

Hickory NC Trout Unlimited October 2019 Newsletter



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A LINE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I don't know about you, but it seems that Summer has a stranglehold on the weather. Is Fall ever coming? Will those fish that they are planning on stocking in a few days going to live in this heat? Jeez!

So this month I'm just going to give you a few bits and pieces of information to keep you in the know.

One thing about Wilson Creek is those new Port a Jons that were installed over Labor Day, all 5 got vandalized with graffiti. Some had the seats pulled out and one was even stuffed to the top with bags of trash. It's a sad situation. They were all removed within the week. I expect that if the weather ever cools off things will get better.

Another thing is that A Clean Wilson Creek is planning an Oyster Roast the last weekend of October at Betsy's Old Country Store. The cost is \$50 for all you can eat, all day. Also accompanying the Oyster Roast is a Fly Fishing Tournament that is planned by our own Brandon Harrison from Hickory TU. There is some stiff competition happening in this tournament. All of the proceeds go to A Clean Wilson Creek. Check this out online or on Facebook. Go watch some of these guys fish. I did at the last tournament and it was fun. I can't be there. I'll be fishing the Casting Carolina's Tie One On Tournament in Cherokee that weekend. But, I would be if I could.

The last thing is our October meeting. We are doing something new just for fun. We are having, Popcorn and a Movie. Instead of a buffet, we will be doing movie food like sliders and chips. The cost will still be \$10.00 to eat but it is going to be a fun night. Our movie is called " Finding Joe Brooks." This is a Sundance Film Festival movie. Joe Brooks was inducted into the Fly Fishing Museum if the Southern Appalachians earlier this year. He is considered the Father of Fly Fishing as we know it. The movie sells for \$100, but the Brooks Family gave me a copy for Hickory TU. So we will be having a drawing for our copy as a door prize that evening.

Also along with our movie, we are having Trout Trivia mixed with Wilson Creek trivia. We have a TU Yeti cup for the winner. Please submit any good trivia questions to my email.

Please email me at jackiefishes@gmail.com if you are planning on attending and eating at TU Popcorn and a Movie Night at Market on Main so that we can order the proper amount of food.

Last month's Fishing Leader building workshop was fun. One thing these fun evenings do is provide us time to talk and

get to know each other better. Please come, relax and enjoy the night.

See you on the creek.

The tug is the drug...
Jackie Greene

OCTOBER MEETING

WHEN: Tuesday, October 15

5:30 PM Optional Buffett

6:30 PM Program

WHERE: Market on Main Cellar

PROGRAM: Popcorn and a Movie *Finding Joe Brooks*

RSVP: HKYNCTUpres@gmail.com

Finding Joe Brooks is a story about a man who had a tremendous impact on the sport of fly fishing. It is a story of overcoming and redemption. It is one of triumph and achievement. At its heart it is a romantic tale of passion, endurance, and a commitment to something greater than one's self. You can see a short video about the movie at <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=finding+joe+brooks+&view=detail&mid=A22CBAA526373F408AFDA22CBAA526373F408AFD&FORM=VIRE>

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

It is the constant - or inconstant - change, the infinite variety in fly-fishing that binds us fast. It is impossible to grow weary of a sport that is never the same on any two days of the year.

.....Theodore Gordon

Tight Lines & Road Kill

THE CHERRY ON TOP

Everything in an ice cream sundae is wonderful! Ice cream, chocolate syrup, gooey nuts, whipped cream – almost too good to be real. But, without a cherry on top, almost nobody would call it an ice cream sundae.

I told you last month I was headed to Yellowstone with my friend Robert for a week of fishing in late August. I've been many times, and each trip and everything included were wonderful – kinda like that ice cream sundae. But put a cherry on top and wonderful gets even better.

You've probably heard me say it: tell me I'm gonna die in a month but I'll feel okay for 30 days, I'm headed to Yellowstone to fish ... unless you tell me in January, that is! This trip did nothing to change my mind. Beautiful places with

hot water and steam spewing from cracks in the earth. Lots of wildlife: a bald eagle, golden eagle, grizzly, black bear, a zillion bison, elk munching on the grass at our hotel, pronghorns galore, and the list goes on and on. Even found some great food and craft beer. Fished beautiful waters and caught lots of fish, all gorgeous, and many in excess of 20 inches. Ice cream sundae – all wonderful.

On our last day of fishing, we headed back to my favorite spot in the entire park. We'd already fished there two other days, and those days left no doubt about where to fish our final day. That spot is on the Yellowstone River, here are the directions:

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After hiking in, our day started slowly. The Yellowstone is truly a bug factory, but the belts run sporadically. No bugs, no fish. They don't waste their effort!

