



# TU Western Driftless

## Hotline



Editorial by Carl Berberich

### Federal EPA and Minnesota Nitrates

Most people have probably heard that the Federal EPA has responded to the petition from non-profit environmental groups about the risk of people getting sick from nitrate contaminated drinking water in SE Minnesota. Of the eleven groups that petitioned the EPA, Minnesota Trout Unlimited was among them. Our chapter currently tests some of our trout stream water using the TU designed kit called WiseH20. Our results show a disturbing result in that many trout streams in our area are at twice the level for nitrates (20 ppm) that the Federal EPA recommends.

The EPA has asked on Nov 3, that despite commitment to address nitrate contamination through state programs, there is an “evident need for further actions to safeguard public health.” It has been shown that high nitrate levels cause higher rates of birth defects, pre-term birth, and low birth weight, as well as a number of cancers and thyroid disease in adults. The letter was addressed to commissioners of the state Departments of Health and the Department of Agriculture, and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. The EPA is requesting a response from the state within 30 days, including a time frame for the work plan, and how the state will identify, contact, test drinking water and offer alternative water to all impacted residents in the region.

Last month, Hiawatha Chapter of TU met with local staff of the MPCA about helping them in this regard. We committed to collecting water samples on a regular basis from springs in the SE. According to the DNR website map of springs in the state, there’s got to be over 500 springs just in Filmore County alone. The SE of Minnesota has an incredible amount of springs compared to the rest of the state.

### Federal EPA and Minnesota Neonics

There was an interesting Letter to the Editor at the Rochester Post Bulletin on Tuesday Nov 21 from Richie Swanson of Winona. He stated that the Federal EPA wants comments regarding the regulation of pesticide-treated seeds. He stated that we should tell the EPA to prohibit the use of neonicotinoids as seed treatments. You can go to his website at <https://richieswanson.com/epa-wants-comments-on-treated-seeds-by-dec-11/> for more information and a link to the Federal EPA website. This is an interesting website. It is not a fishing website, but one for birders. He basically states on his website “*The widespread use of insecticide-treated seeds has been linked with declines of critically important creatures like caddisflies, mayflies, stoneflies and other aquatic invertebrates.*”. These species are a primary source of food for not only fish but also for birds. He has many fact sheets and papers linked to his website stating the facts about these pesticides. There is also a link at the top of his website to the Federal EPA’s website that is requesting our comments. The deadline is Dec 11. I really think that we need to take action to save our fish and our birds, and this is certainly a way to do it. This could be a solution.

## Hiawatha TU Meeting

By John Weiss, HTU Board member

### **MINUTES OF NOV. 6 at 125 Live 11 people present.**

We heard from Amber Taylor, education program director, head of MNTU's Trout in the Classroom, about its history and future. Most of it is with fifth or sixth graders but some high schools, such as Century, use it too.

She said 72 schools and two learning centers - with 82 total fish tanks - now use it as a way to teach students about trout and stream ecology. They get eggs in early December and raise them until they are released into local streams in spring. At first, the Lanesboro Hatchery supplied the eggs, but problems developed there so they get them from out west.

Eggs become alevin in five to 10 days, then they begin to grow. "The students get to see all of this," she said. They check chemistry of the water, clean the tank and monitor the tank. On the streams, they might monitor for insects or pick up trash. Some also learn to cast flyrods or dissect fish. Just having the tank in the classroom is helpful, she said. "Just watching is a peaceful thing in the classroom."

We can help by delivering eggs, teaching fishing skills and donating fly-tying materials.

Before her, Hiawatha TU started its program in 2013.

It's multi-disciplined with students also learning about math, writing, science, chemistry, physics and social studies.

She began with TIC in 2018 when it had 29 schools, though it was going before that. This is a nationwide program with some schools rearing salmon, but we rear rainbow trout. Our program is really highly rated in the country. Much of the money comes from Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources though a few years ago, they didn't come through so various chapters chipped in to keep it going. We now have LCCMR money again but are beginning a campaign to get a fund so that any future cuts or stops of funding can keep the program going. It would also show commissioners that we are backing the program.

HTU donated \$2,000 and we are being asked to double that for the new fund.

The program began in Bemidji. Locally, we have Goodhue, Rochester, Grand Meadow, Lake City and Wabasha in it, she said.

