved with TU but more importantly what the next few years are expected to look like. It could be exciting because basically, MNTU is getting more organized with more paid staff doing more to work on streams themselves as well as advocate to elected officials about the need for clean water, said the professor of Film and Video at the University of Wisconsin-Superior.

“I am a fisherman first,” he said but joined the board because of the politics and environment. “What I really am is a fanatical fly fisherman especially for steelhead.” But he is from the Driftless area.

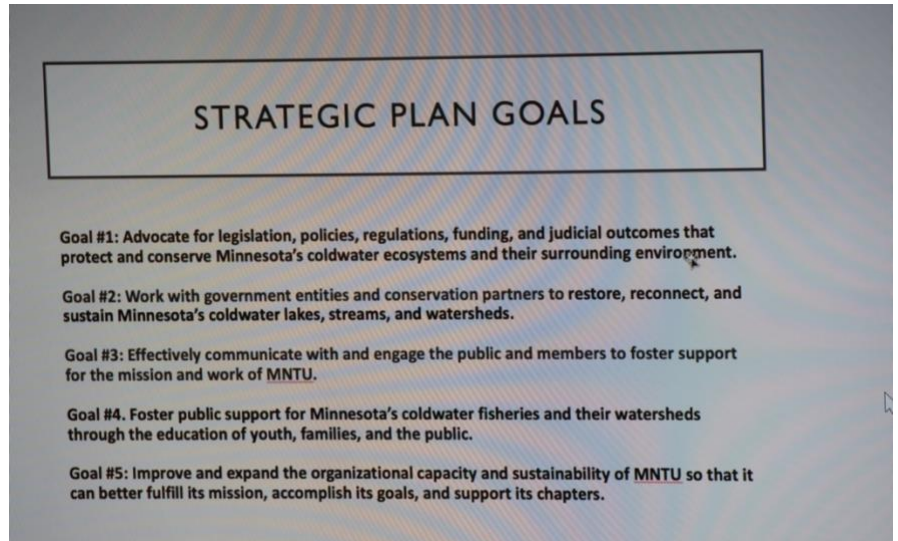
The first news was the part of the 2021-25 masterplan, John Lenczewski, executive director, will get a lot more help, Notbohm said. He has been the person overseeing the Legacy grants from the state as well as the one at the State Capital. “MNTU has outgrown (being) a single staff member,” he said. We are bigger because of all the habitat work that has been done and that work has made a difference, he said, but have not restructured the organization to meet those needs we see.

But Notbohm also said that Minnesota can be proud that we are approaching 100 miles of habitat work done mostly because of money from the Legacy Amendment funds that were approved more than a decade ago as an extension of our sales tax. “We have access to financing that no other state has,” he said, adding there’s another reason Minnesota is fortunate: “Here in Minnesota we have the luxury of cold water.”

We don’t get much money from National TU, he said.

The goal now is to work on our strategic plan, to get better organized, to get more people on staff, Notbohm said. Mark Abner will be our new development director, he said.

The next big thing MNTU is looking for is a statewide habitat program manager, he said. We can get Legacy money to oversee programs. He wants Lenczewski to concentrate more on fund raising as well as advocacy, he said. We have money in the works for more projects, he said.





The final thing will be to reenergize the grassroots members. “We need the professional people to run the show,” he said.

He also mentioned our MNTU Great Waters Expo will be March 17-19 next year at Hamline University.

## Win-Cres TU Chapter Meeting Nov 30

By Dave Shaffer Win-Cres Board member

If you have ever wondered about the water quality and aquatic insects in your favorite trout stream, Caroline van Schaik may have the answer for you — or she can help you find the answer.

She is the Driftless Area Coordinator for the Minnesota Izaak Walton League’s Upper Mississippi River Initiative. It trains, certifies, and equips volunteers to conduct chemical, physical and biological



sampling. Several years of its data about eight southeast Minnesota streams are posted on its web site — the [Clean Water Hub](#).

Van Schaik spoke at the December membership meeting of TU’s Win-Cres Chapter in Winona. Some TU members already participate in the program, and she encouraged more to join the volunteer water-monitoring effort that uses the Ike’s Save our Streams (SOS) protocol to track water quality over time. Data from all participating states can be seen [here](#).

