

# ANGLERS' EDGE



CONSERVING, PROTECTING AND ENHANCING COLORADO'S COLDWATER  
FISHERIES THROUGH VOLUNTEERISM, EDUCATION AND OUTREACH.

*The Bi-Monthly Newsletter of the West Denver Chapter of Trout Unlimited, October 7, 2015, Volume 21, No. 5*

## *President's Message*

Much has happened since the last newsletter came out. This summer saw 5 members of West Denver travel to Yellowstone to help tag Yellowstone cutthroats. We were helping a graduate student with his PhD research involving the migration patterns of the cutts in Yellowstone. The name of the program is, appropriately enough, the Yellowstone Fly Fishing Program. This year, volunteers caught and tagged cutts, rainbows, and cutbows in the Lamar River drainage. All fish were catalogued, and the larger fish were tagged so they could be followed. The members who participated this year were *Ed Calmus, Keith Greenwell, Randy Cordova, Rick Dornfeld*, and I. I am trying to put together an all-WDTU week next year. The week involved is July 17th-July 23rd. Most of the fishing should be on the Lamar River basin. I am trying to rent a house or a couple of rooms in Cook City. This would place us closer to the fishing than what we had this year. In addition, there should be a dorm room that sleeps 2, and a place to park a trailer, as well as a tent site. If we get enough people, we will each fish 3 days, and have 2 days off to do whatever—fishing, sightseeing, etc. I am looking for 10 volunteers. If this interests you, please contact me at [tim2e@comcast.net](mailto:tim2e@comcast.net).

On September 11th, about 20 West Denver members, 4 members from the *Greenbacks Chapter*, and 10 Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) employees met at Herman's Gulch to attempt to salvage some fish—i.e., removed from Herman's Gulch to be placed into the main stem of Clear Creek. The U.S. Forest Service and CPW have designated Herman's Gulch and Dry Gulch the first stream to get the "Bear Creek" greenbacks. We're talking about the greenbacks that were discovered in Bear Creek, located southwest of Colorado Springs. For the past few years, the State and Federal hatcheries have been raising these fish. If all goes well, they will be released in Herman's Gulch and Dry Gulch next year. We were told that 109 fish were caught and released into the main stem of Clear Creek. The CPW also did electroshocking on Herman's, and a total of 477 fish were released into Clear Creek. The CPW clipped the adipose fin—i.e., the small fin between the dorsal and the tail fin—on the fish that were released into Clear Creek. The CPW is asking that anyone who

catches any of these designated fish to contact [Boyd.wright@state.co.us](mailto:Boyd.wright@state.co.us) or [paul.winkle@state.co.us](mailto:paul.winkle@state.co.us).

I want to thank all Chapter volunteers, the Greenback Chapter people, and all the CPW people who helped on this project. A special thanks for *Boyd Wright* of CPW and our own *Rick Dornfeld* for putting this together. After the fishing, our Chapter served lunch for everyone. I want to thank *Linda Miyamoto* and *John Murphy* for helping with this.

On September 19th, 10 Chapter volunteers helped at the 7th annual Clear Creek Watershed Festival. Members handed our information on Trout Unlimited, helped kids catch fish, and showed kids how to tie flies. We also had a display of new equipment that was purchased for our River Watch program. *Dennis Wiles* showed the kids the "bugs" that reside in Clear Creek, and demonstrated how the new equipment worked.

During the month of September, there have been several Windy Peak Outdoor Laboratory sessions in which Chapter volunteers teach 6th graders how to tie flies, talk a little about entomology, and discuss the conservation ethic. Then, the kids are taken down to a pond on site to fish. The program is headed by *Ric Tarr*. If you're interested in volunteering for this outstanding program, contact Ric at [rictarr@gmail.com](mailto:rictarr@gmail.com).

The October 7th Chapter meeting will have *Kirk Deeter* as the speaker (see accompanying article on page 2). Kirk is the editor of National Trout Unlimited's publication, *Trout*. He calls Colorado his home, and will do a presentation of "Why We Live Here".

And, lastly, our November Chapter meeting will be on Friday (yes, the 13th). The speakers will be *Kerry Caragher, Pat Dorsey, and Landon Mayer*. What a lineup! *Charlie Craven* will be our guest fly tier. That night will feature a chili dinner, beer from Odell brewery, and wine from Steelhead Vineyards (California). The chili is being cooked by Chapter members, and if you want to help with preparing a chili dish, contact *Jackie Edwards* at [jaxedw@gmail.com](mailto:jaxedw@gmail.com). We are not charging for the chili, but donations are welcome. See accompanying article on page 3 in this issue for more details.