Much of its growth has come from word of mouth, Taylor said. "We make a huge impact," she said.

### **Here are some other stats she offered:**

- ~16 schools w/in Hiawatha's boundaries (I will send school/teacher info to Paul for these)

- **14,031** TIC students have participated in MNTU educator led programs, activities, and events. This number does not include the educational experiences thousands of other students get each year in TIC related programming with teachers, chapter volunteers, and other organizations.
- **650** TCTU youth education volunteer hours. This number only includes the volunteer efforts of those assisting with our TIC programs here in the metro area, not TUNE camp, Foster the Outdoors, or the other outreach chapters are doing with our TIC schools.
- **1,904** summer fishing skills participants. These are programs held with partner organizations like park and rec departments around the metro area June-August each summer.

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After Taylor’s presentation, Greg Goodnow, who was very important in HTU beginning its TIC program, demonstrated two knots - the Davy and Orvis. It got a lot of us fumbling around with orange fishing line, but the Davy knot would be good for tying on flies in winter, or any time. The Orvis knot is actually a kind of slip knot so if you tie it, you can pull it loose.

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Future events:

Dec. 4: The annual Christmas potluck will be at Olmsted County History Center.



Starting Saturday Dec. 2 and running to March 9 (nothing Dec. 23), from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., there will be free open fly-tying at 125 Live. Come and tie one or two on, or even more. If you’re a novice, come and learn; if a pro, come and teach. All are welcome. Or, come to socialize about trout fishing.

## Win-Cres Happenings

By Mark Reisetter Win-Cres Board member

President Chuck Shepard spoke at the November 15 Winona Rotary Club meeting highlighting Win-Cres’ many initiatives to protect, conserve and restore cold water fisheries. The meeting was held at the American Legion at 302 E. Sarnia Street.

Regarding habitat work, Chuck Shepard will write to Garvin Brook landowners to seek permission to inject the Japanese Knotweed on their property. Dusty Hoffman will coordinate with the Fisheries Department regarding “willow whacking” along Garvin, which has been delayed until March of 2024.

On October 19, 2023, the Win-Cres Board of Directors with 7 affirmative votes and no nays passed the motion to purchase the bench through the City of Winona honoring past Win-Cres President Joe Lepley. The cost of the bench was \$2000. Tom Stoa reported that a bench honoring Joe Lepley has been ordered and the location along Lake Winona near the cherry trees has been decided upon. Win-Cres TU will pay for the bench and the city will install it. Once the appropriate wording for the plaque has been determined it will be bolted onto the cement.

Dr. Jennifer Biederman, statewide Habitat Program Director for MNTU, will be the speaker at our November 29 Win-Cres general meeting. The meeting will be held at Sobieski Lodge, East 7<sup>th</sup> St Winona. Social hour at 6:00 p.m. with her presentation at 7:00 p.m. A meal will be provided, and the public is welcome and encouraged to attend. Dr. Biederman will discuss recent MNTU projects funded by the Outdoor Heritage Fund in southeastern Minnesota and how they have improved angling access, addressed erosion, established floodplain reconnection, and enhanced nongame terrestrial habitat. She will also talk about upcoming projects in southeastern Minnesota, highlight some recent work on the North Shore, and discuss Win-Cres' engagement in our local efforts.

The future Win-Cres Chapter general meeting dates will be January 24, February 28, and March 27, 2024.

## TCTU November News

By Bob Luck, President of TCTU

The last time I fished in Iowa was in early October of 2005. I arrived during a warm spell and had a couple of days of amazing hopper fishing. Every year since then I have told myself I need to get back to Iowa, but all of that closer water in the Minnesota Driftless got in the way. My sense of urgency increased this year after hearing John van Vliet talk about Iowa at our chapter meeting last November and reading his [book](#). Last week, with nearly all of Minnesota closed and my wife out of town, I finally made it down for a few days. It was terrific!