A bit before noon a few bugs appeared, and on cue, a few fish too. There were a few size 14 mayflies and a few size 18 gray ones. A 14 parachute Adams turned nobody. Size 18 p.A., the same. For some reason, a small parachute hopper often works there when fish are looking up at other bugs. Bingo! Soon a nice fish in my net. The bugs stopped and the rises too. We ate lunch under a shade tree.

Back in the water after a sandwich and I saw just a few sporadic rises. The only bugs I saw were the size 18 grays again, so back to the 18 p.A. I saw a golden slab roll over well beyond me at the far edge of the deep current. A minute later a golden roll again, same spot. I waded to within about 40 feet of the rise, waist deep in pretty fast current. I dropped one cast about five feet short, maybe excusable when casting in current up to my waist. I dropped a second cast right where I thought it needed to be, about 4 feet ahead of the rise. In a second the fly hit the spot and the golden slab rolled again. My rod raise was met with a heavy load, and the battle was on. Several minutes later Robert scooped that golden slab into his net for me. The rises were all done, and we never saw another fish. That was the cherry that topped my sundae!

Here's the cherry on top. 24-inch Yellowstone cutthroat with beautiful colors, sight fishing with a size 18. A great way to finish off a wonderful sundae!



By Joel Miller

DELAYED HARVEST BEGINS OCTOBER 1

The season will begin on Wednesday, October 2nd with the first stocking of the year. If you would like to participate, be at the handicap parking lot between 9 & 10 AM.

TIP OF THE MONTH

Stretch Thy Fly Line

BY LOUIS CAHILL



Photo: Louis Cahill

Are you looking for a little more distance in your fly cast?

Is your fly line not shooting through your guides as easy as it should? Is it lacking that fresh from the box buoyancy? Are you spending more time untangling your fly line than fishing? **If your answer to any of the above questions is yes, you should think about taking a couple minutes before hitting the water to stretch your fly line.**

Fly line reeled up tight on the reel and unused for periods of time will cause it to get "coil memory" for lack of a better term. And although the issue gets worse the longer a fly line sits on a fly reel unused, the process begins quickly, and can even nuisance fly fishers that are lucky enough to find time to fish once a week.

For years without thinking about it, I used to rip off sixty feet of fly line off my reel onto the ground and stretch it by hand at the truck. It worked, but doing so my fly line got dirt and grime all over it in the process. Yeah, I know, I could do it on the water or even better, at the house before I leave, but call me old fashioned, I like to string up my rod before I hit the water. I fly fished for years before I thought to use my 2" ball on my truck, and many more years before the light bulb went off in my head to use the roof rack to stretch my fly line. I've yet to come up with a better way to stretch my fly line solo. It's quick, allows me to quickly stretch the majority of my fly line and when I'm done, I can reel it back in without it touching the ground and getting dirty.

Try it next time you go fishing and find yourself with a fly line coiled all to hell. It's a quick fix that will make your fly line cast and float a whole lot better and stay tangle free. Probably wouldn't hurt to hit it with some fly line cleaner and conditioner occasionally as well, in between trips. If your fly line is twisted as well, stretching it won't untwist it. The best thing you can do, is drag it behind the boat and let it untwist

or if you don't have a boat, wade to a fast riffle and let your fly line out. Rod tip in water, let the fly line float downstream until you get tension and hold it there for a solid minute. It works best if you don't have a fly on the end of your leader. There you go, two tips for getting twist-free and coil-free fly line.

Keep it Reel,

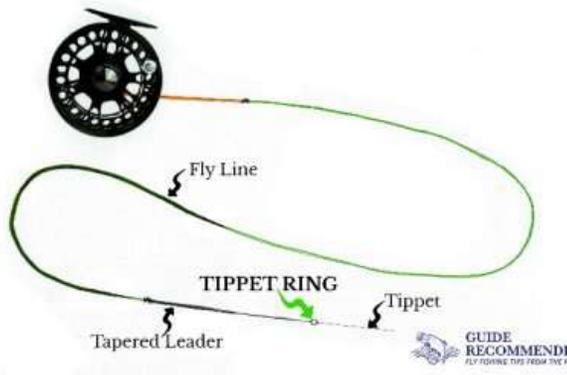
Kent Klewein

Gink & Gasoline

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BONUS TIP

YOU SHOULD BE USING A TIPPET RING



I believe I included an article about tippet rings a few issues ago, but I'm not sure of that and at the September meeting we tied up a Euro Leader including a tippet ring and many people seemed to be unaware of them. I first read about and started using them less than a year ago, but I have become an advocate. The advantage is that you tie your tippet to the ring rather than directly to the leader. If you tie directly to the leader, each time you replace the tippet you lose a little more leader and you can use up that leader rather quickly. Manufactured leaders are not inexpensive, especially if you are using fluorocarbon which can cost north of \$10 each. By using a tippet ring you can make that leader last a year or more.