## ***The October 7th Guest Speaker is Kirk Deeter***

Kirk is the editor of TROUT magazine and an editor-at-large for Field & Stream. He is known for gonzo fishing story angles and has earned various awards, including top "Excellence in Craft" honors for his fishing stories from the Outdoor Writers Association of America. His travels have taken him from the tip of Tierra del Fuego in Argentina, to the Amazon jungle, to above the Arctic Circle in Russia and Alaska. The Little Red Book of Fly Fishing, which he co-wrote with the late *Charlie Meyers*, former editor of the Denver Post, is a fly-fishing bestseller, now in its sixth printing. He also wrote The Orvis Guide to Fly Fishing for Carp. Kirk's presentation is entitled, "Why We Live Here", touting the merits and beauty of this State while fishing its waters. We're fortunate to have Kirk as our speaker for October, so try hard to make it to his presentation.



## ***WDTU General Calendar***

### ***October 2015***

- 3 WDTU Planning Session-TBA
- 4 Fly Fishing for Women Class (Page 6)
- 7 Tying Corner/Welcome 6:30 PM  
Chapter Meeting-AMC  
Speaker: Kirk Deeter
- 12 Board Meeting 7:00 PM, 300 HH, CSM\*
- 16-17 CTU Fall Meeting-Steamboat Springs

### ***November 2015***

- 9 Board Meeting 7 PM
- 13 2nd Annual Chapter Chili Supper  
Speakers: Kerry Carrigher, John Landon,  
Pat Dorsey, Charlie Craven (see page 3).

### ***December 2015***

- 2 Tying Corner / Welcome 6:30  
Chapter Meeting  
Speaker: TBA
- 4 Volunteer Holiday Party – Pot Luck 5:30 – 9:00.  
Optional "White Elephant" Gift Exchange
- 14 Board Meeting 7 PM

**Note!** Our board meetings are held in Room 300 (Williams Room) in Hill Hall on the Colorado School of Mines campus. For directions, contact : Glen Edwards, <[jorgedwards@aol.com](mailto:jorgedwards@aol.com)>.

*All interested members are encouraged to attend.*



***A scene from our last meeting.  
Courtesy of John Pern.***

### ***Want a Fishing Buddy?***

If you want to find a Fishing Buddy, or volunteer to be one if asked, contact Gil Hassinger by reaching him at <[gh9172@comcast.net](mailto:gh9172@comcast.net)> or (303-980-5616).

### ***Volunteers Needed for River Watch***

The River Watch Program, under the auspices of the Division of Parks and Wildlife, is designed to monitor the water quality of various watersheds in the state. WDTU participates in this program. Dennis Wiles (720-404-7821) leads our efforts which generally occur on the 4th Saturday of every month. Give Dennis a call, if interested.

## **CHILI SUPPER---NOVEMBER 13th**

On November 13, West Denver is holding its annual Chili Supper. This is going to be a grand event. Featured speakers are *Kerry Caragher, Pat Dorsey, and Landon Mayer*. *Charlie Craven* will be our guest fly tier. The chili (about a dozen different varieties) will be free although donations are accepted. Wine and beer will be available. Doors open at 5:30 PM; the chili will be served at 6:00PM. Tickets for our Fantasy Raffle will also be available to purchase.

This event will be held at the American Mountaineering Center, 710 Washington Street, Golden. For more information contact either Jackie Edwards (303-278-2282) or Tim Toohey (303-423-8636). Information is also available on our website.

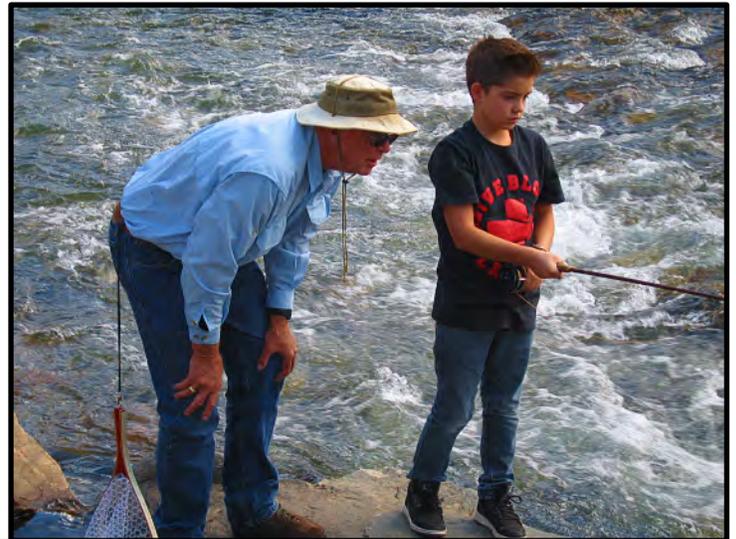
## **Fly Fishing Class for Women**

In late April of this year, our Chapter conducted a fly fishing class for women. We have decided to conduct a similar class on October 4th at Lake Lehow.

Casting will be an important component of the class, but we are also going to discuss the merits of different rods/reels, the importance of leaders/tippets, how to differentiate among different kinds of flies (e.g., dries, nymphs, streamers), how to tie some basic knots, and what to do after you cast the fly (e.g., stripping in the line, setting the hook properly, landing the fish).

