

FLYER

OAK BROOK TROUT UNLIMITED MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



VOLUME 9, ISSUE 01, JANUARY 2009

Tracking Coasters

by Mark Brouder and Henry Quinlan

Reprinted from the Wild Rivers TU Chapter in Ashland, Wisconsin

In May of this past year, US Fish and Wildlife Service biologists, with assistance from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Northern Michigan University, and the Oak Brook, IL Chapter of Trout Unlimited, began using Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tag technology to track the movement of brook trout into and out of several Lake Superior tributaries. The PIT tags used are just under an inch long and each tag has a unique 16-digit code. Tags are surgically inserted into the abdominal cavity of a fish and fish are released.

Tagged fish are detected by remote detection stations with in-stream antenna, with a portable backpack detection unit, or by a hand held reader (if the fish is in hand). When a tagged fish passes a remote detection station the unique tag code,

date, and time of passage is recorded. By using two antenna systems we can determine the direction of fish movement and can confirm whether or not fish leave a stream and enter Lake Superior.

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Why I Am Here

Yesterday, I spent the afternoon rowing a boat down the Clark Fork River, with one Missoula County Commissioner and the County Floodplain Administrator in tow. We were part of a Montana TU tour to show the commissioners problems with growth and streamside development. I basically had a private audience to thank the commissioner for his support of TU grant proposals, discuss the difficulties inherent in mining reclamation, and talk about 1872 Mining Law Reform. And, in between stretches of triple stories and lawn, hot tubs over the river, old tires and too small bridges, I'd see an osprey fly overhead. I'd watch small but unspoiled stands of cottonwoods drift by, fish rising in the eddies... It was a sunny day, in the mid 80s, and I got to thinking: this ain't bad.

My friends and family back home, in that frantic East Coast of my suburban memory, have a hard time figuring exactly what I do. I think my Dad still doubts that I actually get paid. To explain, I've begun to tell them, that if you could go back in time and ask young Rob Roberts—that wet, scrawny kid, late for dinner, catching crayfish in the creek—what he wanted to do with his life, that if he could have conjured up a lucid answer, he would have said: I want to fix streams and rivers, make them better.

And that's what I get to do. That is, in a nutshell, why I am here.

It's not everyday—with the long days of grant writing, reading financial statements, dealing with contracts and invoices and other parts of the job that we all put up with—that this job even makes sense to me. There are times when I want to leave the office, strap my life on my back and wander—to forget electronic timesheets, printers that don't work, conference calls. But there are other times, that glimpse of a wary Bull trout under a newly formed logjam, a stubborn dogwood germinating in dry, rocky soil... that something that makes me stop and say, hell yes. This is actually working.

With so many responsibilities and lists of things to do, it's easy to lose sight of that magic.

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Future Meetings and Events

Go to your 2009 calendar and mark down the following meeting and event dates:

January 21, 2009

Membership meeting at OBPD Rec Center – 7:00 PM
Speaker Mat Wagner, owner of The Driftless Angler shop in Viroqua "Fishing in Off-Color Water"

February 18, 2009

Membership meeting at OBPD Rec Center – 7:00 PM
Speaker – Kevin Feenstra west Michigan guide and tyer

February 20 – 22, 2009

Midwest Great Waters Expo
Renaissance Schaumburg Hotel

March 18, 2009

Membership meeting at OBPD Rec Center – 7:00 PM
Speaker – Eric Heckman, owner Coren's Rod & Reel Service

April 15, 2009

Membership meeting at OBPD Rec Center – 7:00 PM
Speaker TBA

OBTU Needs You.

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Letter from the President

Dear Members:

Happy New Year to you all! I know that the word “change” has been beaten to death in the past year, but it is what comes to mind as I write. Yes, there is change in the White House and the change to the New Year. There has been more than a season’s change of weather in the last 2 weeks of 2008, with heavy snow, freezing rain, thunderstorms, high wind, and temperatures from 4 – 60 degrees in the Chicago area. And its time that there is change in Oak Brook Trout Unlimited.

This is my last column as chapter president as my term ends with the annual membership meeting on January 21st. I have been pleased and honored to work with a number of very qualified and dedicated chapter members over the last four years. In that time, we have seen a number of developments within the chapter.

Oak Brook TU now has a vibrant and growing youth education program, including fly fishing merit badge classes, a scout fly fishing camp, leadership in the Illinois Council Youth Fly Fishing & Conservation Camp, as well as the first “Trout In the Classroom” program in Illinois.

We have participated in conservation projects on the Coldwater River, Tyler Creek, and the AuSable River in Michigan, the Blue

River and Big Spring in Wisconsin, North Bear Creek in Iowa, Clear Creek and the So. Branch Kinnikinnick Creek in Illinois. As well, we have purchased equipment for a Coaster Brook Trout monitoring station administered by the US Fish & Wildlife Service currently on Whittlesey Creek near Ashland, WI.