And heaven forbid you snag your fly into a tree (I know you're an excellent caster and never do that, right?). If it is out of reach and you have to tug it loose, the break will normally be on the tippet side of the ring and you will not lose your leader. Since I fish in a lot of tight streams, I have a lot of first hand experience with this and have only lost the leader a few times when it was badly tangled above the tippet ring.



In many cases when you buy tippet rings they will come on a wire holder of some type. If they come packed loose, be sure to get something like a safety pin and put them on it. Do not take them off before you try to attach them to your leader!!! I also find it easier to complete the knot while it is on the holder, but at least run the leader through it before removing. These tiny rings are very easy to drop and when they do, it's likely you'll never find it. You tie it to your leader and to the tippet using a clinch knot. It is suggested that you use an improved clinch knot on the leader side and standard clinch on the tippet side. The improved

clinch knot is a little stronger so that when you are snagged it is more likely to break on the tippet side of the ring.

As I mentioned above, my line usually breaks below the tippet ring. That is because I use a stronger leader than I do my tippet. For most of my fishing I use a 4X leader and a 5X or 6X tippet. If you are using say a 9', 6X manufactured leader and you want to use 5X tippet, you need to trim a couple feet off to assure your tippet strength is less than the leader tip. For my normal fishing I buy a 7', 4X tippet, tie on the ring and then two feet of the 5 or 6X tippet to give me my standard 9' leader. If you're going for bigger fish and using say 3X tippet, just buy a 7' leader in a stronger size.

An additional use of the ring is to tie your fly and dropper both to the tippet ring, but that's another article. Give the tippet ring a try. I think you'll like it and it may save you a great deal of money by reducing the number of leaders you use up in a year.

START OF NEW YEAR FOR TIC



The new year has begun for Trout in the Classroom. Our TIC Chairman, Cathy Starnes, along with Jackie Greene and Bill Long headed over to the Wildlife Resources hatchery in Marion to pick up the eggs for delivery to the schools. Marion serves as a site for obtaining and hatching the eggs. They will raise the fish to fingerlings and they are then delivered to the Armstrong hatchery where they will be raised until they are ready to be released for stocking at about 10".



Each school is allotted approximately 200 eggs for their tank. The eggs are put into a bag and then into a cooler to keep them fresh until delivery. Each school is asked to prepare their tanks in advance so that the water temperature is ready when the eggs arrive. The egg bag is placed into the tank for the temperatures to acclimate before the eggs are put into a container within the tank for hatching.



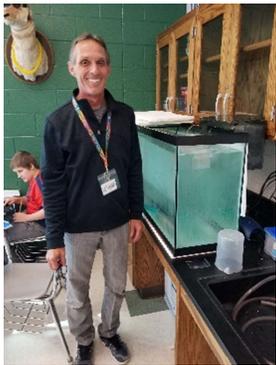
This year we have four local schools that have asked to participate in the Trout in the Classroom program. River Bend Middle School is back for their fourth year as a member of the program under the direction of teacher Stoney Turner.



Back for their third year is West Alexander Middle School under the direction of teacher Ryan Rowe. Last year Ryan added a hydroponics tank to the system to help to balance the chemical cycle. It was a great success and this year



Hickory TU provide a second fish tank for the system to try to more evenly balance the cycle, so they will be raising about 400 trout this year. Hickory TU also provides the materials for the program to each school and if you look closely in the photo, the kids in nicely displayed them.



Newton Conover Middle School is back for their second year in the program under the direction of teacher John Gruber.

New to the program this year is North Lincoln High School. They had not yet been able to prepare the tank for delivery, so River Bend has agreed to hold the eggs for them until they are ready.

We would like to thank all the teachers who have agreed to be part of the Trout in the Classroom program. This is a big effort on their part as the fish need to be fed daily, even during semester breaks. Their efforts are well rewarded by the environmental education the students receive through participation in the program.

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ADVICE FROM THE VISE

October should bring cooler temps and get us fair weather anglers back on the water. It's also a great time to get the last vestiges of dry fly fishing as the trout work on picking off late season protein. When it comes to dry fly fishing, my fishing partner Monty Harris, swears that if a spring or fall fish won't take a Stimulator or a Parachute Adams, it's time to find a Barbecue joint. For those of us who find ourselves of a certain age, with commensurate vision challenges, both those flies are great- high floaters and easy to see. Parachute patterns look hard to tie, but once you practice the post a few times, they are pretty straight forward.

