

The Evergreen Trout

March/April, 2012

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR, by Ron Belak

Last month I wrote a tongue-in-cheek article about the ridiculousness of fishing during the winter months. Of course, Pat Dorsey set us straight on this issue during his excellent presentation on fishing tailwaters at our January chapter meeting. Needless to say, I actually did go fishing in January—not once but twice. I fished Bear Creek on my birthday, which was the first time I ever fly fished on that day, and I ventured south and east to fish a favorite plains reservoir that iced out well before its normal time. As expected, the frigid waters of Bear Creek surrendered no fish, but it sure was a really nice warm day that was unusual for January 5. It was also warm but windy in southeastern Colorado in late January. The fishing there was a total bust—unusual for water that normally yields 15 rainbows and cutthroats from 18 to 22 inches per day. This reservoir fell

victim to a drought and triple digit temperatures last summer. Agricultural water takes withdrew about 40 percent of the reservoir's water, and massive fish kills resulted. These two experiences and a question at our last chapter meeting on climate change led me to reprint below an article on the impacts of climate change on fish that I wrote in 2008 for *Colorado Outdoors* magazine.

With last year's record snowpack, I thought we were in for a swing back to a more normal climate pattern, but 2011 proved to be anything but normal. Last April was the most active April on record for tornadoes in the United States with over five times the average for that month. Last summer saw the most daily high record temperatures set in the U.S. in the last decade and the fewest daily low temperatures. Texas had the hottest summer of any state since

instrument records began in 1895, and Oklahoma had the second hottest. Over 8.7 million acres burned in wildland fires in 2011—the third highest year since record keeping began in 1960. The seven highest years have all occurred from 2000 through 2011.

This year is not starting out well. January 2012 is the fourth warmest January on record since 1895, and Colorado's mountains have only 71 percent of its average year-to-date snowpack. We've done better here in Evergreen, and the state's period of heavy snows is ahead of us so I am keeping up hope. Meanwhile, I'll continue to wash and wax my car as that seems to correlate with the two heavy snows we've had here in Evergreen. However, I think I'll move my car to Winter Park or Copper Mountain so that I can enjoy all that resulting snow on a pair of skis.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND FISH IN COLORADO, article and photos by Ron Belak



N. Fork White River near Trappers Lake, 2002

"The fishing was better in the good old days. We used to catch 16-inchers all the time at Lost Lake and always limited-out on Trout Creek," grouched the gray-bearded fisherman. Anglers hear many stories like these because an ever increasing population is exerting more fishing pressure and leading to the loss of more coldwater habitat. Today, we face another

challenge that compounds these problems—climate change.

Climate is the average weather at a given place over a period of many years. Climate change is a noticeable departure from these average conditions. Natural events that can change climate include volcanic eruptions, solar activity and shifts in ocean currents.

In recent years, however, scientists noticed an unusual warming of the earth. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)—an international group of 600 scientists—observed in 2007 that 11 of the last 12 years were the warmest on record since 1850. In the last 50 years, they

reported that the earth's average temperature increased by about 1 degree Fahrenheit. While one degree is seemingly small, they reported that evidence preserved in glacial ice and tree rings reveal that this is the largest increase in North America for any 50-year period over the last 500 years. Coincident with this warming was a 22-percent increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide traps heat near the earth's surface—a phenomenon known as the greenhouse effect. The IPCC examined thousands of scientific studies and concluded that greenhouse gases from man's burning of fossil fuels caused most of the global warming since 1950. **(This article is continued on page 3).**

EVERGREEN TROUT UNLIMITED
P.O. Box 1974
Evergreen, CO 80437-1974
www.evergreentrount.org

President
Vacant

Vice President and Programs
Terry Walters
720-224-5423-, twaltershome@msn.com

Secretary
Jim Wilborn
303-670-3306, jpwilborn@hotmail.com

Treasurer
Steve Murray
303-670-7942, murray_sp@msn.com

Newsletter Editor
Ron Belak
303-674-2239, ronbelak@msn.com

Webmaster
Karen Christopherson
303-674-0252 Karen@evergreentrount.org

Education
Jim Wilborn
303-670-3306, jpwilborn@hotmail.com

John Ellis
303-674-1017, jellis@enb.com

At Large
Rich Reynolds
303-674-4861, mdirich@msn.com

Len Wheaton, 303-674-4243

Wayne Kosloske
303-674-4092, waynek@fds-llc.com

Chris Schauder, 303-816-9155
cschauder@evergreenmetrodistrict.com

Larry Drury, ljdruvy354@aol.com

Ron Altman
303-928-9295, alty1005@gmail.com

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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.