We are limiting the class to 10 students. We currently have filled 8 of the 10 slots.

There is no charge for the class and, because the class is held on private water, no fishing license is required. If you know a woman whom you think may be interested in signing up for the class and/or wants more information, tell her to contact either *Gil Hassinger* (303-921-9522), *Bob Tauer* (303-906-4837) or *Jon Weimer* (303-830-1609).



*Photos from the Idaho Springs Watershed Festival courtesy of Kathy Danhour*

## **Guest Fly Tier—Nick Alder**

We're fortunate to have *Nick Alder* back to serve as our guest fly tier for our October 7th Chapter meeting. Nick is the former fishing manager of Golden River Sports and is one of the finest anglers you'll ever encounter. Arrive early (about 6:30 PM) to see Nick work his magic.



*(editor's note) Lake Fishing; an old photo of mine.*

## **Fishing the Ozarks**

(Editor's Note: Periodically, we'll be providing more information/background on our advertisers; this is the first of the series).

Have you ever fished in the Ozarks? Now may be a good time to think about it! Former West Denver TU member, *Tanya Lelo*, is the new general manager of a small motel located in Branson, Missouri. The motel, Ridgeview Motel (see ad), is located on State Highway 265, less than 4 miles from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dam at Table Rock Lake. The outflow becomes Lake Taneycomo which, according to many knowledgeable anglers, is home to some of the best trout fishing in the Midwest. Tanya will be offering WDTU Chapter members a special room package deal between January 1 and March 31, 2016. A double-occupancy, deluxe room (2 doubles, 2 queens, or one king), including a microwave and refrigerator, plus a continental breakfast will be only \$50. Any additional persons in the double or queen room, up to a total of 4, will only be \$10 additional per person. Chapter members must call directly and ask for the WDTU Chapter rate at 417-338-2438.

Ridgeview Motel is teaming up with River Run Outfitters, located on Highway 165, just a few miles from the motel and only minutes from Lake Taneycomo. River Run Outfitters, run by *Stan and Carolyn Parker*, is an Orvis-endorsed fly shop. They have very knowledgeable guides and a fully-stocked shop for all of your fly fishing needs. They will also be extending a 15% off special for guide services to any WDTU Chapter member who calls them and books a trip for anytime from January 1 to March 31, 2016. They can be contacted at 417-332-0460. Come out and join Tanya in the Ozarks! Relevant email addresses are:

<[www.ridgeviewmotel.com](http://www.ridgeviewmotel.com)> and

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**Tanya Lelo, Motel Manager**

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## **Greenback Trout Restoration Projects**

The status or lineage of the "greenback" has been turned upside down in light of results from the new genetic and meristic research that has been conducted. However, there are some upcoming prospective projects for greenback restoration that will be of interest to West Denver members: Dry Gulch and Herman Gulch in the Clear Creek headwaters

are two potential small population sites (about 2-2.5 miles each). It's possible that at least one of these streams will be subject to greenback restoration this year. Still, restoration at each project site will require coordination among the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, the Colorado Department of Transportation and, possibly, the Loveland Ski Area. Keep tuned.

## Volunteers needed for Windy Peak

The Outdoor Education Laboratory Program (OELS) at Windy Peak (south of Bailey) is under the auspices of the Jefferson County Public School System. The mission of the OELS is to provide 6th grade students the opportunity for hands-on, experiential learning in an outdoor setting. West Denver has been an integral part of this program for close to 20 years—helping to construct a fishing pond and ancillary structures (e.g., fishing platforms and docks) and teaching interested students the rudiments of fly tying.

In addition to teaching students how to tie flies (simple patterns like Woolly Buggers and San Juan Worms), West Denver members help impart a conservation ethic in hopes of encouraging these students to be stewards of the environment later in life. Typically, after teaching students to tie a couple of flies, they're taken down to the nearby fishing pond in hopes that they can catch something with their own creations. The fly tying classes usually begin in April and may continue through October. There is no rhyme or reason to the number of classes that may be taught, but usually only one or two classes a month is requested. If you think you may be interested in helping out and/or want more information, please contact our Education Director, Ric Tarr at 303-233-9391.



River Watch Photos, courtesy John Pern



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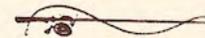
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## WDTU Shirt Logo

Jackie Edwards has made arrangements with a vendor to have an official WDTU logo imprinted on your shirt for just \$4. This program was initiated several years ago and has gained popularity. You simply need to bring your shirt to the next Chapter meeting, and give it to Jackie. She'll take care of the rest.

## Wanted: Newsletter Editor

### An Opportunity for You—Editor of the AE!

Again, I'm putting out a clarion call for someone to take over the editor responsibilities of this newsletter. I've been editor close to 9 years now, and I feel that the newsletter needs an injection of some new creative juices. It helps if you've had some writing and editing experience but, if not, I can certainly provide a helping hand until you develop your own style and rhythm.