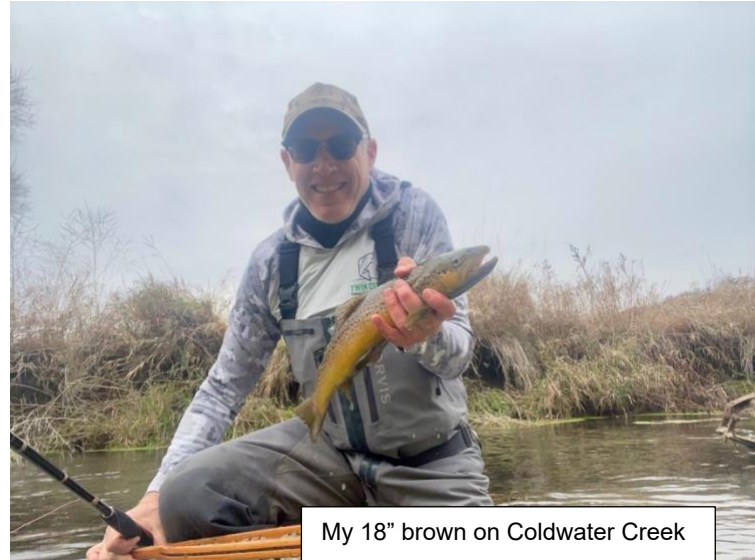
On October 31st I woke up to 2" of fresh snow, air temps in the 20s, and wind gusts up to 40 mph. It was tough to convince myself to leave the house, but I finally got out around 8:45 by telling myself that it would be warmer and snow-free a couple hours south. I arrived at my first destination, Forestville State Park, just north of the Iowa border at about 11 am. (A few state parks and towns in SE MN are open between Oct 15 and Dec 31). Forestville had 2" of fresh snow, air temps in the 20s and wind gusts up to 40 mph. Happy Halloween. But the winds were quite a bit lighter once I got down into the river valley, and the hike to Canfield Creek warmed me up. Canfield Creek flows out of a cave at the park border and empties into the S Branch of the Root River. I figured that the constant spring flow would keep the water warmer and the trout more active. The water level was low and a half-hour of nymph fishing produced nothing but weeds. On a whim, I tied on an old school size 10 Prince wet fly and dead drifted it through some slow water. That was the ticket! I had great action until about 1:30 when the sun came out. After experimenting a bit more, I found that I could attract trout by fishing deeper with a beadhead woolly bugger fished slowly as a streamer through the deeper pools.

I left the stream at 4 pm and drove an hour over to Dorchester, Iowa. I checked into the [Sportsmen Motel](#), which is practically on the banks of Waterloo Creek. The motel is clean, quiet and comfortable, and a single room was 80 bucks a night. Dorchester has a couple of restaurants; I ate at Wings one night and had some pretty good fried chicken. The salad bar had



4 kinds of macaroni salad along with potato and jello salad, but fresh vegetables were in short supply. Fine with me, I don't love lettuce and I didn't go to Iowa to lose weight.

On November 1st the sky was overcast, and it was just as cold as the day before, but the wind was light. I figured the stream would need some time to warm up, so I drove 2 minutes over to the Highway 76 bridge and started fishing at 11:30. This is a beautiful stretch of runs and riffles that reminds me of the Rush River. The water temp was still cold at 39 degrees, but I did entice a few rainbows and one brown on streamers in about 2 hours of fishing before deciding to head farther upstream where there might be warmer water and more action. At 1:30 I drove about 4 miles upstream and parked beside a large pool where fish were rising to a good blue wing olive hatch. I fished that hatch until 4 pm with good success, catching a large number of rainbows and one brown on a #18 Paul Johnson BWO special. Yes, Waterloo Creek has a lot of stocked rainbows, and I have even caught them up in Minnesota where the creek starts out as Bee Creek. I don't love the idea of stocking rainbows over a population of wild browns, but these rainbows were holdovers; brightly colored and strong fighters.



My 18" brown on Coldwater Creek

On November 2nd I decided to seek professional help and hired Mike Rogers of [Bear Creek Anglers](#) to guide me for half a day. We fished North Bear Creek--nymphs under an indicator in the morning, and the Blue Wing Olive hatch in the afternoon. The hatch lasted all afternoon, and I did even better than the day before. Mike gave me a #20 imitation to use. This size was closer to the naturals, and it seemed like I was catching more fish, including more browns. Mike is also the president of the Iowa Driftless Chapter of TU, and they had their monthly meeting that night at T-Bocs restaurant in Decorah. I had a burger and beer at T-Bocs and joined the meeting, with Megan Giorgenti of the Iowa DNR talking about what they were doing to try to control pollution of Siewers spring, the second largest spring in Iowa and the source water for the hatchery in Decorah. Lots of commonalities with the Minnesota Driftless: dedicated DNR and TU folks facing serious issues with runoff that they are trying to address with landowners.



