

# Hickory, Table Rock, High Country Trout Unlimited June 2025 Newsletter



Delayed harvest ends the first Friday in June and the rivers will be fished out on Saturday by the crowds that arrive. But there are still opportunities to find trout all summer in the high mountain streams. Wild trout streams that support fish the whole year are typically above 3000' elevation and wading in the cool water and often in the shade of the magnolias is a pleasant way to spend a hot summer day. This month we will discuss the ways to find and fish these small mountain streams.

## HIGH COUNTRY TU JUNE MEETING

**WHEN:** Thursday, June 5th at 6:00 PM

**WHERE:** Valley Crucis Community Park

**PROGRAM:** Backcountry Hunters & Anglers

**SPEAKERS:** Jordan Linger

Jordan currently serves as Vice Chairman of the NC Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers. BHA has been advocating on behalf of our Public Land & Water since 2018. They are an extremely active chapter with a notable amount of advocacy targeting issues here in our own backyard. TU and BHA are rooted in common values. Both are passionate about caring for and recovering the places they fish, hunt, live, and love. Native and wild trout fisheries and backcountry lands and waters matter to all members of both organizations. Join us in learning more about BHA's work here in NC and how our two organizations can move the needle for progress at a state level as well as our own backyard.

## HICKORY TU MAY MEETING

**WHEN:** Tuesday, June 17th, 6:00 PM

**WHERE:** Old Hickory Station

232 Government Ave SW, Hickory

**PROGRAM:** Finding high mountain wild trout streams.

Hickory TU does not hold meetings in July and August. Our next meeting will be September 16<sup>th</sup>.

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

*"There are always new places to go fishing. For any fisherman, there's always a new place, always a new horizon."*  
.....Jack Nicklaus

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Wagoner Access Land Cleanup.** June 4<sup>th</sup> from 10-2. Please register for our New River Clean up at Wagoner Access in the New River State Park. This is a land clean up in conjunction with Volunteer Vacations. We look forward to seeing you. Please register here: <https://forms.gle/1EBBRjsrwVHc4Gqf7>  
**Elk Shoals Land Cleanup,** June 11<sup>th</sup>, 10-2 Please register for our New River Clean up at Elk Shoals in the New River State Park. This is a land clean up in conjunction with Volunteer Vacations. We look forward to seeing you. Please register here:

<https://forms.gle/iyEroe3F63m31HMfA>

**Wagoner to Gentry River Cleanup.** June 28<sup>th</sup>, 10-3. Please register for our New River Clean up at Wagoner Access in the New River State Park. This is a land clean up in conjunction with Volunteer Vacations. We look forward to seeing you. Please register here: <https://forms.gle/13UVTrQ3BEYhGpHQ9>

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**Tie-a-Thon For Project Healing Waters** in Charlotte and Winston-Salem, July 19<sup>th</sup> at Patterson School. We will be tying Walt's Worm, Squirmy, and Egg Fly. Material is provided. If you can, bring your own tying equipment but a few sets are available. If you can, tie some flies up before you come and bring them along.

You are receiving this newsletter either as a member or prospective member of the Blue Ridge Chapter of Trout Unlimited. If you do not wish to receive this newsletter, please respond by email to [HkyNCTU@gmail.com](mailto:HkyNCTU@gmail.com) and let us know.

## Rocky River TU Alarka 2025 Trip, October 16-19.

We will have cabins and tent/car/RV camping options. Registration will open later this summer.

### NCWRC FISHING CLASSES

06/04/25	Fly-fishing Basics: How to Read a Trout Stream - Virtual
06/06/25	Soft Plastic Rigging & Presentation - Marion
06/07/25	Beginning Fly-tying Workshop - South Mountains State Park
06/11/25	Entomology for Anglers - Virtual
06/12/25	Intermediate Fly-tying Workshop - Morganton
06/13/25	Basic Fly-casting Workshop - Marion
06/18/25	The Foreign Language of Nymphing - Virtual
06/20/25	On the Water Fly-fishing Experience – Marion Greenway
06/21/25	Family Fishing Workshop – Marion Hatchery
06/25/25	Soft Plastic Rigging & Presentation - Virtual
06/26/25	Volunteer Orientation/Basic Fishing Instructor Training - Marion
06/28/25	Basic Fly-Casting Workshop - Patterson
07/11/25	Intermediate Fly-tying Workshop - Morganton
07/12/25	Family Fishing Workshop – Marion Hatchery
07/16/25	Catfishing Basics - Virtual

### HOW TO FIND SMALL TROUT STREAMS IN NORTH CAROLINA

Your first choice in locating small streams is the map that is published by Wildlife Resources. You can find that map at [NC Fishing Areas & Trout Waters](#). Once you have the map loaded select the option for “Public Mountain Trout Waters”. When you zoom in on the map in the mountain areas you will see rivers in blue (wild trout waters) and red (catch and release waters) that are the rivers you will want to consider. The dots near those rivers are access points. When you click on the dot it will give you the access details and the primary fish in the river. You’ll note they are not all primary trout rivers. Frankly I find this map a bit difficult for locating the high mountain streams for summer trout fishing and many of the streams have no WRC access points.