She said SOS training, which will be offered in in the Winona area next spring (March or May 2023) teaches volunteers to conduct chemical, physical and biological sampling, including identifying caddis, mayflies and other aquatic insects. The Ikes have also helped with the testing kits containing sampling nets, chemical test strips and other gear.

Some Win-Cres members immediately responded by volunteering to monitor Rush Creek, the site of a 2022 fish kill. If others are interested in this initiative, contact Caroline at [caroline.ikesumri@gmail.com](mailto:caroline.ikesumri@gmail.com).



## **Temps, Tales and Tails of January Trout Opener and Winter in the Driftless**

By Jason Reike, HTU member



The author casting into a SE MN trout stream. January 1, 2019 | 20°F

Winter trout fishing runs deep in my veins. January through March is my favorite time of year to spend time on the spring creeks of SE Minnesota. I caught my first trout on a fly rod in 2015 on a cold January 3rd morning while dredging a black wooly bugger through a deep hole on Rush Creek. The collision of being a freshman at Winona State University (with access to more than 50 MN trout streams within 20 miles of campus) and the start of my fly-fishing journey kicked off an obsession with braving the elements to fish for trout during the long Minnesota winters. Winter trout fishing is a combination of all my favorite parts of trout fishing and fly fishing: the valleys are still and quiet, the scenery is unbeatable, the fish are hungry (most



days), the temperatures provide an added challenge, and there is solitude to be found on nearly every stream as you hardly ever see anyone else fishing.

For the die-hard trout angler, January 1st marks the start of SE Minnesota's winter trout fishing catch and release season when all streams open up to angling. For a few fishy friends and myself, this day (or one the first few days of January) has become a tradition to fish and we have come to look forward to the start of the winter trout season much more than the April trout catch and keep opener. We have fished on either the 1st or 2nd of January since 2015, only skipping 1 year in 2020 (when I couldn't get enough time off from my job in Colorado to come back and fish). The conditions haven't always been favorable.

2018 was an especially cold year. It was -12°F when we left my college house in Winona and the temps never went above 0°F that whole day. On that day we fished hard when we could stand the cold, and spent a lot of time in the car warming up when we couldn't take the temps. As odd as it sounds, I distinctly remember feeling warm in the afternoon when the temps had risen to just shy of 0°F, the sun was beating down, and the air was still. We ended up catching a couple of fish in the morning and actually doing quite well in the afternoon.



Angler Jack Sackett releasing the first nice trout of the year and showing off a frozen streamer. January 1, 2018 | -5°F

### **Fishing in Cold Temps:**

Now there is a real danger to both anglers and fish when the temps get into the teens, single digits, and below 0°F. For the fish, anytime they are removed from the water there is a chance that fragile parts of them like their eyes and gills can freeze in a matter of seconds. When we fish during these temps, we always use a net and make sure to remove hooks with the fish in the net and the net in the water. If the fish is photo worthy, we get the camera setup and ready with the fish in the net and then only bring the fish out of the water for a second or two before placing the fish back in the net. If you wear gloves, it is highly recommended to remove your gloves when handling the fish as gloves can/will remove the protective slime that trout have on their bodies and soaking wet gloves on a cold day are no fun. I can admit for myself that I never used to do this back in the day but now do my best to make a practice of it.

For the angler, fishing in these temps is not for the faint of heart to begin with and the chance of getting frostbite is a real possibility. The best way that we have found to combat this is to layer up and stay moving. Jumping jacks, doing a few laps up and down the streambank, and swinging your hands below your waist to force warm blood into your fingertips is a common practice for my friends and I no matter how foolish it may look to a passer-by. Doing this keeps things fun and interesting as well. Driving from spot to spot and sitting in a warm car between creeks is also a great way to spend a cold day and explore a lot of trout country.



Colorful trout and watercress. January 1, 2021 | 22°F



Dillan Nelson casting into a winter hole. January 6, 2018 | 5°F

Icy guides, frozen flies, and inoperable reels are a part of the cold winter game. Depending on the temps, breaking ice off the guides, rod sections, and leader/fly line is a common occurrence. Small nymphs and dries tend to freeze around the hooks, and big streamers with a lot of material tend to freeze solid. As for reels, well, if you happen to soak a reel when it's below 20-25°F you might as well walk back to the car and grab a new rod because it will freeze, and you won't be able to let line out or reel line back in. Winter fishing sounds like fun, right?