Recipe as follows:

Standard Dry Fly hook #12 to #20

Thread is Adams Grey

Dubbing is Adams Grey super fine (muskrat is traditional)

Post is Antron yarn (Calf body hair is traditional)

Tail is Grizzly Cock and Brown Cock hackle fibers
Hackle is dry fly genetic hackle in brown and grizzly



So let's start with the tail. Here are the feathers. They are stroked out so you can align the tips. Once stroked out pinch off about 12 fibers from one feather and, measure off a hook shank length and secure with a single wrap.



Then do the same with the other feather and secure those on top and with the tips aligned. Next, slightly roll the fibers in your fingers to mingle the grizzly and brown and pinch wrap on the tail. Tidy up and take your thread to a third from the eye.



I'm using Antron yarn instead of the traditional calf body hair for the post. The synthetic stays waterproof, comes in other colors if you want a better indicator color, and is less difficult to work with to make a post. We are essentially creating a shank that is vertical to the hook on which we will wrap the hackle so the fibers are parallel to the water surface. It floats flat and very well this way, and is a treat to see with that post sticking up.



Take a couple inches of the Antron and take a x-wrap to center it on the top of the hook. Pull both ends straight up and take figure few 8 wraps to establish a base and then build up a couple verticals wraps and the. Coming back to the 8 and then back to wrapping the post until you have as shown. This is the tricky part.



Keep upward tension on the Antron, and take snug wraps around the post. 3-4 mm is about the right height, but don't hesitate to make it a bit higher if you want. You can put a drop of zap-a-gap or head cement down the middle of the post with a bodkin if you think you need a little extra stiffness.



Form a thin dubbing noodle on your thread and dub the body. I'm using grizzly and a brown furnace hackle, strip the tips and, a touch of wax on the thread and tie the tips onto the post as shown. Make sure you wrap to the top of the post as you will take wraps downwards to the hook shank.



Using a grizzly and a brown furnace hackle, strip the tips, a touch of wax on the thread, and tie the tips onto the post as shown. Make sure you wrap to the tip of the post as you will take wraps downwards to the hook shank.



With both feathers in your hackle pliers, take clockwise wraps, while holding upward tension on the post Antron. It's a tricky move to capture the hackle (and take pictures) and capture your hackle. Take a few snug wraps the whip finish around the post. Pull up on the post and trim it even with the hackle stack or slightly above. Trim up any hackles that got trapped in the whip finish and you are complete.



This fly lies in the surface film with a profile that looks buggy and will get the attention of any fish targeting the surface.

As always I'd love to hear your feedback and I'm always happy to answer any and all questions, give a lesson, or just talk fly fishing. Don't hesitate to contact me at jacobsforkflytying@gmail.com or check out some of my current ties on Facebook and Instagram at Jacobs Fork Fly Tying.

Dave Everhart

CONSERVATION ON THE CREEK

By: Jeff Wright, Southeast Volunteer Coordinator



There is no doubt why Wilson Creek is a top priority water for Hickory Chapter Trout Unlimited. There is something special about this place, from the gorge section with its

massive boulders and deep pools full of finicky rainbows to the headwater streams featuring plunge pools that will challenge anyone who loves to chase our native brook trout. Wilson Creek stands tall among in area filled with amazing locations for people to get outside.

In recent years, interest in protecting the Creek has built. Groups such as "A Clean Wilson Creek" have emerged to address issues related to human-related impacts and keep the area in top shape for all. Trout Unlimited, too, is working to decrease these impacts in the Wilson Creek Watershed.

Andy Brown, Southern Appalachian Stream Restoration Manager, adopted the watershed as one of his top-priority areas. He has worked with additional TU staff, NCWRC, and the US Forest Service to create a Community Science program, engaging local volunteers with a deep love and interest for a watershed in creating data that can be used to prioritize projects and create the biggest bang-for-the-buck in keeping the area healthy. Through 2019, a core group of volunteers has worked to measure road-stream crossing structures and identify those that may block the passage of fish and other aquatic organisms. Mike Hodges, Terry Jennings, Charles Heafner, and Michael Waddell have spent hours on dirt roads categorizing culverts and bridges, to the tune of over 60 structures surveyed. If you see one of them around, you might stop and thank them for their efforts in better the ecosystem.