Another option you might want to consider is a fairly new APP called Trout Routes available at [TroutRoutes](#). This APP

claims to have a huge number of NC streams and it will provide access information to those streams. The APP provides direction on how to get to the access points even if you don’t have phone access in the area.

And perhaps the best for you is the Hickory TU website. Kinn Hodges provided us with maps of the recommended high mountain streams in our area along with stream samplings for the rivers. *(Note: samplings are in millimeters. 25 mm equals about 1”)* You can find this information at [NC Wild Trout Streams](#). This will provide you maps of the streams he recommends and if you then use the Trout Routes map for those streams it will provide you with the information on how to access the streams.

Do your research and make some plans now to do some fishing in those beautiful high mountain creeks this summer.

### CELEBRATE WORLD FLY FISHING DAY ON JUNE 21<sup>ST</sup> TO COINCIDE WITH THE SUMMER SOLTICE

#### ADVICE FROM THE VISE

As the temps go up, the hard core trouters also head for the higher elevations to pursue the holy grail- wild trout. There are plenty of waters that hold wild trout- and are not even designated as such. Blue lining is one of my favorite pastimes. The waders come off, hiking boots go on and everything fits in a day pack. This month’s fly is a minimal pattern that has caught fish just about everywhere but is my go to dry on the 2 weight 7x tippet.

I call this one the Silver Creek because that’s where I first learned of it in the Eastern Sierra. I was sitting at the camper tying a few #18 ECH when a fellow angler sat down and showed me the pattern. He promised it would drive the fish crazy and he was right. The dry bite was already good, but this fly really got clobbered. It’s not super durable, but it’s also a super easy to tie- so make a pile of them.



Hook is a standard 103 dry barbless, a thread body, and a micro wire rib. The prototype used black thread as the rib, but I like the micro wire for a little sharper definition. The OG fly was olive with grizzly hackle, but it does a great job of imitating sulphurs in yellow, and it’s easy to see. That’s a big deal anymore. Tailing is stiff CDL, and you want it to be about a spit longer than a shank length. That keeps it lying upright on the



surface film the water from behind and on the hackle. I'm tying in #16, but those are great in #18 to #22.



Dress the hook from eye to bend, and tie in the tailing.



Wrap forward with touching turns to keep the body level and trim out the butts. Spin the bobbin to flatten the thread and take wraps to the end and back to the eye. I usually spin the bobbin at the bend as the thread will start to cord back up. Place the wire with a pinch just behind the eye and wrap to the bend, spin, and back to the eye.



Rib the body to the eye and secure and helicopter the wire off. It's flat thread, take wraps to the midpoint of the shank. Strip off the barbs from the hackle and tie the stem in so the hackle I'll be at that midpoint.

Take touching turns with the hackle. This fly is really heavily hackled, and it will stay really well with a touch of floatant. As it rides high, the fish seem to be pretty aggressive on the take. Secure the last hackle wrap just a tad behind the eye, trim the butt and take a whip finish. Take a few more wraps to build up a small head, and whip one more time.



It's another base pattern that lends itself to whatever color combinations you want to try. Head for a hike this summer and try this pattern out on those high country brookies.

Please don't hesitate to contact me at [Jacobsforkflytying@gmail.com](mailto:Jacobsforkflytying@gmail.com). Please check out some current ties on Instagram at Jacobs Fork Fly Tying.



## EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT FLY FISHING IN SMALL STREAMS

BY STEVE CULTON, JUN 13, 2024

**In the heat of late summer, it's hard to beat a small stream full of brook trout**

### Everything You Need to Know About Fly Fishing in Small Streams

If there's a better way to enjoy fly fishing at its most wondrous than on a small stream, I've yet to experience it. There's something about a thin blue line hidden deep in the woods that invites you to touch fly fishing's very soul. I consider my beloved small streams to be not so much fishing spots as cathedrals. The water is cold and clean, the air unspoiled, and the resident char wild. Their lineage dates back to the previous ice age. It's not hard to imagine that a thousand years ago these sacred waters and woods looked exactly as they do today.

