

The Evergreen Trout

January/February, 2012

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR, by Ron Belak

After nearly a year hiatus, you are receiving your first newsletter from the new volunteer editor. Please think of this publication as a kind of "newsletter light." It will be published bimonthly, rather than monthly; will never compete aesthetically with our former newsletter; and may be rather brief at times. The high standard that Joe Kerper created for past newsletters will be difficult to recreate. His newsletter was truly a work of art that was instrumental in earning us the Outstanding Chapter Communications Award in 2009. Our hats were off to Joe, who consistently produced a quality product month after month. Joe, John Haile, and contributors toiled away for tens of

hours assembling the newsletter. As such, when Joe could no longer devote the great amount of time that was needed, I think people were intimidated and reluctant to step forth and fill his shoes. I'll start by taking some small steps.

Much has happened in the last year. We have had turnover on the board, which has brought some new faces to ETU. Our volunteer activities, including Camp Comfort, Jeffco Outdoor Lab, and the various children's fishing clinics continue to be strong. Also, we have had some outstanding presentations at our chapter meetings. The chapter fishing trip to Trappers Lake was

enthusiastically attended, and fly fishing at the Buchanan Ponds was exceptional this past year, with many large fish being caught in the lower pond. High water on our streams continued well into summer, but when the waters finally subsided, local fishing on Bear and Clear Creeks was good. Most importantly, Bear Creek appears headed for additional protection under EPA's 303(d) program.

I urge members to attend a few of our chapter meetings, pick an activity for which to volunteer, and send me any stories you wish to see published in this newsletter. May all enjoy a happy and healthy new year.

BEAR CREEK APPEARS HEADED BACK TO IMPAIRED WATERS LIST, by John Haile (photo by Ron Belak)



Major sections of Bear Creek appear headed back onto Colorado's list of impaired waters following hearings in December before the state Water Quality Control Commission. The Commission found that Bear Creek exceeded the maximum standards for temperature needed to sustain a healthy stream or fishery and failed to meet minimum standards for aquatic bug life. The Commission gave preliminary final approval to list the stream as impaired. A final vote is expected February 13. Bear Creek

was last listed as impaired in 2006 by EPA under section 303 (d) of the Clean Water Act.

An impaired listing could mean that stream improvement efforts by groups such as ETU would have a better chance of being funded, and agencies that discharge into the stream would have more of an incentive to correct whatever is contributing to the problems. If approved, for the first time the listing would include a segment of Bear Creek above Evergreen Lake, running from Witter Gulch downstream to the lake. Evidence submitted by the Water Quality Control Division and ETU showed the stream exceeded maximum temperature standards above the lake a total of five times during the summer of 2010. Additional data collected by the Bear

Creek Watershed Association, which opposed the listing, showed another six exceedances during the "winter" season. Below Evergreen Lake, Bear Creek would be listed as impaired for temperature down to Kerr Gulch, just east of O'Fallon Park and below Kittredge. That stream segment also would have a separate, lesser monitoring and evaluation listing to assess problems related to the aquatic bug life.

Representing ETU and Colorado Trout Unlimited were ETU's Karen Christopherson, who collected stream temperature data for ETU; Mely Whiting, the attorney representing CTU; Dr. John Woodling, a fisheries biologist who analyzed the aquatic life data; and ETU's John Haile, who helped prepare hearing documents and testified about Bear Creek.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

The Evergreen Chapter of Trout Unlimited meets the third Wednesday of each month except July and December at Beau Jo's Pizzeria in downtown Evergreen. Join us for dinner and chapter business at 6:30 PM and a program at 7 PM.

January 6, 7, 8, 2012: Fly Fishing Show, Denver Merchandise Mart and International Sportsmen's Show (also Jan. 5) at the Denver Convention Center.

January 7, 2012: Colorado Trout Unlimited Winter Board Meeting, 400 Indiana Street, Suite 200, 9 AM.

January 10, 2012: ETU Board Meeting, Stagecoach Grill in Evergreen, 6:30 PM.

January 18, 2012: ETU Chapter Meeting, Beau Jo's in Evergreen. Pat Dorsey will speak on Colorado tailwaters at 6:30 PM.

February 14, 2012: ETU Board Meeting, Stagecoach Grill in Evergreen, 6:30 PM.