A second aspect of Community Science are Sedimentation Survey teams. The goal for these volunteers is to travel trails and roads, identifying point sources of increased

sedimentation that could enter the water. Unnatural sediment loads effectively smother the streambed, making it far less productive than it should be. Reducing these inputs means keeps the stream bottom healthy for spawning and for aquatic bugs that depend on the rocks and gravel for survival. While there have been a few delays, we are now poised to get these teams rolling.

In fact, there is an upcoming training for anyone interested in helping Wilson Creek on Saturday, October 19th. Volunteers will meet around 9 am and learn the survey protocol. If you want to take a more active role in conservation on the creek, contact Jake Hansen, jake.hansen@tu.org, to sign up and receive more details.

We are also working to identify projects and opportunities in the watershed that local chapters can take part in. One potential on the horizon is a sedimentation remediation project. Volunteers will be needed to install silt fence and straw to protect an area recently affected by a landslide. This work will help ensure a large amount of silt and sand stay in place as we find the funds to pay for a full road repair. Our goal is to work with Hickory TU and other local chapters on a work day at the end of October or beginning of November.

Wilson Creek is a special place and Trout Unlimited exists to make sure these places remain healthy for years to come. Our Grassroots structure means that you get to be a positive influence and part of the solution in areas you value. If you love Wilson Creek, please consider getting involved, be it as part of a Community Science team, taking part in a cleanup, or keeping an eye open for future volunteer opportunities to lend a hand. Feel free to contact me at jeff.wright@tu.org if you have other thoughts or want to hear more.

EAGLE ROCK CAMP

Eagle Rock Camp needs volunteers to teach fly fishing at our retreat for military families on Thursday, October 31st, starting at 9:00 a.m. until noon. All volunteers are welcome to stay for lunch and visit with the families. Location is YMCA Camp Harrison in Boomer, NC. To sign up, please reach out to Gary Hogue: gamaho@charter.net, or Lynn Marilla: lmarella@eaglerockcamp.org/704.650.5353. Thank you to all those who are able to help out!

CASTING CAROLINAS

Casting Carolinas is a free program for women cancer survivors. The fall retreat is scheduled for October 11-13 at Lake Logan in Canton, NC. Fly casting volunteers will be needed on the 13th. To apply for a retreat or to volunteer to help out, sign up at www.castingcarolinas.com.

A CLEAN WILSON CREEK FUNDRAISER

Announcement: Oyster Roast at Wilsons Creek, Hosted by "A Cleaner Wilson Creek" and Betsy's Ole Country Store in Mortimer, NC. October 26th and 27th. Lunch through late night. All you can Eat food includes Shrimp, Oysters, Fried

Flounder, and Low Country Boil. Live music will start in the evening and is included in the price of admission which is \$50 for the full day.

ACWC is also hosting another Fly Fishing Competition on Saturday which Team NymphMaster is putting on. This competition filled up in about an hour on Monday August the 26th. It would be a pretty fun day for anyone who wanted to watch some very talented anglers compete for prize money and to support the Cleanup of Wilson Creek.

<https://www.flycomps.com/events/oyster-roast-on-wilson-creek-10-26-2019> For information on the competition, contact Bruce Gray at the Store or <https://acleanwilsoncreek.org/> for information on the efforts to support one of our favorite trout streams.

SMALLIES ON THE NEW



In late September my son Michael and I booked a trip for smallmouth bass on the New River with guide Brandon Harrison. It's not a trip for the weak. I was up at 3 AM to meet Brandon in Lenoir at 4 AM for a two and a half hour ride up to Virginia. We arrived at the New River at about 6:30, launched the boat, and got everything rigged. My son Michael had driven up from Charlotte to the take out site. Once we were rigged and ready Brandon drove over to the take out site and they drove back in Michael's car.



We got onto the river shortly after 7 AM. We oared across the river to the far bank, threw a few crummy casts to loosen up and then hit the bank with our poppers. In about two casts I pulled in a 4# smallie. We landed the fish after an amazing battle, took our photos, and turned him loose back into the river. Not more than two or three casts later my son Michael hooked a 3# smallie. By 7:30 in the morning we already had to declare that the day was a success no matter what else happened.



What made this even more fun is that we were fishing topwater poppers and the fish were aggressive. There is nothing more beautiful than seeing a fish attack your fly and with crystal clear water we were even able to see the fish come in for the attack. In one instance I landed my fly a couple feet off a grassy bank and we watched the bass come flying out of the grass to slam my fly. In another instance we saw a bass examining Michael's fly. Michael twitched it a couple

times and the bass came closer, but didn't hit it. A couple seconds later Michael twitched it again and saw that the bass had attacked but he had pulled the fly out of its mouth. He let the fly sit for a couple seconds and the bass came forward and ate his fly. All of these visible catches made the day even more enjoyable.