The chapter now has a functioning website, and newsletters are being sent by email to all chapter members who have provided their address.

These activities have been accomplished through the efforts of many chapter members, including: Clyde Alho, Jeff Berg, Wally Bock, John Breslin, Rich Ference, Dave George, Andy Gulya, Joe Hammon, Steve Harrison, Fred Hodge, Jeff Kroger, Claude Mays, Joseph Meyer, Ed Michael, Greg Prosen, Chuck Roberts, Jeremy Slade, Doug Vanerka, Joe Vitti, Ken Voight, John Weibel, Phil Young, and Stan Zarnowiecki.

Thanks for allowing me to participate in the chapter’s activities. I look forward to seeing you at an upcoming meeting or event.



Tracking Coasters *continued from page 1*

This allows biologists to collect data on fish movement patterns in and out of a stream without having to be present or expend resources to have fish in hand!

As part of an ongoing coaster brook trout restoration experiment, a solar-powered, remote PIT tag detection station was deployed near the mouths of Whittlesey and Little Whittlesey creeks, tributaries to Chequamegon Bay, Lake Superior. After the remote station became operable, 2,000, 5-6 inch coaster brook trout from the Iron River National Fish Hatchery, each with its own unique PIT tag, were stocked into Whittlesey Creek. As of early December, 2008, 84 of the 2,000 PIT tagged coaster brook trout have moved downstream and been detected by the remote PIT tag station near the mouth of Whittlesey Creek. The majority (56) of the brook trout were found to be leaving Whittlesey Creek and entering Chequamegon Bay. Of the 56 trout that left Whittlesey Creek, three later returned and five entered Little Whittlesey Creek. The whereabouts of the remaining 48 trout that left Whittlesey Creek are currently unknown. A boat electrofishing survey of the Chequamegon Bay shoreline did not turn up any brook trout.

In addition to the PIT tag stations at Whittlesey and Little Whittlesey creeks, Wisconsin, the Fish and Wildlife Service and Isle Royale National Park installed a remote PIT tag station near the mouth of Washington Creek/Washington Harbor at Isle Royale, Michigan. Shortly after the deployment of this station, biologists captured brook trout from both Washington Harbor and Washington Creek, implanted each with a PIT tag and released them back near their point of capture. Data retrieved from the remote station at Washington Creek showed that adult brook trout originally captured and tagged in Washington Harbor entered Washington Creek this fall, presumably as part of the fall spawning run.

With several remote PIT tag stations up and running, the Fish and Wildlife Service is working with its Federal, State, Tribal, and other partners to explore options for the development of a large-scale network of PIT tag stations to include new locations or locations adjacent to existing stations to allow for greater coverage and thus, greater potential for detecting a tagged brook trout after it leaves a given stream. 🐟

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Diagnosing Diseases

The National Wild Fish Health Survey plots the occurrence of disease

By Ken Phillips

Reprinted from "Eddies" Fall, 2008 –vol. 1 no. 3 – The publication of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Set in Missoula, Montana during the 1920's and 30's the film "A River Runs Through It" brought the grace and art of fly-fishing to the forefront. Well before the 1992 movie, western states like Colorado and Montana were considered the fly-fishing Mecca. Many of their streams were known to have rainbow and cutthroat trout populations that numbered in the thousands of fish per mile of stream.

By the mid-1990's, things took a downward turn. Trout populations in Montana's Madison River plummeted. In other streams, young trout were virtually absent. Biologists traced the losses to whirling disease, a deadly fish disease caused by a microscopic parasite called only by its scientific name, *Myxobolus cerebralis*. Spores of the parasite target cartilage in the head, resulting in bone and nerve damage that cause infected fish to swim in a spiral, or "whirling" pattern that greatly reduces their ability to swim away from predators, or to capture prey of their own. Eventually, severely infected fish die.

Prior to the outbreak of whirling disease, little was known about the distribution of agents or pathogens of fish disease in the wild. While it is not possible to eliminate pathogens such as *Myxobolus cerebralis* from the wild, knowing where they exist is a valuable tool to limit the spread of deadly disease pathogens. Fishery biologists could use the information when making decisions on moving wild fish stocks, collection of fish tissues from wild fish, or stocking fish.

To address the need to gather this information, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service developed the National Wild Fish Health Survey (NWFHS), and naturally nested it in our nine Fish Health Centers across the nation. The Centers already performed fish health inspections at National Fish Hatcheries, giving it a national scope with internationally recognized expertise. The NWFHS launched in 1997.

The Fish Health Centers use standardized protocols to determine the distribution of 11 different viral, bacteriological, and parasitic pathogens on a national scale. They also look for additional pathogens of local importance, like infectious salmon anemia in the Northeast, or salmonid ceratmyxosis in the Pacific Northwest.