March 13, 2012: ETU Board Meeting, Stagecoach Grill in Evergreen, 6:30 PM.

March 16, 2012: Colorado Trout Unlimited Annual Dinner, Gala and Auction at 6 PM at the Arvada Center, 68th and Wadsworth in Arvada. Call Dave Nickum at 720-581-8589.

March 21, 2012: ETU Chapter Meeting, Beau Jo's in Evergreen. Greg Felt of Ark Anglers will speak on spring fishing on the Arkansas River at 6:30 PM.

April 4, 5, 11, 2012: ETU fly tying instructions for children at Jeffco Outdoor Lab, 9:15 AM--noon. Call Jim Wilborn at 303-670-3306 or jpwilborn@hotmail.com to volunteer.

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

April 18, 2012: ETU Chapter Meeting, Beau Jo's in Evergreen. Duane Redford of Lone Archer Guide Service will speak on environmental damage on the South Platte at 6:30 PM.

April 21, 2012: Evergreen Earth Day Fair with ETU sponsoring a booth promoting water conservation, fly tying, and aquatic entomology. Evergreen Lake House, 10 AM to 3 PM. Call Ron Belak at 303-674-2239 for more information or to volunteer for 2-hour shifts.

April 21, 2012: Jeffco Outdoor Lab Foundation Fundraiser and Gala at the Denver West Marriott, 1717 Denver West Blvd., Golden at 5:00 PM, featuring a silent auction, dining, and music to raise funds for the Outdoor Lab. Call Shannon Hancock at 303-982-2539.

April 19-22, 2012: Colorado Trout Unlimited Rendezvous in Redstone, CO. This conference on leadership, fundraising, recruiting volunteers and conservation advocacy is for chapter leaders and members. Contact Terry Walters at 720-224-5423.

April 28, 2012: Bear Creek Spring Cleanup. Meet in the parking lot in downtown Evergreen next to Beau Jo's at 9AM. Call Ron Belak at 303-674-2239 to volunteer.

May 5, 2012: Annual Children's Fishing Clinic at Buchanan Ponds, Evergreen at 7:45 AM to 2 PM. Call Len Wheaton at 303-674-4243 to volunteer. See article directly below.

ANNUAL BUCHANAN POND FISHING CLINIC

article by Len Wheaton, Clinic Chairman, photo by Ron Belak



Evergreen Trout Unlimited has set the date for its annual Buchanan Pond Children's Fishing Clinic for Saturday May 5 from 8 AM to 2 PM. This day-long event teaches up to 30 children to tie flies, fish the ponds, identify aquatic insects, and more. We have reserved the large meeting room for instructions, the outer deck for a picnic lunch, and the ponds for fishing. Bob Schmitz, Buchanan Park Director, has assisted in planning and will provide T-shirts for the children and contribute funds for the stocking of the ponds.

We provide one-on-one coaching of youth, and we ask that ETU members commit to volunteering from 7:45 AM to 2 PM. Fishing rods and flies are given to the children, and a picnic lunch is provided to all. Volunteers should bring some tippet, a net, and nippers. To volunteer, call Len Wheaton (303-674-4243) or John Ellis (303-670-4022).



Low water in Dillon Reservoir, 2003

Regardless of how much warming in Colorado is due to natural causes or man's activity, the warming and its effects on fisheries have been noticeable in recent years. Prolonged heat waves and extended droughts increase stream and lake temperatures, adversely affecting many fish populations because fish require specific temperature ranges for survival, growth and reproduction. Dissolved oxygen drops with rising water temperature, further stressing fish. Droughts also decrease water amounts in streams and rivers.