### Winter Fun:

What I have always found amazing with the spring creeks and trout around the driftless is that even when the temps have hit double digits below zero, some (not all) creeks stay warm enough to stay open enough from ice to fish and the fish are still active. And surprisingly, you can catch big fish. Over the years I have caught some of my biggest fish of the season during the first week of January.



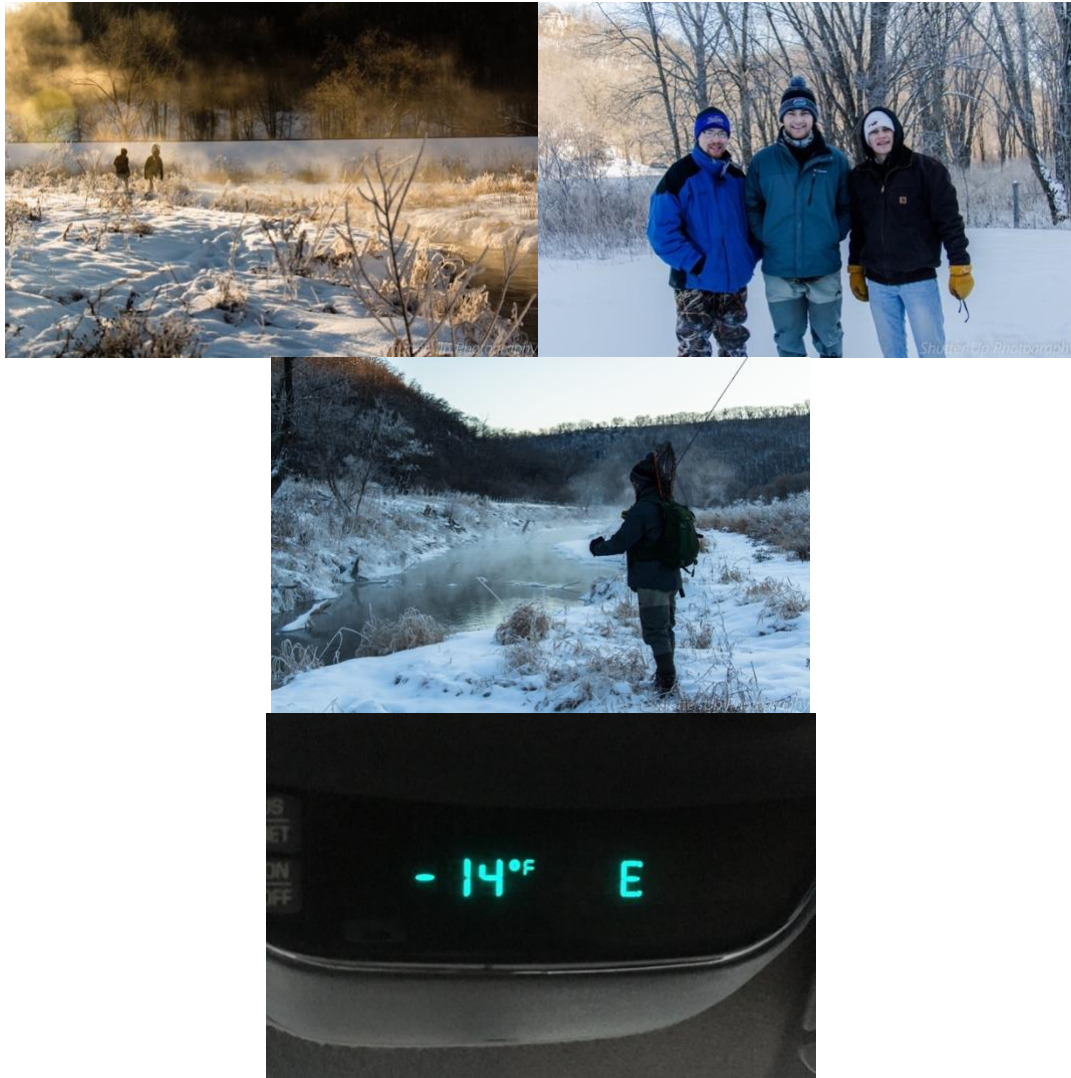
January 6, 2018 | 12°F



January 4, 2022 | 28°F

During the second semester of my senior year at Winona State University, I didn't have class until 9:30 am on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Except for one Thursday in March, a couple of friends and I fished every Tuesday and Thursday morning between January and May. That was a