The Fish Health Centers partner with other federal, state, tribal and non-governmental organization biologists to determine areas to be sampled. Often the Fish Health Centers "piggy-back" sampling efforts with partners to make efficient use of time and money. Results from NWFHS have been used by biologists at all levels to make fishery management decisions.

What Robert Redford's movie did for fly-fishing, Steve McQueen's B-movie "The Blob" might come close to portraying Viral

Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS) in the Great Lakes. VHS does to fish flesh what Ebola viruses do to the human body. VHS causes internal hemorrhaging and fish bleed to death.

In the spring of 2005, a significant kill of freshwater drum occurred in Lake Ontario's Bay of Quinte in Ontario, Canada. The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources identified the cause as VHS, considered by many disease pathologists as the most feared fish pathogen in the world. This was the first report of VHS in the Great Lakes region. Later in 2005, VHS was found in muskellunge in Lake St. Clair, Michigan. First reported as a disease of European rainbow trout in 1938, it was not until 1963 that VHS was determined as the responsible pathogen.

The NWFHS has been an important tool in responding to emerging aquatic conservation issues such as the outbreak of VHS in the Great Lakes.

The NWFHS has been an important tool in responding to emerging aquatic conservation issues such as the outbreak of VHS in the Great Lakes. In spring 2006 fish kills occurred throughout the lower Great Lakes, including Lake St. Clair, Lake Ontario, Lake Erie, and the St. Lawrence River. Freshwater drum and yellow perch died in Lake Erie. The La Crosse Fish Health Center in Wisconsin, where I work, teamed with the Ohio Division of Wildlife and sampled numerous fish species from Lake Erie to determine the distribution of VHS.

In 2007, we expanded NWFHS efforts in the Midwest, and worked with state and tribal partners looking for agents of disease in the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, lakes Michigan and Superior, and numerous smaller inland lakes. Typically, partner agencies would collect and ship fish on ice to the La Crosse Fish Health Center, where we screened them for VHS and other pathogens.

The Ohio Division of Wildlife and La Crosse Fish Health Center isolated VHS as part of routine spawning of muskellunge from eastern Ohio's Clear Fork Reservoir in April, the first detection of VHS outside of the Great Lakes basin. We assisted the Ohio Division of Wildlife with follow-up work in the Mohican and Muskingum Rivers and found no VHS, but we did detect spring viremia of carp virus from bluegill and largemouth bass, the first detection in a non-minnow species in the U.S.

All living things can suffer from disease and fish are no exception. Diseases kill fish in hatcheries, and in the wild. With the nasty nature of VHS and debilitating whirling disease, knowing the location of your enemy is extremely valuable, and so is the NWFHS. For more information visit www.fws.gov/wildfishsurvey. 🐟

Ken Phillips is a microbiologist at the LaCrosse Fish Health Center in LaCrosse, WI. "Eddies" can be found at www.fws.gov/eddies



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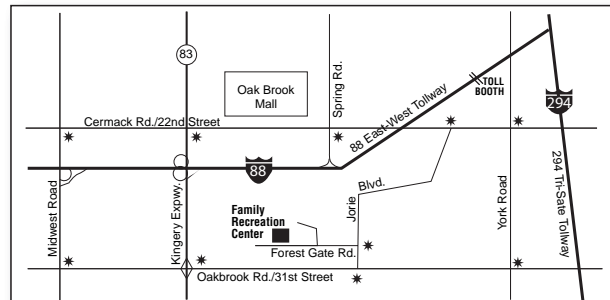
Why I Am Here *continued from page 1*

I hope that's why we are all here. For the other part of the job—watching the fruition of many years of hard work and really, doubt and uncertainty, finally come to life as a place restored, a place saved. That makes it all worth it.

Something moved me today and I'm holding onto that moment. I hope I never lose that possibility—become too experienced, wise, cool, old or mature—to be inspired. Where are we if we cannot take a deep breath, take in all our accomplishments, however small or large and roll in them?

That is why I work here. Because, I think, there are people who understand. I thought I'd share. Keep up the good work. Young Rob thanks you. 🐟

Rob Roberts, August 12, 2008. Rob Roberts is a member of Trout Unlimited's Water Restoration staff. He lives in Missoula, MT and organizes stream restoration projects in historic mining areas.



Oak Brook Chapter meets at the Oak Brook Park District Recreation Center 1300 Forest Gate Rd.

From Jorie Blvd. Turn west at Forest Gate Rd. (first stop light north of 31st Street). Follow Forest Gate straight into the Recreation Center parking lot. We meet in Meeting Room 2/3.



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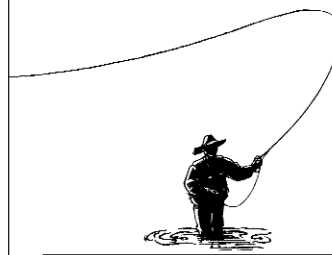
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