Small streams are everywhere. Some of them are miles from any town. Others are hidden in plain sight in urban and industrial areas. Many of them are home to self-sustaining populations of wild trout. And one of the best parts of fly fishing these gems is that it's easy to get started.

### The Best Fly Fishing Gear for Fishing Small Streams Small Stream Fly Rod

You don't need expensive gear to enjoy small stream fishing. I like a short, slow-action rod between 6 and 7 feet—that length is easy to maneuver in dense underbrush. It's hard to go wrong with a 5-weight, although many aficionados love their 3- and 4-weights. A new 6'6" Cabela's CGR 4-weight will run you well under a hundred dollars. And it gets you into fiberglass, a classic rod blank material. You can also look for deals in the used section of your local fly shop. (I own several previously loved small stream rods and reels).

### Fly Fishing Reel and Line for Fishing Small Streams

Get the cheapest reel you can find. The vast majority of fish you'll be catching will never go on the reel; it's merely a line retention device. Get a floating line to match your rod; I like double-taper lines like Cortland 444 Peach.

Double tapers load the rod quickly, and when one end gets ragged you can simply reverse it. I like a tapered leader to match the rod length, and I carry tippet spools of 5x and 6x.

### Other Fly Fishing Gear

You can wear a vest or pack, or go light and stuff things into pockets. You should at least carry some basics: small pliers, nippers, and a stream thermometer; insect repellent that does double-duty on ticks and mosquitoes; and your phone, although you're at the mercy of the nearest cell tower. Get a small landing net that's made of fish-friendly netting material. The stocking truck never comes to most small streams, and you'll want a net that protects your catch before you release it.

## What to Wear When Fishing Small Streams

Many anglers like to wet wade in shorts, especially in summer, but I'm a big fan of waders on small streams for several reasons. One, the water's often cold. Two, I'm a klutz, and my shins have a gift for finding submerged rocks. I also find ticks to be a compelling reason to cover your legs. And worst of all, I'm highly allergic to poison ivy.

Depending on where you find your small stream nirvana, you may be hiking distances that can be measured in miles. So lightweight, supportive footwear is a must. My boots are outfitted with tungsten studs for extra gripping power.

Use common sense and dress for the weather. Layering, especially on colder days, is a best practice. Wear a hat and polarized sunglasses. I know, I said gearing up was easy. But you probably have most of these things already.

## A Basic Small Stream Fly Box

If you love fishing dry flies, you're in for a treat: many small stream fish will rise to a dry year-round. To start off, keep things simple. Think bushy patterns like Stimulators and Elk Hair Caddis, sizes 12-16. I like to have a few small nymphs on hand, if only to use in a dry/dropper combo. Size 16-18 bead head Pheasant Tails will serve you well, as they look like lots of things small stream fish eat.

**You don't need a lot of flies to fish for brook trout in a small stream.**

Small stream residents are very curious about any submerged fly introduced into their world. There are times when I fish a pool with a dry and get no takers—but when I offer them a wet fly or small streamer, they bull-rush it. I like to carry a few small soft-hackles, as well as some tungsten bead head micro Woolly Buggers (size 10 or smaller). Those can be jigged or stripped. This basic fly box will cover your needs for most small stream situations.

## How to Find Viable Small Streams

"Where?" That's the million-dollar question. My home state of Connecticut publishes a list of small streams, and classifies them from wild trout only to those with supplemental stocking. Check to see if your state's fish-and-game department does likewise. Other than a list, there are two great ways to find viable small streams. The first involves paying attention as you travel. Take note of all the small streams you cross. Check them out when you can. One of them may be your next secret spot.

The other method involves a little detective work. Get a good, old-fashioned road atlas of your state—one that shows every river and stream—and go exploring. Late summer/early fall is a fantastic time for this because water levels are usually at their lowest and warmest. Many streams will quickly self-eliminate—too dry, too hot, barren of any life. You're looking for brooks that still have decent flow, canopy to protect them from summer sun, and most of all, cooler water. Many small streams rely on "spring houses"—pockets of water cooled by underground springs—to maintain summer viability. Find a stream with spring houses and you've struck gold.

Once you discover a good small stream, keep quiet about it. If you tell one person, you probably just told ten. If you blab

on the internet, you just told thousands and thousands. Don't be that person. An overfished, highly-pressured small stream can go south fast. I've seen it happen.

**Look for streams with a canopy of trees to keep the water cool.**

## Basic Tactics for Fly Fishing in Small Streams

The best way to learn how to fish small streams is to go out and do it. Here are some things to try:

- Stay out of the water as much as possible.
- Tread lightly near soft, slow pools. The fish can feel you coming and may spook. Also, be aware of making sudden movements that can startle fish.
- Try fishing upstream, working the whitewater and seams near plunges with a bushy dry fly.
- Fish the same runs downstream. Try dangling and wading the fly near plunges; it's a lethal tactic for brook trout.
- Try fishing a dry fly with a small bead head nymph dropped off the hook bend. The fish will always tell you which fly they prefer.
- I like to fish wets and streamers downstream, swinging them down current, then jigging or stripping them back.