February 15, 2012: ETU Chapter Meeting, Beau Jo's in Evergreen. Cameron Cipponeri of Frying Pan Anglers will speak on fishing the Roaring Fork Valley at 6:30 PM.

CONSERVATION IS UP IN A DOWN ECONOMY

article condensed from *High Country News*; White River photo by Ron Belak



According to the *High Country News* magazine, conservation of private lands in the U.S. has increased significantly in the last five years despite the recession. These tracts of land are saved from development, thereby aiding in the protection of fragile watersheds and resident fish. In some cases, these lands are also open to anglers. About 10 million acres of private land nationally has been protected, according to data obtained from 1,700 land trusts in the Land Trust Alliance.

Much of the protected land is the result of nonprofit land trusts either purchasing properties outright or acquiring conservation easements. Purchasing the lands has become easier lately because the recession has stalled residential development of agricultural land and lowered sales prices. Conservation easements, according to the *High Country News* article, are often a better bang for the buck because easements often cost half of a outright purchase and don't require management fees since the private landowners continue to own and manage their lands for grazing, agriculture, and timber. Landowners also receive a generous federal tax break.

Of course, private lands under protection in the West are only a tiny fraction of all undeveloped rural lands. In addition, federal lands still comprise the overwhelming majority of protected lands in the West. The large unbroken tracts of federal land are often the last refuge for threatened fishes such as the bull trout, westslope cutthroat, and Colorado River cutthroat. However, purchase of key private lands by the federal government has dropped significantly in the past five years and was only 5 percent of that protected by nonprofit land trusts from 2005 to 2010, according to *High Country News*. With deep ideological divides in Washington, the outlook for additional federal purchases looks bleak. Experts also worry about the loss of generous tax incentives, which are soon to expire unless Congress acts to renew them. For more information, see the full article in the December 12, 2011 issue of *High Country News*.

IS THERE A SEASON? article and photo of Buchanan Pond by Ron Belak



Evergreen, Colorado. December 5. It's 13 below zero on my deck, and it's only 8:30 PM. It'll probably dip down to 20 below tonight—making it perhaps the coldest night of the year. Sitting in an over-stuffed chair strategically placed in front of a blazing fire, a magazine slips from my grasp as my head begins to nod. The phone startles me. It's my friend Dave, and he's trying to organize an early February trip to the San Juan River. He knows I was disappointed about missing his October trip.

"The Juan. Big 'bows. We could even get a little Baetis action," he says.

"February?" I inquire. "You must mean April, or maybe May."

"No! February. It'll be some good mid-season action. We'll have most of the river to ourselves."

"Maybe there's a reason for that," I explain. Give me a call in April when it warms up. We'll do the Green."

Mid-season? I never thought February was mid-season. When I was growing up in Upstate New York, the trout season spanned April 1 to September 30. April 1 was pushing it; temperatures were in the thirties and rain was mixed with snow. Most streams were still receiving snowmelt, and they were raging and chocolate brown. There were some good days in October, however, and a few selected streams had special regulations which permitted angling for trout through the end of the month. But November was nasty, and few people had the desire to fish even though a couple of rivers were still open for steelhead and coho. The

rest of the winter was dominated by steel gray skies and a permanent snowpack. The sun would once again be seen in April.

I know that Colorado is different, and I have come to appreciate these differences over the past 33 years. I enjoy the blue skies and an occasional 50-degree day in January. And the skiing, well it's nothing short of fantastic. However, the one thing that I can't get used to is fly fishing during the middle of winter. I have tried it a number of times and have even landed a few hogs on No. 26 dry flies. I couldn't see the flies, so I'm sure it was just dumb luck that enabled me to set the hook at precisely the right moment. After all, my reflexes were incredibly slow because I was wearing enough clothing to make the Michelin man look as thin as a Manhattan model. I even tried ice fishing once, snowshoeing to a lake at 12,000 feet just to jig streamers through the ice at native cutthroat. I don't know why I did this since ice fishing shares little in common with fly fishing, and it was cold enough to make an Eskimo cry.

Fly fishing during the middle of winter is for people who haven't learned to ski. I'm sure few anglers in Colorado seriously considered it before fly shops started to promote it. After all, a simple rule of economics dictates that if you can't capture additional market share, simply expand the market. With a bigger pie, everyone can have a bigger piece. Every professional sport already does this. This is why basketball is played from November through June and the baseball season consists of 162 games. But you really have to give credit to professional football for their creativity. They simply weren't satisfied with expanding the season to 16 games so they invented the bye week to add another week to a season which sooner or later will start overlapping with baseball.