As I said above the day had an amazing start with a 4 and a 3 pound fish in the first few minutes. I'd love to tell you that this was an omen of things to come, but it wasn't to be. By the end of the day we caught probably 20 fish, but most of the rest were in the 8-12" size range, still very respectable smallmouth and these fish seem to fight like no others in their size range. An 10" smallie will put up a 5 minute battle before you can finally land it.



As it was approaching noon, we spotted a picnic table that someone had put along the river and decided it was better than sitting on a sandbar, so pulled over to the shore for lunch. Brandon bought a pellet smoker

recently so had smoked a pork loin that he sliced and brought along for our lunch. That really hit the spot and after that great lunch we headed back down the river.

We had anticipated a long day with an 8 or 9 hour drift, but the drought of the last month had its effect on the river. The groundwater from heavy rains earlier this year that should have been helping the flow has been used up and the river was well down from earlier in the summer and even from the prior week. We were slowed by working our way through the minefield of rocks and ledges and even had to even get out and walk the boat a few times in the shallow sections. It was 5 PM when we finally arrived at the take out.



After pulling to boat out of the river and packing up the gear, we headed back to the put in point to get Michael's car and then headed toward home. We stopped along the way at Crackle Barrel for a great meal and some chatting time to talk about our day on the river. I commented on being rather sore from a long day of casting and even my son admitted to a few aches. A lot of that ache comes from the need to make long casts for these fish. With the clear water we had to stand off 50-60 feet from spooking them and then land a fly a foot off the bank. It takes an effort to spend ten hours heaving a fly that far. Brandon said nothing, but we know he probably had more aches than us after struggling through the low water with the oars.

After a good meal we headed on back home. It was a little after 9 PM when I finally arrived home, sore and exhausted. After a brief hello and chat with my wife about the day on the river I headed for the bed and collapsed until late the next

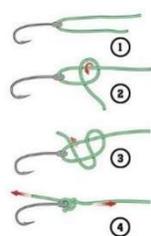
morning. It was truly a great day on a beautiful river and is likely to become an annual event.

Brandon does trips on the Catawba and New Rivers. If you would like to book a trip with him, he can be contacted at bharrisonflyfishing@gmail.com.

COME VISIT OUR FACEBOOK PAGE

I follow a dozen different fly fishing blogs and post many of them on our Facebook page. Many of these articles are too long to include in the newsletter so never make it here. Recently I posted a blog on fly fishing for big bluegill. It turned out to be one of the most followed posts we've ever had. There are also posts on targeting fish in small streams, how to tie a Tenkara fly, and even a bit of humor thrown in. Please visit our page at: <https://www.facebook.com/nwctcu/> and be sure to like and follow the page so you will be kept up to date on the latest posts.

CHAPTER WEBSITE



At our September meeting there was some discussion about using the Davy Knot rather than the normal clinch to tie on your flies. It was suggested that when using fluorocarbon the clinch often slips loose and the Davy will prevent that.

The Davy knot has been added to our website on the Fly Fishing Merit Badge subpage.

<http://www.hkynctu.org/helpful-links/fly-fishing-merit-badge/knots/>

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTORS INVITED

I'm sure many of you will be taking trips to Montana, Alaska, the Bahamas or many other places this year. Take some great photos like Joel just did at Yellowstone, put some words to them and submit it to the newsletter. Your adventure may inspire others to start planning their own trip for next year. Send it to us at HkyNCTU@gmail.com for consideration of publication.