## [ON THE FLY SOUTH](#)

### **SOUTH MILLS RIVER BACKCOUNTRY TROUT**

Hendersonville, North Carolina

Article and photos by Jimmy Jacobs



North Carolina's South Mills River is one of the backcountry jewels of trout fishing in the eastern portion of the nation. Throughout its course it teems with wily and wild rainbow and brown trout, as it offers miles of angling territory that can only be reached on foot.

Before anyone gets their dander up about "hot-spotting" a wild fishery, it is worth noting that Trout Unlimited has listed the South Mills as one of its 100 best trout streams in the U.S. for decades. This river is no secret, having been publicized for years. Additionally, it is not easily accessed and offers 12 miles of remote water that provides plenty of room for angling.

The South Mills River rises near the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina's northern Transylvania County. From there it flows east under US276 near the Cradle of Forestry in America historic site. This site is where scientific forestry was first practiced in this country, when George Vanderbilt of the



Biltmore Estate hired Gifford Pinchot to manage surrounding woodlands in 1892. Eventually, it was also the location of the first forestry school in the United States.

Where the river is crossing the historic site property, it features a number of beaver ponds. These small bodies of water contain numbers of small, wild brown trout. Once past US276 the river turns south at an old gauging station in the shadows of Funneltop Mountain, the South Mills tumbles over High Falls. Turning west it then crosses into Henderson County and flows off the Pisgah Game Lands of the Pisgah National Forest at a point between Buttermilk Mountain to the north and Forge Mountain on the south. Eventually, the South Mill joins the North Mills to form the main stream of the Mills River.

Athe the old water gauge, which stands is a tall stone structure at streams side, the South Mills is a medium-sized stream. Downstream of this point, the river traverses a roadless area. The South Mills River West Trailhead (FT 133) is located here, with that path continuing for 12 miles down river to the Turkeypen Trailhead on FS 297, just off US 280. The trail travels mostly along old roads, with a portion on the bed of an abandoned logging railroad. It also follows the river shore, but does drift away around the High Falls area.



Through here the river is a series of deep, clear pools broken by short stretches of riffles. Although there are several smaller waterfalls, the entire valley is surprisingly level. Be aware, however, that there is a concrete and a swing bridge crossing the river on the trail, along with nine spots where the trail fords the stream.



This lower portion of the South Fork is noted for giving up some big trout, up to the 20-inch range. Most are likely to be browns, but they can be quite difficult to fool. Their favored

hangouts are in the deeper pools where the clear water is flowing slower. Too much movement and these crafty old fish will see you before you can even deliver a cast.

Some hefty rainbows do show up, as well. Despite that promise, expect the average fish to be in the 8- to 11-inch range. The rainbows tend to be easier to catch because of their proclivity for being in moving water where surface turbulence provides you with the opportunity to get to them with less likelihood of spooking the fish.

## **MAGGIE VALLEY FLY FISHING FESTIVAL MAY 23&24**

A great event this year. Thank you to everyone who helped.



## **7 PRO TIPS TO FLYFISH A MOUNTAIN STREAM**

By Matthew Bernhardt

Fly fishing amidst stunning scenery in small mountain streams is like poetry in motion. The magnificent scenery, plentiful trout, and pleasant climate away from the city's hustle and bustle, making for a fun-filled fishing vacation. But you need to consider a few things if you've not fished in a mountains stream before.



Fly fishing amidst stunning scenery in small mountain streams is like poetry in motion. The magnificent scenery, plentiful trout, and pleasant climate away from the city's hustle and bustle, making for a fun-filled fishing vacation. But you need to consider a few things if you've not fished in a mountains stream before.

Wild trout are fast and wary. They have evolved heightened senses and escape maneuvers as they have plenty of predators that eat them. They can hide in the tiniest of spaces and are challenging to catch. You need to move cautiously to avoid spooking them.

If you are new to fly fishing the mountain streams, the seven pro tips to fly fishing a mountain stream in the following section will make a world of difference-

### **1. Equipment selection for Fly Fishing a Mountain Stream**

Gear and equipment selection is the foremost consideration when it comes to fly fishing small mountain streams. A short light action rod is perfect for small mountain streams. But if you are fishing bigger water a 9ft 5 or 6 weight is ideal.