Colorado fisheries at lower elevations and near populated areas suffered the greatest impacts from drought and heat waves. Unlike fisheries in wilderness areas, these fisheries are stressed by increasing urban development, water diversions, and runoff laden with sediment. Bear Creek exemplifies this situation. In 2002, the stretch of Bear Creek from Evergreen Lake downstream to Morrison experienced massive fish kills. The little water flowing over the top of the dam was warmed by the prolonged summer heatwave. The creek then stopped running and disintegrated into a series of isolated pools that were further warmed and depleted of oxygen.

Drought also decreases snowfall, which means less snowpack accumulates and less runoff is available for fish in the spring. A study on snowpack in the West found that maximum snowpack in the northern mountains of Colorado decreased significantly from 1950 to 1997. Snowpack in most of the central and southern mountains remained about the same. Data since

1997 shows that snowpack decreased across all of Colorado's mountains from about 15 to 25 percent. Less snowpack results in low reservoir levels and the need to release more water earlier for crops and people.

Colorado's recent drought further decreased water quality by contributing to an increase in the number and size of wildland fires since 1999. Fires burned over 76,000 acres in 2000—more than triple the annual average in the 1980s and 1990s. In 2002, over 244,000 acres burned. Among the fires in 2002 was the state's largest—the 137,000-acre Hayman Fire—and the 73,000-acre Missionary Ridge Fire. The loss of vegetation in burned areas results in increased flooding, erosion and deposition of sediment into water ways, as evidenced by degradation of the South Platte River at Deckers.

Prolonged drought in recent years also contributed to growing beetle infestations, which have killed large portions of our forests. With fewer living trees, less runoff is absorbed, more flooding occurs, and wildland fires may increase. From 1996 through 2011, the mountain pine beetle killed lodgepole pines on over 3 million acres in Colorado.

The recent warming trend has not adversely impacted all fisheries. Anglers visiting Colorado's high mountain lakes appear to have benefited from a longer open water season. For 30 years, I have fished these lakes just after ice-out, and I have noticed that my trips have been about two weeks earlier in recent years. Longer open water seasons also allow fish to grow larger.

While impacts from Colorado's recent warming trend are clear, impacts from future warming can only be estimated. To do so, climatologists use complex computer programs to model circulation patterns in the ocean and atmosphere. Models account accurately for past events, but their predictions depend on many

assumptions. Most models assume rising temperatures consistent with increasing amounts of atmospheric carbon dioxide as predicted by the IPCC. The IPCC estimates a doubling of carbon dioxide and a 4 to 9-degree Fahrenheit rise in temperature in the western U.S. by 2100. These estimates depend heavily upon the rate at which the global economy and population increase and the degree to which technology will improve the burning of fossil fuels.

Computer modeling, however, cannot precisely predict regional changes, much less model how climate will change at a favorite fishing hole. Colorado's wide range of topography and elevation compound inaccuracies. Nevertheless, models are consistent in predicting certain changes for Colorado over the next 50 to 100 years. These overall projections are similar to what has already occurred over the past decade—increased heatwaves and droughts, an average warming of surface waters, an increased incidence of wildland fires and insect infestations, and increased competition for water. Changes in snowpack are less certain as it is more controlled by the amount of precipitation and less by average temperature.



Beetle infestation, Mt. Zirkel Wilderness, 2003

Future impacts to fisheries from climate change are also determined through modeling. Scientific studies through 2007 generally used the same methodology for modeling impacts to stream habitat. Knowing the maximum water temperatures that each species of fish can tolerate, scientists obtained stream temperatures from U.S. Geological Survey stream **(continued on page 4)**

(continued from page 3) gauging stations and determined which species could exist at each station. Next, scientists used IPCC data to project air temperatures over the next 90 years, converted these air temperatures to corresponding changes in maximum stream temperatures of from 2 to 9 degrees Fahrenheit, and determined which species could not tolerate the increased temperatures. Although the studies were national in scope, they displayed results specific to Colorado and included from 4 to 20 common Colorado species.



Hayman Burn Area, 2002

These studies concluded that cold water habitat supporting trout and mountain whitefish would decrease at lower elevations where summer temperatures are already near the species' maximum tolerances. One study predicted a loss of trout habitat in 18 to 33 percent of locations studied while a second study

estimated a loss of up to 40 percent of trout habitat over Colorado. Another study predicted about a 20-percent loss of Colorado River cutthroat habitat on the West Slope. Scott Cooney, a fishery biologist at Colorado State University, concluded that global warming could help Greenback cutthroat on the East Slope. Citing its tendency to occupy cold high elevation streams, he said that Greenback fry could benefit by a longer growing season and that fish could migrate or be planted upstream in areas that are now too cold. Collectively, the studies conclude that warm water fish, such as largemouth bass, channel catfish, and common carp, could expand their range in Colorado by moving upstream into waters that are now too cold.