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WILSON'S CREEK – THE HISTORY BEFORE THE FLOODS

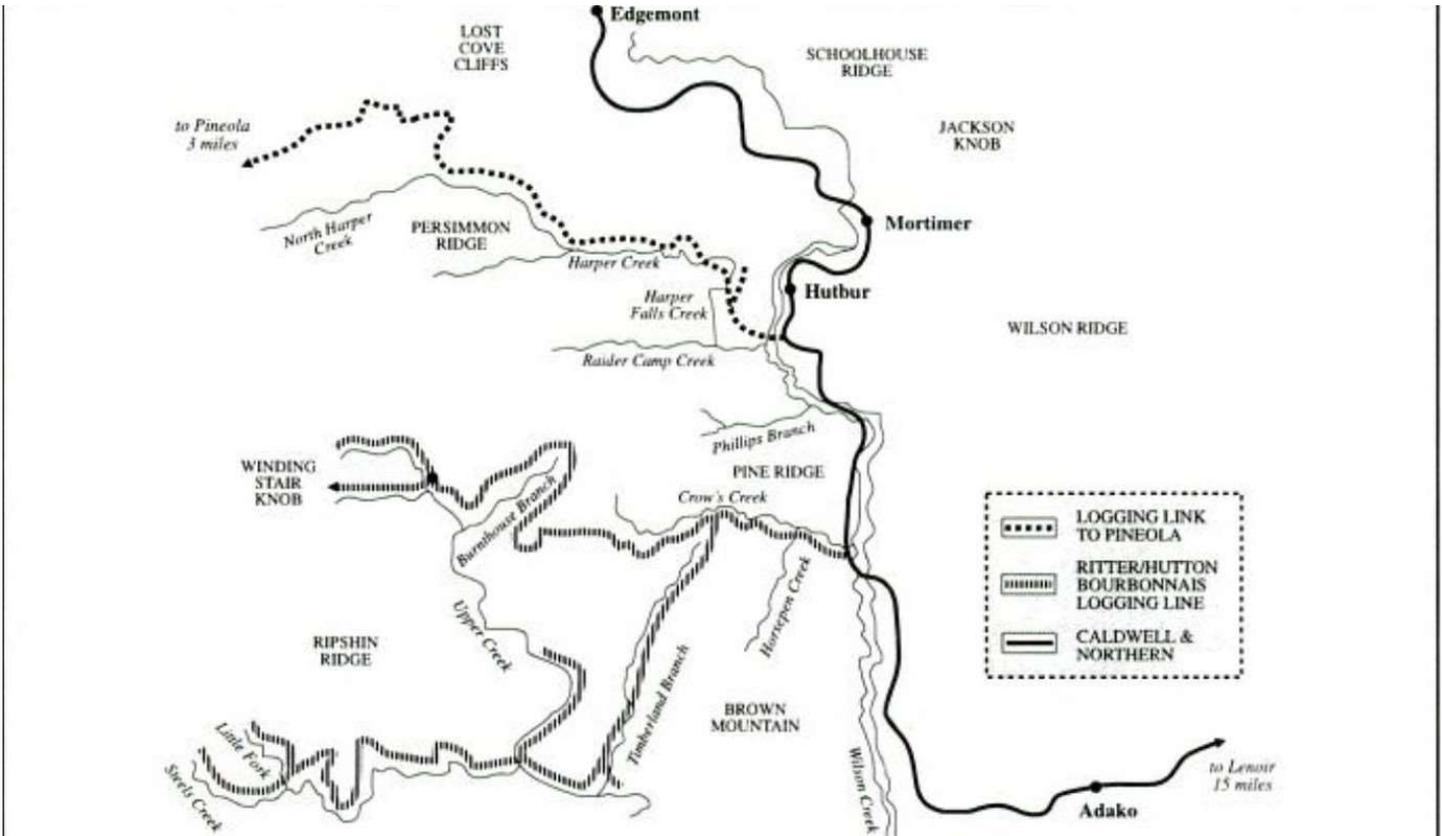
“On the line with Charlie Walker”

With extracts from "Legacy of the Carolina & North-Western Railway" by Matthew C. Bumgarner

Many of us enjoy fishing the many creeks and rivers all around our great nation. We enjoy the beauty that they hold, like the terrain, the clarity of the water, the amazing sounds of the water rushing over rocks, the bountiful fish that they provide and the serenity that sets a peace in our hearts and minds. There are so many reasons that we all come out and fish these incredible areas and yet, there are places that we fish all the time without knowing the history behind them. For this avid fisherman and lover of the outdoors, I found this to hold true with one my favorite fishing spots around the area, “Wilson’s Creek”.

The water is beautiful and mesmerizing as it cascades down from Grandfather mountain, making its way down through the small town of Edgemont and Mortimer, that is now consider “a ghost town” and continuing its way down through the gorge as it empties into the Johns River.

The dirt roads that twist, turn and snake their way along the path that is cut through the Pisgah National Forest to these towns are so tight in areas that only one vehicle at a time can make their way through. With high rock walls on one side and shear drops 200ft down to the bottom of the gorge on another, one can’t help but wonder how these tight dirt roads came into existence. The truth of the matter is they were the actual paths that the railroad followed. Yes, that is right, the roads you drive on were actually where the Narrow gauge railroad that ran to the towns of Mortimer and Edgemont.



Back in 1904 these towns Rapidly came into existence when the Ritter Lumber Company bought much of the land around Wilson Creek for logging. This area with clear creeks became a town of 800 people that lived there and worked at both the saw mill and the textile mill. The town of Mortimer had a Hotel, a church, a store, movie house and the Laurel that Teddy Roosevelt danced in the ballroom at. Edgemont had a hotel and a Train depot there and a General store still stands that will now house a railroad museum soon.