Take along a small selection of nymphs, dry flies and streamers that can be easily carried. You can bring the other fishing gear in a small hip bag or a fishing vest. This will ensure that you will have quick and easy access to the equipment.

You'll also have space for a drink or a snack. Also, don't forget to carry the [best fishing pliers](#) you can lay your hands on. Some multi-tool fishing pliers are extremely handy for de-barring hooks and removing the fly after you have captured a trout.

2. Fly selection for Fly Fishing a Mountain Stream

A trout eats aquatic life such as insects, crawdads, and other fish. As a fly fishermen you must pay particular attention to the insects or hatches that may occur in that area because those are the ones that the trout will be feeding on. For a quick introductory lesson on fly selection check out our video below.

Flies that imitate the insects indigenous to the place where you are fishing are always a great choice. You must also check and comply with any regulations that are in force where you are fly fishing. Some states only allow two flies on a rig, so check before you start using a 3 fly drop shot rig.



3. The Best Times to Fly Fish a Mountain Stream

The best time to fish during summer months is early morning and the hours just before the dark. This is known as the hour of

power. The hour just after sunrise and just before dark. That's when the fish are feeding actively. However, don't forget to fish in during the midday too. Many fly fishermen have reported success while fishing in the afternoons. Also the time of the year is important as well. If you look at this graph below, it shows what time of day is most successful during each month of the year.



4. Reading the Water when Fly Fishing Mountain Streams

Your ability to read the water where you plan to fish is critical. Fish usually congregate in areas that provide the maximum amount of food without expending too much energy. Knowing these areas will give you a good day's fishing. Fish often hide out behind obstructions such as rocks and other debris.

They like areas that have an overhead cover. Sections of a stream with an overhanging branch or a fallen log are likely candidates. Pools or holes in shady areas that have low water flow rate also tend to hold fish. During the feeding hours (early or late in the day), fish lay in wait for prey in fast-flowing riffles typically found above a pool or a run.

5. The Approach

It would help if you always worked upstream. This gives you the advantage of approaching the trout from the rear without spooking them. Some fishermen use extreme stealth

methods like crawling on hands and knees to reach the pool! However, simply crouching and avoiding jerky movements will be enough. Plan a course that lets you get to the water's edge to cast without throwing a shadow on the water.

6. The importance of solid presentation

A solid presentation is the difference between catching fish or going home empty-handed. When casting, the fly shouldn't create a splash. Any unnatural splash will scare away the fish. Cast slightly quartered downstream. This will let the lure drift naturally to where you think the fish are hiding. Try to cover as much water as you can to entice as many fish as possible.

7. Quickly Cover a Pool

When you get to a pool in the stream, cover all the likely spots as quickly as you can. In many cases, food is scarce. If a brook trout strikes, it'll attack as soon as it spots the lure or bait. Multiple casting in the exact location is a waste of time. If you don't get any strikes, head over to the next pool before the feeding hour ends.

To sign off

The above section of pro tips will be a good starter if you are going fly fishing in the mountains for the first time. However, nothing beats experience. You'll develop a sort of a sixth sense the more you fish in the mountains.

You'll become better at reading the water and honing other techniques to fish better. Above all, enjoy your day out in the mountains. Being one with nature and pitting your skills against the wary trout is the ultimate experience that all anglers crave.

About the Author



Matthew Bernhardt, a third-generation Coloradan, grew up at the forefront of the state's fly-fishing revolution, enjoying time on the water, side by side with experienced guides and lifelong anglers.

By combining his passion for fly-fishing with input from other experienced fly-fishers and guides and his fine arts degree from Colorado State University, Matthew spent five years carefully developing the [DrifTHOOK Fly Fishing System](#), built to help every angler catch more trout.



...The whole purpose of summer fishing, the Old Man said, " is not to worry about catching fish, but to just get out of the house and set and think a little. Also, the womenfolk are bad-tempered in the summer. The less you hang around the premises the less trouble you're apt to get in."

Robert Ruark      The Old Man and the Boy



## 4 REASONS WHY WATERFALL PLUNGE POOLS CAN HOLD BIG FISH

By Kent Klewein



Targeting deep plunge pools below waterfalls for big trout.  
Photo By: Louis Cahill

**THERE ARE FEW THINGS I LOVE MORE THAN WADE FISHING A SMALL STREAM AND STUMBLING UPON A STEEP VERTICAL WATERFALL WITH A DEEP PLUNGE POOL.**

Waterfalls this size are pretty rare on small streams, but if you're lucky enough to locate one, you could very well find yourself hooked up to one of the biggest trout in the stream. Here's four reasons why I feel waterfalls plunge pools are great places to look for big trophy trout on small streams.