Fishing in February is like skiing in

July. In Colorado, you can find snow in July, but warm weather sports are far more appealing. About the only advantage to fishing in February is that you don't need insect repellent.

"Come on, Ron. The Juan. Huge bows," Dave pleaded.

"How about if we pack our skis and rods, drive first to Taos—which is less than 2 hours from the Juan, and promptly forget about our rods?"

"You're hopeless," Dave said. "I'll call back in April."

Nine o'clock. Minus 15 degrees, and the temperature is falling. The phone rings again, and this time it's my friend Mike.

"So what do you think about our ski trip tomorrow?" he asks.

"I don't know. It's a little brisk. Call me in the morning. If the temp rises above zero by mid-morning, maybe we could do a tour before dinner."

I hang up the phone, toss another log on the fire, and pour two fingers of single malt. Gazing at the crackling logs, thoughts of Dave's conversation start me thinking of fly fishing. Maybe I'll spend the rest of the evening tying Baetis for April, I ponder, or maybe I'll tie some Woolly Buggers or streamers for ice-out. Suddenly, more rationale thoughts prevail, and I head for the basement to wax another pair of skis.

This article first appeared in the *Evergreen Trout* about 10 years ago so I apologize to those of you who actually remember reading it. However, I must admit that I will once again be dragged out into the snow this year to fish in February. For fishing-related ideas on how to occupy your time during the upcoming cold months, see my article in the January/February 2012 issue of *Colorado Outdoors* magazine.

BIMONTHLY FLY: SOCKEYE SANTA, by Ron Belak



Thread: black Kevlar

Hook: 3X 4/0

Head: Sitka spruce, sanded fine

Collar: polar bear

Body: red chenille, tied very fat

Fins: green tinsel

Tail: caribou hide dyed black

Creator: Kris Kringle, Santa Clause House, North Pole, Alaska 99705

Fishing Tips: Best fished deep for king salmon and larger silvers. Reportedly most effective December 24 through January 1, especially when jigged down chimneys. Have a better pattern? Send the fly or a photo, recipe, and tying tips to the newsletter editor. Describe situations when it is most effective.

PAT DORSEY SPEAKS AT THE JANUARY 18 ETU CHAPTER MEETING



On Wednesday, January 18 at 7 PM, Pat Dorsey will deliver a presentation on fly fishing tailwaters at Beau Jo's in downtown Evergreen. Pat is Guide Director and partner in the Blue Quill Angler fly shop. A native of Colorado, Pat has been guiding for over 20 years and spends about two hundred days a year on the water. Pat is also a renowned author with three marvelously illustrated books under his belt. These books are *A Fly Fishers Guide to the South Platte River*, *Fly Fishing Tailwaters*, and *Tying and Fishing Tailwater Flies*. Pat's presentations include great digital photography and are well attended so come early to secure a seat.

FEBRUARY 15 MEETING TO HOST CAMERON CIPPONERI



Independence Pass to its terminus at the Colorado River. The Fork parallels Highway 82 and flows through much private land below Basalt, but there are public access points, and the river is a good float trip. The Frying Pan has its headwaters in the Hunter-Frying Pan Wilderness and flows unobstructed into Ruedi Reservoir. Above the reservoir, the river has characteristics of a small, high gradient mountain stream. Below Ruedi, the Frying Pan is a tailwater where trout gorge themselves on Mysis shrimp, pale morning duns, green drakes, caddis, midges, and other aquatic life. It is easily waded in the summer and fall. The Colorado in the Roaring Fork Valley is big, largely unwadable water that contains some truly big fish. Come and learn more.

Cameron Cipponeri will deliver a slide show at our February 15 chapter meeting at Beau Jo's Pizzeria in downtown Evergreen at 7 PM. Cameron began guiding for steelhead, trout, and smallmouth bass 15 years ago in northern Michigan. He came to Colorado seven years ago and started working at Elk Trout Lodge. Subsequently, Cameron found a home as a guide at Roaring Fork Anglers.

The Roaring Fork Valley from Aspen to Glenwood Springs includes three Gold Medal Rivers: the Roaring Fork River, the Frying Pan River, and the Colorado River. The Roaring Fork is a true freestone river all the way from its headwaters on



Upper Frying Pan drainage cutthroat, by Ron Belak