I'm not being facetious when I say that being editor can be a fun job. You quickly become immersed in Chapter activities and develop a relationship with an array of interesting people (members), relationships that often evolve into friendships. If you think you may be interested in this position and/or want more information, don't hesitate to contact me at either [weimerj@earthlink.net](mailto:weimerj@earthlink.net) or at 303-830-1609.



Nina, Columbus' Ship. (Ed. Note: I just like the ship.)

## FOR SALE

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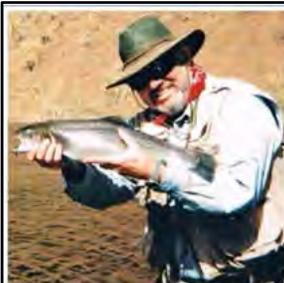
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***The Fishing Shows Are Coming!! The Fishing Shows Are Coming!!***

I know---it's a little premature to be talking about these shows in September-October, when they don't make their appearance until January. However, before you know it, the winter doldrums will be setting in, and you're going to be looking for a venue to compensate for your lack of fishing. These shows will allow you to indulge in your fantasies for next year, and perhaps to purchase that rod/reel/fly that will make all the difference in the world for your success.

First off the block is the Fly Fishing Show which appears January 8th through the 10th at the Denver Merchandise Mart (58th Avenue, Exit 215 East, off I-25). This show is devoted exclusively to fly fishing. The International Sportsmen Exposition (ISE) follows on January 14th

through the 17th at the Colorado Convention Center. The ISE is more eclectic, having booths and demonstrations related to hunting, archery, camping, hiking, and other outdoor activities, including fly fishing. The fly fishing component of the ISE has increased exponentially in the last few years.

West Denver is going to have a presence at both shows, displaying our "Fantasy Raffle". And, we're going to need volunteers at both shows to help sell raffle tickets to our Fantasy Raffle package. If you think you might be interested and want to throw your name into the hopper for consideration, call either *Jackie Edwards* (303-278-2282), *Randy Cordova* (303-619-1585) or *Jon Weimer* (303-830-1609). Being a volunteer at either one of these shows is enjoyable—you get to chew the fat with fellow anglers, and you get free admission!

## Chapter Facebook Page

In addition to having a Facebook group (WDTU Fishing Trips), we also have a Chapter Facebook page. To find it, open up a Facebook page and search for "West Denver Trout Unlimited".

We update the page each month to add information about the Chapter meeting, including the date and time as well as information on the presentation that evening. We also update the event page with the date and time for the Chapter Bowling Night. Although we try to have the Bowling Night on the Friday or Saturday following the Chapter meeting, the exact date depends on the availability of lanes. We have a Bowling Night mostly to have fun, but also to support the Wheat Ridge Bowling Lanes which has been a much appreciated supporter of the Chapter for a number of years.

If you would like to join the WDTU Fishing Trips group, email <Sullivan.daniel.w@gmail.com>.

*Dan Sullivan*

## Photos for Our Website

We are in the process of redesigning our website. One of the features that we are really excited about involves the use of photos from our membership as background to the pages. To that end, we would like to begin asking our members to send in theme-specific photos. This month we are asking for pictures that show a parent and child or grandparent and grandchild taking part in some fly fishing activity.

Please send your high-quality digital photos to: [Wdtu.email@gmail.com](mailto:Wdtu.email@gmail.com). Thanks.

*Dan Sullivan*



River Watch Workers.  
Photo courtesy of *John Pern*

## Volunteers Needed for River Watch

The River Watch program, under the auspices of the Division of Parks and Wildlife, is designed to monitor the water quality of various watersheds in the State. WDTU participates in this program on a stretch of Clear Creek in the Golden area. *Dennis Wiles* (720-404-7821) leads the WDTU effort, which generally occurs on the 4th Saturday of every month. Give Dennis a call if you're interested. Participation in this program affords you not only an interesting, but also an educational experience.

## Donations

Some WDTU members have inquired whether or not they can submit unsolicited donations to the Chapter. The answer is "Yes". If you wish to donate money, checks should be made payable to West Denver Chapter of Trout Unlimited, and then either mailed to our treasurer, *Matt Rivera*, 8189 Webster St., Arvada, CO 80003, or presented to him at a Chapter meeting. If you wish to donate fishing-related merchandise (for example, rods, reels, flies, etc.), contact *Tim Toohy* at (303) 423-8636 or <Tim2e@comcast.net>.

Our Chapter is tax exempt under code 501(c)3. Therefore, all contributions are deductible on your Federal tax returns. If you so desire, you can designate your monetary donation be applied to a specific project or purpose, as well as setting up a matching donation program. If you want additional information about WDTU's projects and/or want to discuss your intent for a donation, you may contact me (*Jon Weimer*) at either 303-830-1609 or <weimerj@earthlink.net>.