**1. Lots of food gets washed over a waterfall, especially during high flows.**

Large amounts of food (tiny fish, aquatic insects, crustaceans and amphibians) are constantly being swept over the falls. In many cases, it provides a steady enough stream of food, that big fish aren't required to leave the plunge pool to fulfill their daily food requirements.

**2. There are usually lots of hiding places to make big fish feel safe and allow them to survive for long periods.**

During high flows, quite often fallen trees can float over the falls and get snagged; creating perfect log jams for big trout to hide in. The whitewater at the foot of the waterfall provides a protected roof, allowing trout to feed safely without being seen by predators. Constant water cresting the falls, creates a deep plunge pool overtime that provides deep water protection and enough room for big fish to forage efficiently.

**3. Waterfalls that are big and steep enough, create a natural feeding funnel for big fish.**

Migrating fish moving upstream in search of cool water, and stocked fish in search of fresh holding lies find themselves funneling into a dead end. This allows big fish to wait in prime lies to ambush trapped prey.

**4. You can usually utilize a high vantage point to help spot big fish.**

When the location permits, I regularly will access high vantage points so I can peer into the deep clear water and try to spot big fish. Just before Louis shot this photo, I had just done this and spotted a trout over 20". Unfortunately, before I could get into position the big boy spotted me and tucked under a log jam. I wasn't able to get a good presentation to the fish. It didn't pay off for me that time, but it has numerous other times in the past, and I highly recommend taking the time to

scan the water before fishing when possible. If there's a big fish in the plunge pool, you can bet it's very smart and you'll probably only get a few presentations before your cover is blown. Spotting the big fish before it spots you, is half the battle, and will put the odds in your favor.

Keep it Reel,

Kent Klewein

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## PHIL'S TOP 10 DRY FLIES FOR MOUNTAIN STREAMS

Author [Phil Monahan](#)



*The healthy, wild brook trout that inhabit mountain streams are simply gorgeous.*

In late summer, many of the valley rivers in Southwestern Vermont are often low and warm. (This year is an exception.) That's when I head for the hills, by which I mean the Green Mountains. This beautiful stretch of the Appalachians is veined by tumbling freestone streams that are home to native brook trout, as well as the occasional brown that may have made its way up from lower in the system. Because of shade trees and springs flowing from the hillsides, the water in these streams stays cool, even in the heat of the summer.

Although adding a nymph dropper to a dry fly can be very productive, I prefer to catch these trout on the surface. I have nothing against the nymph; I just love the easy casting and seeing the fish come out from under a rock to eat. As you'll see, I have a fondness for classic patterns, but I'm not above chucking a bit of foam. All I need for hours of fun are a box of dries, some desiccant, nippers, and a hemostat.

Here are my Top 10 favorite dry flies to fish this time of year.

**1. Royal Wulff (sizes 10 and 12)**



The white wings of the Royal Wulff make the fly easy to see in the often rough water, and brook trout seem to love the peacock-herl body. When I first moved to Vermont

more than two decades ago, my friend Dave Klausmeyer—the

editor of *Fly Tier* magazine—took me to a tiny stream outside Bennington, and as he tied on a size 10 Wulff, he explained that it was the only fly he used in that situation.



#### 2. Elk Wing Caddis (sizes 10 and 12)

You don't often run into real hatches on mountain freestoners, but there always seem to be caddisflies around. If the big, bushy flies aren't doing the trick, my go-to prospecting rig is a caddisfly with an ant as a dropper.



they get the chance.



for when I want to fish a small ant that may sink below the surface in rough water.



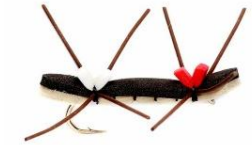
#### 3. Stimulator (sizes 10 and 12)

The rocks on mountain streams are sometimes dotted with the husks of stoneflies that have recently hatched, and the fish are accustomed to pouncing on these meaty bugs whenever

#### 4. PMX (sizes 8 to 14)

The PMX is an all-purpose attractor fly that sits low in the water. In larger sizes, it can imitate a hopper or a stonefly, while smaller versions mimic a caddisfly. It's also a great indicator fly

for when I want to fish a small ant that may sink below the surface in rough water.



surprised when the smallest brookies are willing to whack this thing that's a third as long as they are.

#### 6. Schroeder's Parachute Hopper (sizes 8 to 12)



When the hoppers are out, the fish are ready to strike should one of these big bugs get knocked into the water. The white post makes the fly easy to see in

whitewater or low light, making this another great indicator pattern.



where the fish have plenty of time to look before the decide to strike.