There were two railroads that operated there, one was the narrow gauge rail system that Ritter Lumber company used for logging and the other was The Hutton-Bourbannis Company railroad. There was a company store, a blacksmith’s shop, a church, a school, a hotel, and numerous houses.



What was the railroad is now but a dirt road.

Mortimer and Edgemont became thriving areas. There were no roads at first and people would ride the rail, to come to visit and enjoy the recreational waterways of Wilsons Creek for canoeing, swimming and fishing. Yes, sir, those two towns were thriving and things were going good until the flood of 1916 that wiped out much of the narrow gauge line used for logging and the big flood of 1940 that wiped the town out. Later down the old railways became the roads you drive in on. You can still see the paths of the railroad in many areas and parts of the bridging, logs, with railroad ties still in them and section of the narrow gauge track left in the water by the great floods the trout now use for protection and an ambush point for food flowing to them.



Old railroad logs with spikes

As you wade along and fish the beautiful Wilson's Creek, let your mind fade back to a time that was a little more "raw" and beautiful and think about the hidden beauty, the history and what made Wilson's Creek the Wild and Scenic River it is today. Let's help to preserve and keep this area in the best possible conditions that we can and take whatever measures we need to do to ensure that the creek Lives up to being the Wild and Scenic river that is deserves to be.



Bird's-eye View Mortimer, N. C. Looking West.

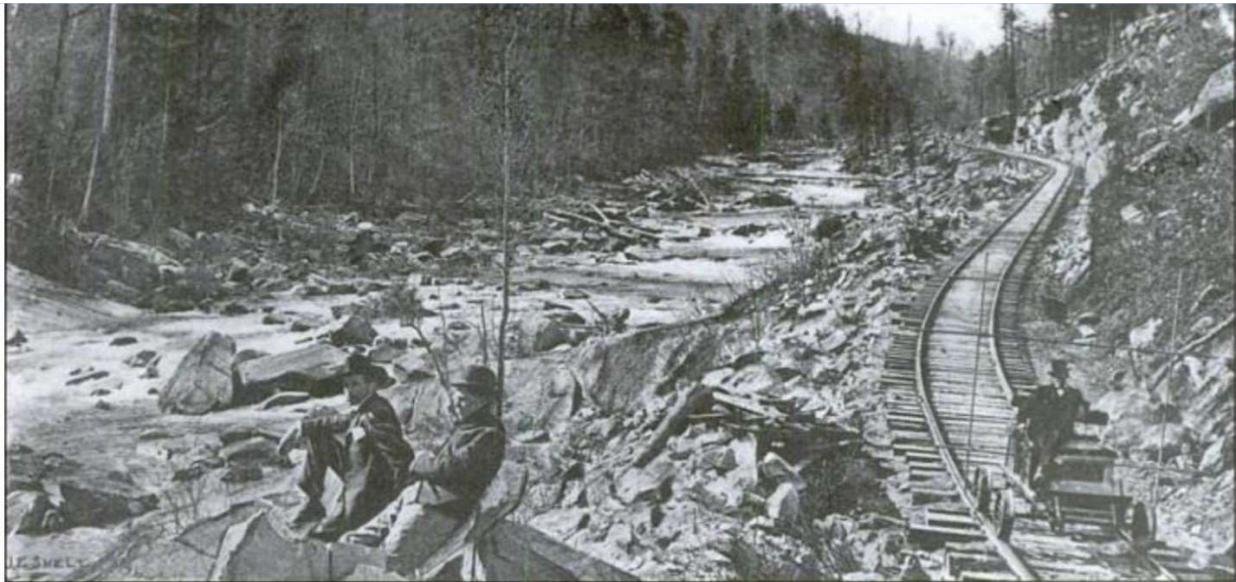


"Crossing" Mortimer, N. C.
*Miss Septent - Sunday
 with my girls
 M. J. Smith, N. C. 1908.*

After buying the Caldwell & Northern, the Carolina & North-Western immediately began widening the logging railroad to standard gauge. This 1903 construction shot west of Lenoir is a classic example of why narrow gauge lines were used to begin with. Note the existing narrow gauge Caldwell and Northern roadbed carved into the hillside behind the bridge. Now that the line is being standardized, an expensive trestle must be put into place to accommodate the larger equipment. (Courtesy of R. Doug Walker.)



Bridge and Railroad that ran along the creek that we now drive on.



It took almost a year longer than expected to carve the railway through the rugged Wilson Creek Gorge on the route to Edgemont. Note the motor car and clearance frame mounted to it. (Courtesy of R. Doug Walker.)