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## ***Alagnak Lodge at Bristol Bay, Alaska, a Long Story***

At the 2013 Annual Colorado Trout Unlimited Dinner and Auction, my wife Judy and I were fortunate to net the winning bid for a week of fly fishing at the Alagnak Lodge on the Alagnak River just above Bristol Bay in Alaska. We had been there before and knew that the remote lodge wasn't a five star luxury hotel, e.g. no private bathrooms. However, the meals were sumptuous and the river has some of the best salmon runs in the world. The lodge did provide the expert guides we needed and there were even plenty of Alaskan brown bears to photograph. Our friends Glen and Jackie Edwards joined us for the trip and it turned out to be a fabulous and memorable fishing adventure.

So when my wife elbowed me this year at the TU dinner the moment the auctioneer was starting the call on the Alagnak lodge my hand shot up very sharply indeed: and it stayed up there until we had a return trip in hand. Best of all, Glen and Jackie signed up again to make for another fun fly fishing week.

The salmon species swimming up the river from the bay at the Alagnak lodge vary according to the time of the year. Last year we fished the river at the end of August when silver (coho) salmon were running along with pink (humpback) and a few chum (dog) salmon. It was a great introduction for us to fly fish for three different species and we scored on all counts. This year we opted to try the last week in July, which according to the guide books, would give us a shot at four species of salmon, with hopefully some king (chinook) salmon still in the river, maybe a few sockeye in the middle of the massive chum salmon run and perhaps the silver's would also start running. (For some reason Mother Nature sends the pink humpback salmon up this river only on even years.)

We were now familiar with the trip to the lodge: jetliner to Anchorage, turboprop from there to King Salmon airport and then 20 minutes on a DeHaviland Beaver float plane that lands at the wharf directly below the lodge.

The daily routine was the same. Breakfast at 6 am sharp, crawl into your waders over your layered clothing and then slog the 48 steps down to the dock where our two guides and the boats were waiting. Glen and Jackie had Michael, a young but experienced Alaskan guide, while Judy and I shared Robby, a southern gentleman and an experienced guide from the Florida Keys but with almost three months guiding for the lodge. We were in good hands again for our first morning outing on the mighty Alagnak.

A short boat ride downriver on a cloudy, chilly morning

took us to a wide sandbank where Robby and Michael anchored the boats and got our fly rods ready for action. Before last year's trip Glen and I, in keeping with our many years as scientists and engineers, read the books on Alaskan flies, talked to the fly shop experts, bought every conceivable fly that might be needed and packed the prodigious plethora into eight large fly boxes. We then discovered that the Alagnak guides provide the exact flies that have proved successful on this particular river at that time. And the flies were? A couple of streamers in basically one color....pink. This year was essentially the same. Robby tied on a pink tube fly with a dash of Krystal Flash at the tail, added a little split shot for added weight on a sinking leader and then handed Judy and me our fly rods. We were all fishing for chum salmon now but with the same 8 and 9 weight rods that we had successfully used last year on silvers so we confidently waded out on the sandy bottom, four across, about twenty feet apart to a point where the silty water was knee deep. The procedure was the same as it was the year before: cast the weighted pink fly across or slightly upstream, let it dead drift or strip as it swung back with the current and strip or jig the fly at the end of the drift because we learned last year that many of the strikes came with the line straightened at the end of the cast.

Glen and Jackie are far more experienced in fly fishing than JUDY and me so they hooked almost immediately into salmon. But when Judy yelled "Fish On" I thought to myself, "*I taught this woman to fly fish when we were dating and now she hammers me when we fish. And keeps score too.*" I watched her 8 wt. 7-piece Orvis travel rod bend dangerously close to a "U" shape until Robby grabbed the leader and released a nice hen chum salmon. Then I finally felt a tug on my line. Cool. My first chum salmon was hooked. I pretty much thought it would be the same experience as last year based on the only two chum salmon I landed that first trip. The two chum were certainly fun to land but weren't the spectacular leapers and shakers like the silvers. So I put my thumb and finger on the little plastic black handle on my Ross Reel and began to reel in this fish in for a quick photo.

That's when Hell cracked open. The water around the hooked chum boiled, the line moved at hyper velocity from my 3 o'clock to high noon and the spinning reel handle beat my knuckles to a bloody pulp at the same speed. These weren't the tired, worn chum upriver of last year, these were bright salmon fresh from the sea only 5 miles away, and some still had sea lice on their scales. And each one was absolutely determined to swim undaunted for forty or so miles upstream for sex and death. The Fly Fisher's Guide to Alaska notes that "*pound for pound chum salmon could well be the hardest fighting of the five salmon species.*" At that moment, I became a devout believer.