Scientific studies on the impacts of a warming climate on lake habitat are too limited in scope to generalize for all of Colorado. One study conducted for the Environmental Protection Agency modeled 27 different lake types at 209 locations nationwide. The modeled lake types that are most similar to Colorado's high mountain lakes showed little impact, and at the 5 Colorado locations in the study, which were all below 7,000 feet, modeling predicted that a warming climate will not significantly affect

coolwater fish, such as yellow perch, walleye and northern pike. In colder reservoirs, they may actually benefit from warmer temperatures. The study predicted warmwater fish would do much better.

So how's an angler to respond to climate change? Anglers can play, land and release fish quickly when water temperatures are high. Anglers can also avoid trout fishing in waters when temperatures exceed 70 degrees and instead fish the higher streams and mountain lakes. Anglers concerned about their carbon footprint can do the obvious—recycle, conserve water, turn down the thermostat, and carpool. Better yet, take a buddy fishing rather than going alone. With a little luck and better technology, we may avoid some of the bleakest climate predictions. Then in thirty or forty years, our children may talk about how good the fishing is rather than how great it was back in ought-six.

This article was first published in the July/August 2008 issue of *Colorado Outdoors Magazine*. For information on more recent studies on the impacts of climate change on fish see the study of Trout Unlimited et al. at: www.pnas.org/content/early/2011/08/09/1103097108.full.pdf

COLORADO TROUT UNLIMITED RAFFLE FOR FISHING THE GUNNISON RIVER GORGE



One angler will receive a three-day and two-night trip with Dvorak Expeditions through the Gunnison River Gorge. This trip provides a float through one of Colorado's true natural wonders and an opportunity to experience world class Gold Medal fishing. Fly fish for trophy browns and rainbows on one of the most productive and remote stretches of wild trout water amidst deep granite canyons. The river can produce 16 to 25-inch rainbows and browns up to 5 pounds. This stretch of the Gunnison has one of the best stonefly hatches in Colorado. Your gear will be packed in, and all meals will be provided. The trip is available in either the 2012 or 2013 season. Retail value is \$1,425.

Raffle tickets cost \$10 each or three for \$25. If purchased from ETU, the chapter gets half of the proceeds. The drawing is at the CTU Rendezvous on April 21, 2012. Purchase tickets at the chapter meeting or by calling Terry Walters at 720-224-5423.

OPPORTUNITY TO PACK IN AND FISH THE WIND RIVER MOUNTAINS



Photo by Ron Belak

Hike with llamas, tent camp, and fish multiple lakes in the Wind River Range near Lander Wyoming. The Fly Fishing Chapter of the Colorado Mountain club has arranged with Lander Llama Company (LLC) the opportunity for a limited group to pack into Atlantic Canyon for a five-day and four-night guided and catered fly fishing trip from August 6 through 10, 2012. The hike to base camp is 6 miles with an altitude starting at 9,400 feet and camping at about 10,300 feet. Llamas carry most of the gear. Participants carry day packs and are allowed to put 18 pounds of personal gear on the llamas. Seven lakes with inlets and outlets are available to fish with brook, cutthroat, cutthroat/golden hybrid, and pure golden trout present in these lakes. Guides, wranglers and cooks are provided. Tents, sleeping bags and sleeping pads are available from LLC. Participants provide their own personal gear and fly fishing equipment. Cost is \$1,250. Contact ETU member Dick Wheeler at richardwwheeler@gmail.com or 303-674-6240.

BIMONTHLY FLY: LITTLE DEBBIE, narrative and photos by Jim Wilborn

The Little Debbie is an effective adult midge pattern for fishing still water or pools in streams and rivers. It is apparently named after the little delicious snack food, and undoubtedly brings tasty thoughts to the minds of fish as well. I have effectively used it to imitate newly emerged midges at Buchanan Pond.