Mike Rogers and Iowa DNR Employee Megan Giorgenti at the Iowa Driftless Chapter Meeting

I spent my last day, November 3rd, at Coldwater Creek on a tip from Mike. Like Canfield, Coldwater comes out from a cave, but it has significantly higher water flow. I caught a few fish in



the afternoon on dry flies, but the hatch wasn't as big as the two previous days, and I got most of my fish on nymphs. Today, it was almost all browns, including some big ones. Around 3 pm I was tightlining a #16 beadhead nymph on 6x tippet through the fast water at the head of a pool with my Tenkara rod. A large fish took it, and after convincing myself to be patient, I babied it over to the bank and netted it. A perfect bookend to my first day of the 2023 season when I got too impatient with a large fish and it broke me off. No doubt I will have to learn the same lesson again next Spring!



Cave at the headwaters of Coldwater Creek

## Quincy Bridge outage on Middle Branch of Whitewater

By John Weiss, HTU Board member

Hey fellow trout anglers. Here's an alert: the bridge at Quincy over the Middle Branch Whitewater River is being replaced so you'll have to go around some way or the other.



## Iowa Driftless Chapter

By Mike Rogers, President



Next Chapter Meeting—Thursday, December 7<sup>th</sup> @ 7pm—join us at T-Bock's Sports Bar and Grill for our monthly chapter meeting. All are welcome!

Fly Tying Events—



## Cold Days are Coming

By Jason Rieke



Having fun on a slow day of fishing

Winter is a long season in our neck of the woods. With the possibility of snow covering the ground for 4 months out of the year, the fair-weather fly fisherman misses out on a lot of time that could be spent on the water. I have always found fishing during these cold months to be an enjoyable time between the scenery, quietness, challenge, and reward. Without the right gear and a willingness to get a little cold though, winter trout fishing can be fairly miserable. Here are a few tips to get you started and buffer the potential misery of winter trout fishing.

- **Layering** is a critical aspect of the winter trout game. I like to **fish with a backpack** so that I can pack an outer layer that will keep me warm in the coldest condition that I expect to face **and** to pack away those outer layers when I inevitably get too warm sometime during the day and need to shed layers. It's amazing how warm a still, sunny



day can be in the dead of winter, and yet how cold that same day can be when the sun tucks behind a bluff and a slight breeze starts up.

- **Try wearing insulated boots instead of waders.** If you are fishing a smaller stream or hiking back into a valley, wearing below the knee boots can at times be warmer and more comfortable to wear than waders.



The scenery of a winter drive in SE MN is hard to beat

- **Don't over layer socks.** If you jam 2-3 pairs of socks into the neoprene booties of your waders or into your hiking boots, you may end up being colder than just wearing one pair of socks.
- **Driving from spot to spot** can be your friend in the winter to stay warm and to explore multiple creeks/systems.
- Try wearing **nitrile gloves** or **fish with a towel**. Wet hands become cold hands. Keeping them dry with nitrile gloves or wiping them off with a towel after a submersion or touching a fish will keep them feeling much warmer. Wearing a hand warming pouch containing a pair of HotHands is a game changer on bitter cold days.
- **Stay moving and out of the water.** Nothing is colder than standing in one spot in the river and not moving. When it's really cold, jumping jacks and running up and down the bank is a sure bet to get some blood moving. Also, swinging your hands below your waist to force warm blood into your fingertips can work wonders.
- **"Sit your starter."** I read this tip in a winter fishing article somewhere and it rings true. Winter fishing is hard on fly rods (and fly lines). I have snapped my fair share of rods while breaking ice out of guides and slipping/falling on ice.
- **Handle fish carefully.** When it's really cold (10°F and below) don't expose fish to the cold air for more than a few seconds.
- **Let someone know where you are going and be cautious of exposed skin.**

Be safe and have fun out there this winter.