As the morning progressed it seemed that each hooked fish used its own individual technique to toss our barbless hooks. One would stick to submarine tactics, dive deep, plow forward against a full drag on the reel and pit bull upstream. Another would be a leaper, one even “tail walked like a tarpon at Biscayne Bay” as Robby described it. All of them though, at one point or another would churn and roll over in an attempt to pull that barbless hook from its jaw and often succeeded with that ploy. I figured I had a 60% success rate that first morning in getting a fish close enough for the guide to grab the leader and lead the fish to a quick release. Robby had his homemade hook release gadget, a simple wire hook with a wooden handle. A flick of his wrist and the chum was deftly off my hook and heading back upstream.

Several times that extraordinary morning all four rods were bent with tight lines, - a “double-double” that sent the guides in a Chinese Fire Drill running in the water between us trying to quick release fish. Even WDTU treasurer Judy lost count, but certainly 40 salmon in the 10 to 15 lb. range for both of us were at least hooked and fought. My bet is that Jackie and Glen did even better. When we finally crawled back into the boat for lunch it was with smiles that said “It can’t get any better than this can it?” Ditto for the afternoon session.



### **Typical chum salmon caught and released on the Alagnak River above Bristol Bay**

The next day the guides took our boats in separate directions for a different view of the river. Same great action although not quite as frantic and furious. I had put band aids on my left fingers and learned to keep clear of whirling reel handles so it was just another great day in paradise for everyone on the river. We now had a far better appreciation for the power of these “dog” salmon, so called because they were less tasty than the other salmon and the Native Americans fed them to their sled dogs.

When we came back to the lodge though Judy and I learned that Glen had done the ultimate, landing a king salmon on a fly. Jackie flicked on the LCD screen on her Nikon and provided the proof of the feat. Dark spots on the upper body instead of the usual vertical stripes on our chum. Not a record king by any means but undoubtedly a king on a fly and that called for a round of toasts with Glen’s peat smoked scotch. Even the guides did an accolade toast. Judy and I stood and humbly bowed to King Glen. Chuckle! And then just to show it wasn’t a fluke, he did it again later, hooking two more kings, although one surprised him with a straight on rush and threw the fly.



### **Glen with his Alagnak king salmon ready to be released**

Understand that most kings on the Alagnak river are caught trolling with conventional gear and stiff, heavy fishing rods with spoons and lures the size of hand grenades, so landing even a small one with a tube fly and an 8wt is always a good day on the water. I claimed a distant second with two silver salmon that hopefully announced the first of that species run up the river but it was not to be that week. No other silvers, kings or sockeyes were caught by our clan.

Our schedule called for six days of fishing from Sunday through Friday and we decided to plunk down our plastic for an optional fly out to an even more remote spot for fly fishing for arctic char and perhaps grayling. But Wednesday the float planes at King Salmon were socked in and Thursday was worse with fog surrounding the lodge. So we had to content ourselves with some more fly fishing for salmon on the river. Not bad for second prize right?

On Thursday afternoon with skies clearing and hope rising for a fly out the next day, Robby took Judy and me back to the downriver sand bar to conquer more chum salmon. As we beached the boat, Robby pointed out moving waves of chum salmon very close to shore so we started wading only ankle deep and began casting with success.

ankle deep and began casting with success. By late afternoon, Judy was taking a break and I was about to give up with a sore arm when I got a hookup simply resting the fly below me in the current. It rolled over, then jumped out of the water high enough that Robby saw it was a good size chum, maybe the best of the morning for me he said. So I worked the fish trying to keep its head up and turning it from side to side hoping to wear it out and reel it close enough for the guide to grab the leader. By this time we knew that if a salmon spotted a guide or his shadow wading to the leader, it would instinctively make a strong burst up river and away from the menacing predator. Judy aptly nick named Robby "The Bear" from this instinctive fish response but you became accustomed to that and just let the salmon run against a full drag and hoped the barbless hook would hold.

Ah, but this critter must have been a rodeo rider back in the ocean because as Robby reached for the line, instead of the usual run away from the Bear, this salmon cut between us and then slashed a 360 degree circle behind and around me. For a split second I thought I might be turned into a Maypole with a yellow ribbon of 9wt. fly line wound around my body. Somehow with my boots stuck in river sand, I managed to whip the fly rod over and around my head while the big salmon tore completely around me, put its head down two feet in front of my wading boots and then barreled straight for the bank on the other side of the river

At that point I lost every firing neuron in my old feeble brain. Instead of letting this heavyweight run I jammed the fighting butt of my rod into my gut determined to stop this blanket-blank fish and in a moment of sheer stupidity I reached up and grabbed the middle of the rod for more leverage. Dumb, dumb and dumber. Now, instead of the stress running down as designed by Orvis to the thick butt section of the graphite, the force was suddenly concentrated in a much thinner section of tubular graphite.