Hook: TMC 100, No. 16-22
Thread: black UTC 70 Denier
Abdomen: thread as above
Ribbing: small silver wire
Wing: white goose biots
Thorax: peacock herl
Hackle: grizzly



Step One: As in the photo above, tie the thread on to the hook at its midpoint and start wrapping to the bend. Tie in the wire and continue wrapping to the bend. Wrap the thread to the front of the hook then back 1/3 from the eye.



Step 2: Wrap the wire forward, spacing the ribbing. Tie off and clip excess, as illustrated above.



Step Three: Tie in two goose biots for wings. They should extend back to the bend of the hook and lie flat along the top of the hook as in photo above.



Step Four: As in the photo at the bottom of the previous column, tie in the grizzly hackle (appropriately sized for the hook) and one peacock herl. Bring thread forward to the eye, leaving enough space for finishing.



Step Five: Wrap the herl forward and tie off.



Step Six: Wrap the hackle forward with about four wraps and tie off. Whip finish the head, trim the bottom of the hackle to be level with the point, and cement. Go fish.

BEAR CREEK RESERVOIR TO BE STOCKED WITH SPRING RUN STEELHEAD, by Ron Belak

For the first time in its history, Bear Creek Reservoir will be stocked with steelhead trout. Steelhead are sea run rainbows that hatch in fresh water streams and reservoirs and migrate to the ocean where they live for several years before returning to their place of birth to spawn. In landlocked states like Colorado, steelhead are seldom stocked. When they are, it is usually in lakes and ponds on private lands to enhance an angler's sporting experience.



Four hundred steelhead in the 16 to 23-inch range will be planted in Bear Creek Reservoir in early March. According to fisheries biologist Harry Shiner with the state department of fish and wildlife, "The "steelies" are being released as an experiment to determine if they can survive and provide a sort of boutique fishery during the early spring. As runoff starts, the fish are expected to run up Bear Creek in search of spawning beds." Starting April 1, Mr. Shiner said that anglers will be allowed to harvest up to 2 steelhead per day since the fish are not expected to survive warmer summer temperatures in either Bear Creek or in Bear Creek Reservoir. Snagging is not permitted. All steelhead will be marked with tags to differentiate them from resident rainbows, which must be released. Mr. Shiner said, "The fish are expected to make it all the way up to downtown Evergreen, and some may even make it to the pool below the dam on Evergreen Lake. The fish can jump, and some acrobatics may be seen as they try in vain to scale the dam." In addition, Mr. Shiner said that one of the fish will be marked with a tag worth \$500 if returned to the department. Mr. Shiner said an opening day celebration will be held on Sunday April 1 at the Morrison Community Center. There will be lectures on steelhead biology, educational displays, and hand-crafted beers.

Okay, I hope you realize that this is an April Fools' joke. Instead of rubber doughnuts in the breakroom or a whoopie cushion on your chair, you got this. I remember a similar April Fools' joke back in the 1960s when I was growing up in Syracuse, NY. The sports editor of the local newspaper wrote jokingly about the state stocking several thousand catchable rainbows in Onondaga Creek in downtown Syracuse. Onondaga Creek was one of the most polluted creeks in the country. It had high levels of industrial chemicals, and some industries discharged waste water directly into the creek. Numerous storm sewers also drained into the creek, and during spring runoff and times of heavy rains, sanitary sewage treatment facilities were swamped, and human waste entered the creek. Nevertheless, the story made headlines in the sports section of the early morning edition. By mid-morning, dozens of anglers were stalking the phantom fish in downtown Syracuse along the banks of Onondaga Creek. I don't recall if the editor apologized the next day. If this happened today, lawsuits would fly. So don't go down to Bear Creek on April 1 unless you are looking for small browns.

BUCHANAN POND FREE FISHING ANNOUNCED

Anglers who volunteered for ETU activities last year are allowed to fish Buchanan Pond free of charge on these dates in 2012: April 6, 7, 8; April 20, 21, 22; May 4, 5, 6; May 18, 19, 20; June 1, 2, 3; June 15, 16, 17; July 6, 7, 8; July 20, 21, 22; August 3, 4, 5; August 17, 18, 19; September 7, 8, 9; September 21, 22, 23; October 5, 6, 7; October 19, 20, 21; November 2, 3, 4; and November 16, 17, and 18. It is your responsibility to ensure that your name is on the volunteer list. If it is not, call Jim Wilborn at 303-670-3306 **BEFORE** you intend to fish. Fishing is by barbless fly, and anglers must check in at the desk in the recreation center for an arm band.