#### 8. Irresistible (sizes 10 and 12)

The Irresistible floats like a cork, making it useful for high, fast water and heavy riffles. It's also dark enough to stand out in water with lots of white bubbles.

#### 9. Flying Ant (size 14)

When flying ants are in the air, you'll find them in the water, too. I don't over-dress ant imitations because trout seem to like them just under the surface, as

well. I always fish an ant as a dropper off a more visible pattern to save my eyesight. I carry all ant patterns in both black and cinnamon.



for my fly.

#### 10. Travis Para Ant (size 12 to 16)

If I do want to fish an ant by itself, I choose the Para Ant because I can see the darned thing. The post doesn't seem to bother the fish at all, and I can fish more accurately and effectively if I'm not constantly scanning the water

### Setzer State Fish Hatchery Renovation Update

The Bobby N. Setzer State Fish Hatchery is located in the Pisgah National Forest near Brevard and provides 60% of the trout stocked in North Carolina. This aging facility, operated by the North Carolina Wildlife Resource Commission (NCWRC), was scheduled to close this past January for a three-year renovation project. However, Hurricane Helene damaged the NCWRC's Armstrong Hatchery near Marion forcing NCWRC to delay the Setzer renovation. Barring any more future events, the Setzer project will begin in January 2026.

While this project will impact the amount of fish NCWRC stocks in Delayed Harvest and Hatchery Supported waters for several years, a modern facility will have improved technology to increase efficiency, withstand future flooding events, and reduce the impact of discharge water into the Davidson River (lower effluent water temperatures and improve water quality).

NCWRC keeps the public updated on this project and how their stocking program will be affected on their website ([CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)).

*Fishing tip: Have a fishing buddy come along with you when possible and take different fishing approaches on the water. This will help you decipher the fishing code much quicker*

*Editor's note: Fly fishing a high mountain stream can often mean hiking through the forest to get there and we all know the difficulty of doing that trying to work your way between the trees with a fly rod. A great option is to use a Tenkara rod. These quickly fold up to a very short rod that is fully rigged so that when you reach the stream you just slide it open and start fishing. The downside is that it can be difficult to fish with that 12' rod when there is tight overgrowth. This article tells you how to adjust the length of your rod. Another option for some Tenkara rods is to keep a piece of duct tape on the rod. Then when you have adjusted to the length you need you wrap the duct tape around the joint where you have made the adjustment.*



## [ON THE FLY SOUTH](#)

### **LINING IT UP**

Having the right length of line is important

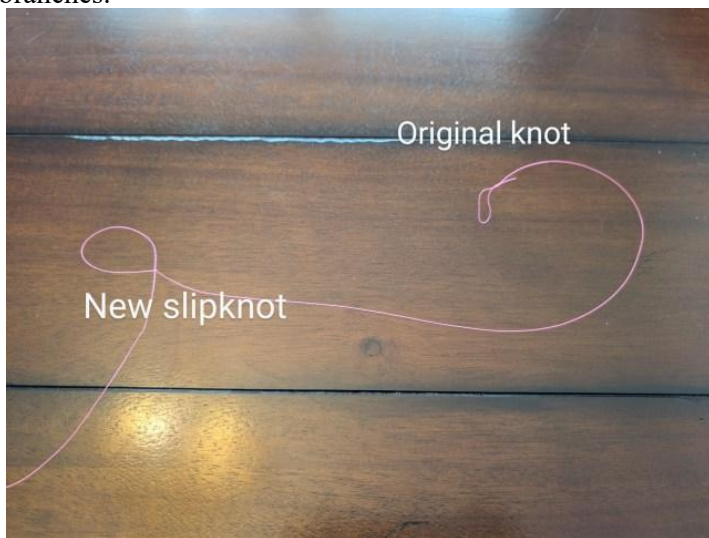
The Tenkara Guy

January 2025

By Zane Jacobs

One drawback of Tenkara is the lack of adjustability of the line length. With many of the rods available you simply don't need the length of your line to be able to change, but with the availability of zoom rods you may find yourself wanting such an option. For any who aren't well versed in the intricacies of Tenkara rods, a zoom rod can be telescoped and fished at multiple lengths. A zoom rod is a great choice for unfamiliar water, but can leave you questioning how long of a line to bring.

Let's say you have a triple zoom rod like the Dragontail Foxfire. This rod can be fished at about 6 1/2 feet, 8 feet, and just over 9 feet. A 7-foot line would work well on the shortest length and be okay for the middle length. With full extension that same line would feel a bit too short in most situations. So, do you go for the happy medium and use an 8-foot line? Well, that can feel a bit cumbersome on the short length while working fine for the other two. A 9-foot line would be far too long, if you need the short configuration to clear low hanging branches.