pretty awesome semester, and I still ended up graduating so I would say it was a success. Most of those early January mornings before class didn't turn up many (or sometimes any) fish but I wouldn't trade those chilly mornings for anything. Some would say we were a little crazy that semester, and I would agree. The coldest morning, we went out was  $-14^{\circ}\text{F}$ . Truthfully, we didn't stand a chance at catching a fish that day, but we tried, had a blast in the process, and the steam coming off Garvin Brook was nothing short of incredible.



Anglers Tyler  
Jacob, Jason Rieke, and Noah Rutzen. 8:00 am, February 6, 2018 |  $-14^{\circ}\text{F}$

If you decide to brave the elements this upcoming winter and spend some time on a SE Minnesota trout stream, I'd advise you to layer up, let someone know where you are going, don't let your reel drop in the water, and enjoy some of the best days of trout fishing that the driftless has to offer.



## Disasters by a Snowbirder

By Bob Luck President of TCTU

I am one of those weak, morally questionable Minnesotans known as a Snowbird. I am currently sitting in the kitchen of my rented house in Kamakura, Japan, roughly the same latitude as North Carolina, looking out over a garden of camellias, daffodils, and blazing red maples, which are showing no sign of interest in dropping their leaves. Life is good, but there are two big drawbacks:

1. I will miss all that great winter fishing in the Driftless Area.
2. I will forget how to fish, and royally screw up the first several times that I return to the water in April.

A few of my past early-spring disasters include:



- A gaping tear in my waders from walking into a barbed wire fence trying to take a shortcut back to the car at the end of the day. Yup—I was trespassing. Karma is a boomerang.
- A failed experiment in retrieving snagged flies from tree branches. A few years ago, I read about a monk in Meiji Era Japan who tied a string to his sandal and threw it up around the branch of a cherry tree to pull it down within arm's reach and cut it off for grafting onto another tree, thereby saving a rare cultivar. I got all excited and wrapped a length of cord around a Leatherman's tool to stash in my fly vest and use to recover flies in the same way that monk got his branch. This worked for a few weeks until I stepped on my rod tip as I was winding up to pitch the Leatherman over a particularly high branch.
- I snag a fair number of flies on submerged obstacles, too. Being both cheap and stubborn, I wade over to the snag and root around with my feet to try and dislodge the fly without breaking it off. I attempted this one April day in a deep hole on Hay Creek without bothering to move my adjustable waders from waist-high to chest-high. You guessed it. The water started pouring in as I was rooting around, and I had to retreat to the bank to dry my clothes in the sun
- A portable camera tripod that fell out of my (unzipped) vest pocket. I could open a fly shop with all the gear I've lost this way over the years. How hard can it be to check my zippers?

I do believe I am more accident-prone after a few months away from the stream, but that doesn't mean nothing bad happens in the winter. A friend of mine told me about dropping his rod into the stream on a day when the air temperature was well below freezing. When he pulled it out, his reel was a block of ice.

Be careful out there and enjoy your winter outings in the Driftless!



## Fly of The Month

Tying a UV Copper Minnow

By Lance Prado, HTU Board member



This is very much a cold-weather streamer fly. Whether you are fishing January streams in the Driftless or are fishing winter steelhead streams, this is an easy fly to tie and to fish. Root River Rod Co's YouTube [website](#) can show you how to tie. Materials are available at the shop and their [online store](#).