Angler Isaac Hiner on a beautiful winter day in the driftless





## Fly of The Month: Game Changer

By Lance Prado, HTU Board member



This month we are tying finesse Blane Chocklett's Game Changer. This is a awesome swimming fly that mimics a bait fish. We have Game Changer kits at the shop that include everything to tie 6 Game changers. Check out the full fly-tying tutorial on our Youtube channel. If you would like to purchase one of these Game Changer kits, they are available on our website at [www.rootriverrodco.com](http://www.rootriverrodco.com) Thank you for watching.

<https://youtu.be/j0g9fAMkaPw>

## Monthly Fishing Reports

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

Root River Rod Co is hosting bi-weekly fly tying nights at Sylvan Brewery in Lanesboro from 5-8Pm on Thursdays. This is a fun social event to get together and share stories and fly-tying techniques. If you are looking to start fly tying and want to try it out give Root River Rod co a before showing up and reserve a vise and basic materials for free. All fly-tying materials will be 20% off in store the day of each fly tying night. Our next fly-tying night is Thursday Nov 30 and we look forward to seeing a bunch of new faces.



We have been lucky to have such warm weather this late in November for fly fishing. This weather has kept the fish eager to get their next meal and the bugs have been hatching. What we have been using and seeing on the water are Midges, BWOs, Scuds and other bait fish. We have also been seeing a healthy display of fish spawning in SE MN and there are redds with fish still on them. Cooler weather is in the forecast so as these fish finish up their spawn season they will go into deep and slow pools as the water temps drop. Stop in or Shop online at Root River Rod Co for all your fly fishing needs.



Zebra Midge Nymphs size 18-22  
Midge Dry Flies Size 18-20  
Orange Scuds Size 18-14  
BWO Nymphs Size 18-20  
BWO Dry Flies Size 18-20  
Bait Fish Patterns 1"-4" Long

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

Fishing has been solid through mid-Fall. Water levels are still low, but BWO hatches have been consistent most days from mid-morning until mid to mid/late afternoon. Make sure to carry sizes 18-22 BWO dry patterns and also keep some emerger patterns and/or soft hackle patterns for activity in the foam line.

For nymph fishing, some favorites this time of year are pink squirrels (size 14-16 scud hooks), rainbow warrior (size 16-18), prince nymph (size 16-18 with red hotspot/collar), hare's ear and pheasant tail variations (size 16-18).

Don't hesitate to throw leech patterns and other streamers or bugger patterns. Be cautious fishing shallow waters with streamers as we don't want to initiate strikes from spawning fish! Redds are everywhere and should be avoided!

## **Upcoming Events Schedule:**

**TCTU's Chapter Meeting** Nov 27, 2023. At Fat Pants Brewing Co. in Eden Prairie and on Zoom.

**Win-Cres Chapter Meeting** Nov 29. Dinner at 6 p.m. at the Sobieski Lodge, East 7th St. Winona followed by the presentation at 7 p.m. Jennie Biederman, MNTU

**Hiawatha TU** Fly Tying at 125 Live in Rochester - Saturdays, Dec 2, 2023, and running until March 9, 2024- 9 to 11 am. Free and open to the public.

**Hiawatha TU Holiday Potluck:** Dec 4, 2023. 6:00pm at the Olmsted Historical Center (1195 W Circle Dr SW, Rochester MN 55902

**Iowa Driftless Chapter:** Thursday, December 7<sup>th</sup> @ 7pm—join us at T-Bock's Sports Bar and Grill for our monthly chapter meeting.

**Hiawatha TU Members Meeting:** Tuesday, January 2, 7pm, 125Live - Chapter Meeting, program TBD

**Win-Cres Chapter Meeting:** General meeting dates will be January 24

**Hiawatha TU Members Meeting:** Monday, February 5, 7pm 125 Live - Chapter Meeting

**Win-Cres Chapter Meeting:** General meeting dates will be February 28

**Hiawatha TU Members Meeting:** Monday, March 4, 7pm 125Live - Chapter Meeting

**MNTU's Great Waters Expo:** - March 15-17, Hamline University, St Paul

**Win-Cres Chapter Meeting:** General meeting dates will be March 27, 2024.

## Resources:

[SE Stream Conditions](#) (MN DNR)

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

[Southeast Streams](#) (MN DNR)

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

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

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

[State Forest](#) (MN lands)

[Driftless 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/>

**TCTU Events:** <https://www.twincitiestu.org/events.html>

[2023 MN DNR Driftless Stream Projects Map](#)