The solution I have come across is to use a line equal to the longest length of the rod. You are correct in thinking I just stated that wouldn't work well at the short setting, but there is a simple solution. A slip knot. You can tie an additional slip knot in the line wherever you desire. Suddenly your 9-foot line that was too long, is now a perfectly sized 7-foot line. This does leave you quite a long tail on the unused portion of the line, but that too has a quick fix. I like to run the original knot down the rod to keep it out of the way. There may be another way to deal with it that I have not yet found, but that method has worked wonders for me.

When the branches clear and allow for ample casting room, you only have to pull the new knot straight. The original knot is now ready to cinch back down on the lillian and give the extra reach you need. If things get tight again another quick knot gets you back swinging flies. Rinse and repeat. I wish I could take all the credit and fame for this clever trick, but I

cannot. This trick was taught to me by Luong Tam, the owner of Tenkara Tanuki.

[How to tie a slip knot](#)

### **2024/25 TROUT IN THE CLASSROOM**

This has been another great year for Trout in the Classroom. If you haven't been involved with the program you have been missing something beautiful. Seeing the excitement on the faces of the children when the eggs arrive is a great pleasure and then when they attend the release it becomes even greater.

We started this year with seven classes. We had one teacher drop out because she was expecting and was going to be on leave when the eggs arrived. Another teacher decided not to continue with the program. River Bend Middle School with two classrooms, North Lincoln High School, and Blackburn Elementary continued from the year before and we had a new classroom at Hickory High School. Egg delivery is normally late September, but the damage to the hatcheries by Hurricane Helene delayed it to November. Special thanks to NCWRC for the effort they made to find eggs for the program this year. The teachers all managed the programs during the year and for the most part we had a good survival rate with the fish. Unfortunately North Lincoln had a chiller failure and their fish did not survive.

For us the greatest part of the whole program is the release of the fingerlings into the stream near the end of the school year. River Bend likes to release at Stone Mountain State Park and we got a date reserved early. South Mountains State Park is much closer so it is our preferred site. Hurricane Helene caused a massive amount of damage to South Mountains and up until almost time for the release it was uncertain the park would be ready. Thanks to the park service they were able to get enough of the park open that we could hold our release there.

As I mentioned, for us the greatest part of the whole program is the release. Generally we start the program by asking the kids how many of them have ever been to the park before and sadly it's normally a small number. The basic reason for the TIC program is to introduce the children to the 3Cs of a trout stream (Clean, Clear, Cold) and taking them to the stream to release the fish introduces them to that water. And when I say introduce I mean it literally. Part of the release is having them wade into the stream to search for the food that trout eat.

We have developed a release program that includes releasing the fish, searching for macroinvertebrates in the water, fly casting lessons, lessons about the bugs, fly tying demonstration, and at South Mountains introduction to the animals there through the pelts and skulls. We all feel very proud of the fact that the kids seem fascinated with all of the events and keep their attention on what is happening.

Special thanks to the people who have participated in the program:

- Jackie Greene – program director and Bug Educator
- Gary Schnick – Equipment Manager & Fly Casting Instructor
- Dave Everhart – Fly Tying Instructor



- Dave Dellinger – Fly Tying Instructor
- Lynette Hicks – Stone Mountain Ranger
- Missy Parish – Stone Mountain Ranger
- James Yates – South Mountains Ranger
- Chick Woodward - Photographer
- And especially to our teachers
  - Krystal Luce – River Bend
  - Taylor Hildebrand – River Bend
  - Jonathan Carpenter – North Lincoln
  - Shelby Gruber – Blackburn
  - Kasady Carroll – Hickory High

Jackie has been our program director for several years now, but has plans to retire to Florida soon. Gary & Chick are working together to prepare the program for the coming year, but there is a lot of effort involved and we could really use your help with equipment distribution, egg delivery, and year end release. If you are able to help out, please contact Gary at the email address below. The teacher who had a child this year plans to return to the program and we have been contacted by others that are on a waiting list. We won't be able to expand the program without some more help and we can always use more people at the releases to help chaperone.

If you would like to see how great the release really is, you can view the videos on our chapter website at: [2025 TIC Release](#). Here are a few photos from this year.



Hickory TU President

Gary Schnick [garthies007@earthlink.net](mailto:garthies007@earthlink.net)

Table Rock TU President

Alan Clark [alan@hattarasgroup.com](mailto:alan@hattarasgroup.com)

High Country TU President

Joe Lynch [joe@thespeckledtrout.com](mailto:joe@thespeckledtrout.com)

Editor....Chick Woodward [HkyNCTU@gmail.com](mailto:HkyNCTU@gmail.com)