Oh yeah.....snap! My 7-piece travel rod became a seven and a half piece stick. Professor Glen Edwards, who retired from a successful career of doing failure analysis on materials, could only chuckle when I displayed the classic fracture over a big glass of wine at the lodge. But no matter, Orvis could repair the rod and we would be using our 6 wt. rods anyway for arctic char on the fly out on the last day. (And of course I'm not above turning my idiocy into a fish story to my grandkids. "*Yep, son, that monster fish was sooo big and sooo heavy it just bent my rod and broke it into little pieces!*")

Friday morning the float plane flew in under clear, sunny skies for our fly out adventure. Judy had opted out because of her shoulder disability and senior citizens Glen, Jackie and I had requested a fly out to a site that had minimal

hiking and no climbing that might require subsequent Medicare payments. Michael replied he had found a perfect spot but it was more distant and beyond the usual fly out sites for the air service so it would be more expensive but we felt the seclusion would be worth it. So we eagerly watched the Cessna 206 pull up to the lodge dock and began loading ourselves and our gear into the cabin.

An hour later we touched down on the water as smooth as butter and taxied to a narrow beach somewhere on Becharof Lake. We piled our gear on the sand and watched the Cessna take off, hopefully to return late that afternoon.

Michael told us the stream was named Cabin Creek but it doesn't appear on any map we found. According to the Fly Fisherman's Guide this remote part of the Alaska Peninsula doesn't receive many human visitors unlike the industrial tourism in nearby Katmai for several reasons. First, this section of the peninsula has extremely severe weather because of the pressure gradient between Bristol Bay and the Gulf of Alaska. Second, the lake and streams in the area have very few if any, rainbow trout, the mainstay target of fly out fisherman. Finally, Becharof has the highest concentration of bears in Alaska. But these are not the brown bears accustomed to human activity like the bears around the lodge or the photo op bears at Brooks Falls where the Forest Service has built viewing platforms. The book instead noted that Becharof bears are reputed to have a hair trigger "fight or flight" response.

So when we began our hike through chest high grass and fireweed and approached any dense brush, Michael would occasionally let out a "HEY BEAR" shout and we kept up a conversation to let any Becharof bear know we were loudmouthed anglers and not stealthy hunters. It was a bit eerie to walk single file following a mere hint of a trail that you knew wasn't made by humans. (And yes Virginia, grizzly bear poo is BIG.)

All those thoughts disappeared when we reached the bank of the creek. There in that cold, crystal clear water, glistening like shimmering rubies in a Maharaja's fountain were hundreds of scarlet sockeye salmon stretching from the mouth of the stream at the lake as far as we could see upstream, resting momentarily on their journey from the lake to some distant spawning ground upstream near the base of the surrounding mountains. It was an absolutely awesome sight, dozens and dozens of sockeyes, green heads pointing against the current with a just a hint of motion until one or another would suddenly burst out of the cluster and momentarily produce mayhem until the pod settled once again.



### **Sockeye salmon cluster resting in a pool in Cabin Creek, Alaska Peninsula**

Careful not to spook the resting fish, Michael explained that the arctic char, which appeared as ghost-like dark shadows among the larger brilliant sockeye, would be swimming underneath and behind the salmon to suck up any eggs floating down. So the obvious technique was to use a barbless hook below a glass bead to imitate an egg with small split shot for weight. Above that Michael attached a small white bobber.....yes, I know we call them "indicators" in fly fishing but this looked, felt and acted like the bobber from my first days of fishing for carp in my steel town home back in Pennsylvania. And the system worked. No sign of grasshoppers, ants or any insects besides the pesky "no-see'ums" and a few flies so it wouldn't be a day for dry fly fishing.

Observant Jackie quickly found a "honey hole" of arctic char in a ripple where the stream split into two branches and began a massacre, catching and releasing one after another with her 6wt. weapon. As predicted by her husband, she wouldn't leave a spot like that until she had fooled every char in the area or until the sun went down and it was too dark to fish. In the meantime point recon Glen had moved upstream on the left fork and was into a nice fish to photograph. These weren't the yard long huge char in spawning colors that you see in documentaries above the Arctic Circle. These ranged between 10 to 20 inches and you could clearly see the kinship with brook trout by their orange spots and white edged fins.

I found a couple of rich spots to work below Glen and more often than not, I'd hook them on the end of the downswing. They fought like a few big Brookies I have caught in Colorado but this was a far cry from the crowded weekends on the Fryingpan or the Arkansas River where some of the older trout have smiled at hundreds of fly patterns flung at them. These fish probably had never seen a human. And yet some of the biggest char here were



### **Typical arctic char caught and released from Cabin Creek**

consistently able to discern the difference between that amorphous glass bead floating by and real sockeye eggs. Even Michael tried his hand at coaxing a couple of big shadows among the sockeye in a deep pool but to no avail. Maybe some fish are inherently wiser and that's why they get to grow bigger than others. Chuckle!