Andes, Chet
Altman, Ron
Attalla, Jim

Belak, Ron
Boschen, Tom
Bornhouser, Mike
Brame, Randy
Christopherson, Karen
Drury, Larry
Egender, Jack
Ellis, John
Forbes, Peter
Goldblatt, Mike
Haile, John
Hastedt, Jim
Hock, Rodney
Huiting, Randy
Johnston, Warren
Knoll, Dean
Kosloske, Wayne
Kuberski, Mike
Linn, Peggy
Lockwood, Tom
Marshall, Don
Martin, Art

McGinnis, Mike
Murray, Randi
Murray, Steve
Oliphant, Ford
Regan, Paul
Reynolds, Rich
Rotollo, Gary
Ryan, Jim
Schauder, Chris
Schumaker, Dave
Squire, Gregg
Thom, Doug
Tindall, Chris
Underwood, Dave
Walters, Terry
Walters, Anne
Waters, Phil
Wheaton, Len
Wheeler, Richard
Wilborn, Jim
Yancik, Rick
(continued on p. 7)

(continued from page 6) Last year, Buchanan Ponds iced out on March 14. An early ice out is expected once again this year, and fishing can be really good with Woolly Buggers and black leeches from shore or from a belly boat. We expect many hold over rainbows in the 15 to 18-inch range, products of having stocked the lower pond with some larger trout last spring. The board is currently deciding on criteria for allowing

members not on the list above to fish for free during the specified times listed on the previous page. For more information on fishing conditions throughout the year at Buchanan Ponds, please check out page 1 of the March 2010 issue of our newsletter on our Web site at http://www.evergreentrout.org/Newsletters/ETU_March_10_final.pdf.

GREG FELT TO SPEAK ON ARKANSAS RIVER AT MARCH 21 ETU MEETING



On Wednesday, March 21 at 7PM, Greg Felt of ArkAnglers Fly Shop will speak on spring fishing on the Arkansas River. The presentation will take place at Beau Jo's Pizzeria in downtown Evergreen, and is preceded by a

short business meeting at 6:30 PM. Greg Felt has guided both float-fishing and whitewater trips on the Arkansas River since 1985. As partner and guide service manager for ArkAnglers, he oversees one of the largest guide services in the state and spends considerable time communicating with the angling public regarding issues on the Arkansas. In addition to his occupation, Greg is involved with local and state natural resource issues, serving on the boards of the Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District, the Office of Outfitter Registration, and the Colorado division of the Trust for Public Lands. Greg has spoken at our ETU meetings in the past, and these presentations have been well attended. Please join us early in order to get a good seat, have a little dinner, and perhaps share a drink with fellow members.

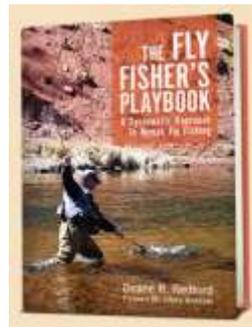
DUANE REDFORD WILL ADDRESS ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE ON SOUTH PLATTE RIVER NEAR DECKERS AT APRIL 18 MEETING



Duane Redford will address the ETU Chapter on Wednesday, April 18 at 7PM at Beau Jo's Pizzeria in Evergreen. Duane Redford, a professional fly fishing guide, spends the majority of his days guiding on the South Platte River below Deckers, Colorado. This

stretch of river can be difficult to guide because of the constant changes in river conditions. These conditions include high angling and recreation pressure to undesirable water clarity due to the erosion of several feeder creeks.

Since the Hayman Fire nearly ten years ago, the South Platte River has battled several obstacles in its recovery. One large obstacle has been the persistent erosion of Horse Creek into the South Platte. Duane is very passionate about the health of the river, and has prepared a presentation to help bring this issue forward.



When he's not guiding, Duane spends his time teaching fly fishing classes, and recently published his first book on fly fishing. When he's not teaching, writing or guiding, you'll find him on the river. To order Duane's book visit www.FlyfishersPlaybook.com.