Hook: Gamakatsu B10S Stinger size 4

Bead: Harline Countersunk Tungsten Bead Size 7/32" Gold

Thread: Veevus GSP 100 Denier

Tail: Black Maribou

Under Body: Black Maribou

Body: Hareline UV Polar Chenille UV Copper

## Monthly Fishing Report

By Mike Rogers President of Iowa Driftless Chapter

### Lanesboro MN: [Root River Rod Co](#)

The Cold Front has moved in, and the fish have moved deep! Low and Slow will be the name of the game. Fish have been hitting very softly so it's good to use a sensitive indicator. Fish are hitting Scuds, Midges, Pheasant Tails sizes 22-16. For not so classic flies Blow Torches, Perdignons and Walz worms are working just as well in sizes 18-16 with tungsten beads ranging from 2.5-3.5mm. All Flies and materials are available at Root River Rod co.

### Decorah IA: [Bear Creek Anglers](#)

As we all know, it's COLD! The snow has finally started to hit hard as well as the extreme lows in temperatures. Looking for upcoming breaks in the weather is always recommended for success in fishing as well as health of the fish themselves—i.e., keep the fish in the water as much as possible, avoid taking pictures with fish, fighting fish too hard, etc.

As for flies and technique, go small—both flies and tippet (as low as 6x), as well as going with a longer leader, 9' minimum, even as long as 12'. Small baetis, midges, scuds (size 16-20) and leech/wooly patterns will likely be most effective. Sluggish fish might like to sit in the deeper pools, but don't count out the riffled waters as they will be holding the most oxygen. Here are two patterns that I recommend:

### **RED-COLLARED PRINCE-NYMPH**

The prince nymph has always been one of my most consistent flies year-round in the Driftless. Typically tied in sizes 14-18 for my flybox, I also like to include a red-collar when finishing the fly, as well as a light touch of glue to secure the whip-finish and also give it a bit more shine. Another difference in this particular fly is the silver tungsten bead-head and silver wire wrap—typically you see these tied with gold instead, but I've found the silver combination and red-collar to be insanely effective on trout everywhere.



### **GREEN AND COPPER-JOHN**

A variation of the Copper-John that I'll usually tie anywhere from size 12-16. This fly is your basic CJ, but with the addition of some green wire and a double wrap up the hook. Although the basic CJ is known to be highly efficient in catching fish most anywhere, I've found this added color to be a bonus.



## **Upcoming Events:**

**HTU members meeting:** Jan 9 at 7 pm at 125 Live in Rochester. Justin Watkins of the MPCA will present and the DNR. This program is open to all.

**Win-Cres members meeting:** Wednesday January 25, at Sobieski Lodge in Winona. Fellowship and a light meal begins at 6:00 pm, with the program following at 7:00. James Melander, the Habitat Construction Supervisor at the DNR's Lanesboro Fisheries Office, will provide the program. Jim has worn many hats in that office and will share some of his previous experiences working in fisheries, in obtaining AMA acquisitions, and in working at the Peterson hatchery. The bulk of his presentation will focus on the habitat work he and his crew have done, and also will highlight some of their upcoming projects.

**HTU Members meeting:** Feb 6 at 7 pm at 125 Live in Rochester. If you have a mobile phone (or other camera) and you like to fish, you will enjoy Michael Melford (National Geographic photographer) talking and teaching about how to take better photos. Bring your phone (of course you will) and/or your camera and we will have a hands-on session.





## Resources:

[SE Stream Conditions](#) (MN)

[State Map Trout Streams](#) (MN)

[Southeast Streams](#) (MN)

[AMA](#) (MN DNR Aquatic Management Areas)

[WMA](#) (MN DNR Wildlife Management Areas)

[SNA](#) (MN DNR Scientific and Natural Areas)

[State Forest](#) (MN lands)

[SE Minnesota Hatch Chart](#) (Driftless Region)

[MN DNR Fish Kills Reporting](#) (or call 651-649-5451 or 800-422-0798)

[Trout-In-the-Classroom Map](#) (School Locations in MN)

[Wisconsin DNR Trout Streams](#)

[Iowa DNR Driftless Trout Stream Maps](#)

[IA WMA](#) (IA DNR Wildlife Management Areas)

[HTU's Iowa Driftless Stream Map](#)

**HTU Website:** <https://hiawatha-tu.org>

**TCTU Website:** <https://www.twincitiestu.org/>

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