After a pause for lunch under a sunny warm sky, astute Jackie found still another big pool of char in a deep pool while pathfinder Glen as usual explored a curve upstream. I found a cluster of char that were hiding under a couple of overhanging willows. Once again I found that more often than not, the strikes came at the end of the down swing. Maybe not the explosions of a strike on a dry fly on the surface but they hit hard and often. I was happy that Michael had loaned me a spare set of pliers to ply hooks from a dozen char while he checked on Jackie and Glen.



### **Male sockeye salmon caught and released from Cabin Creek**

There had to be an ending to this and it was time to begin the half mile trek back to the beach, pausing here and there to check if the char had settled back into some of the hot spots. But as I was wading in the middle of the wide portion of the stream I stopped to rest my hands on my wading staff and just suck in the gorgeous scene around me. Directly ahead beyond the mouth of the stream and across this vast lake in the distance were snowcapped volcanoes. A lush green treeless mountain (timberline is only a couple of thousand feet in this part of Alaska) was on my left and a huge basalt dike from some extinct volcano rose sharply on the right. Some ominous cumulus clouds were forming in the hills behind us and I began to think about incoming weather and hopefully started listening for the sound of an engine. Just then I glanced downstream and coming straight at me was a "V" mini tsunami...fifty, a hundred, sockeyes entering the stream swimming through a shallow ripple portion not yet aware of the intruding creature standing there in awe.

My mind struggled to search for the appropriate descriptive word.....and failed. The red tide stopped at my shadow and I crawled up the bank and followed the others back to the bank. Jackie, prepared and organized as ever, whipped out a flask of smooth Irish whiskey as we sat down on a driftwood log. Perfect touch to a great day.

Just a final hint; the owner of the lodge flew in from his home in Hawaii that day and mentioned that once again he would donate a trip for two to the auction at the Colorado Trout Unlimited Annual Dinner next year.

It could be yours.

### ***Try Out Our New Website***

West Denver's website is new and improved. We hired a professional web developer to give us a state-of-the-art website. The site includes our mission, current news, an events calendar, and a description of Chapter activities. It is a great place to learn more about current projects and information how you can be involved in them. Our Chapter has over 1,100 members, and we are proud of the difference we make through our outreach and conservation activities.

Our site currently averages around 60 visitors per week. The site is full of photographs, and we rely on members who attend Chapter activities to help supply these photographs. We welcome your feedback and suggestions for improvements. You can leave comments for us on the "About Us" drop-down menu, or email the webmaster directly at <ed.calmus@gmail.com>. We want the website to be a valuable resource for all West Denver fly fishers. Your feedback will help.

### ***A Generous Gesture, Indeed***

The Discount Fishing Tackle owner, Mike Grey, has given the Chapter ten \$10 gift cards that he intends to give to new members. He hopes that the gifts will bring in new members for us in addition to helping his business. Mike says that as soon as he starts seeing the redeemed cards, he will provide us with more. Note, also, that Mike gives a 10% on most items to WDTU members.



### ***A Note About Email Address Changes***

A number of you have changed email addresses without telling us. Thus, you, or friends of yours, may no longer be receiving the Electronic Anglers' Edge. PLEASE notify at least one of us whenever you change either your email address, snail mail address and/or telephone number so that we can communicate with you quickly and efficiently. Thank you.

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**Do you want to be active in our conservation activities and join our Rapid Response List?**

Circle Yes or No

## Program October 7, 2015

at The American Mountaineering Center

Golden, Colorado

- 3 WDTU Planning Session-TBA
- 7 Tying Corner/Welcome 6:30 PM  
Chapter Meeting-AMC  
Speaker: Kirk Deeter
- 12 Board Meeting 7:00 PM, 300 HH, CSM\*
- 16-17 CTU Fall Meeting-Steamboat Springs

## Anglers' Edge@

Published 6 Times per Year by the West Denver Chapter of Trout Unlimited, 385 Flora Way, Golden, CO 80401.

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We want your contributions such as guest editorials, letters-to-the-editor, photographs, trip reports, etc. Send them to the Editor by e-mail <weimerj@earthlink.net> or to Jon Weimer, 700 Washington St. Suite 809, Denver, CO 80203.

All materials are subject to editing. Text (word document) and graphics/photos preferred JPG. Please check with the editor before submitting files.

Please send postal change-of-address information to: Linda Miyamoto at <sullimoto@gmail.com>.

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## West Denver Chapter Trout Unlimited Organization And Officers: 2013

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Trout Unlimited:

"Founded in 1959, TU is the leading conservation organization dedicated to conserving, protecting, and restoring, North America's trout and salmon fisheries and their watersheds. Our 100,000 members are organized into 450 local chapters nationwide. These volunteer chapters are the "watchdogs" of their local rivers and streams. They conduct stream restoration projects, monitor legislation, and fight for "fish friendly" policies with state and local officials. Through its Washington DC-based national headquarters, TU conducts valuable scientific and economic research to foster more enlightened trout and salmon management practices, lobbies to strengthen environmental legislation like the Clean Water Act and Endangered Species Act, and provides a voice for its 100,000 members."

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