



CONEWAGO FLY FISHERMAN NEWSLETTER

Winter 2010

www.flyfisher.com

www.worldfishingforum.info

Rob Bennett 717-677-4272 Eugene "Guido" Macri 717-762-9750

email: gene@flyfisher.com; gene@eugenemacri.com

Published by E. Macri Aquatic and Environmental Scientist and Riverkeeper

Notes From Rob and Gene

The fish have survived the summer drought. Many small browns have been spotted and caught so the stream in its own amazing way despite the low waters environmentally sustained our fish population. Browns and rainbows are being reported, and we stocked a small stocking of colorful brooks on November 23. One report of a big brown and Gene saw two large browns feeding in the upper end of our fly zone. As we write this newsletter a nice soaking rain has hit the Gettysburg area with anticipated quantities of over 1.5 inches!

Overall this was one of the worst droughts in 20 years but our fish survived while other clubs lost populations of fish. We have the best habitat and temperature regime on the stream with the highest oxygen levels for the trout to survive. Our Hemlocks are still hanging on providing shade and cover to the fish. We appreciate fly anglers not fishing when the stream temps reach 70f. What this does is allow the fish to only put up with the stress of the low water and not the fishing stress which gives them an advantage in survival. This allows the stream to lie fallow like the Riverkeepers of England have done for hundreds of years and gives the fish a chance to recover. Temps above 71f are the club rule for not fishing.

Your spring newsletter will give you dates, and times of stockings and club activities.

Dues

Our club's annual fee has hardly been raised in a number of years. The club below charges at least \$2500.00 and the club above charges in the neighborhood of \$5000.00 and we charge less for a better fishery. In order to keep the stream properly maintained in a proper scientific manner we need to raise fees to meet our needs. The fee this year will be \$495.00 if paid by January 1, 2011. After January 1, 2011 the fee will be \$600. Fees will only slightly increase and stay relatively stable for long time members. New members will have a different fee structure.

Best Winter Flies

- Black Woolly Buzzer: Size 8-12
- White Maribou: Size 8-14
- Black Olive Woolly Buzzer: Size 8-14
- Little Brown Trout Streamer: Size 12-14
- Little Brook Trout Streamer: Size 12-14
- Little Rainbow Trout Streamer: Size 12-14
- San Juan Worm: Red, White, Grey, Yellow, Sizes: 16-10
- Red, Black, Brown, Tan, Cream Midge Larvae and Pupae: Size 16-24
- Little Brown Stonefly: Size 12-14
- Large Black Stonefly: Size 8-10
- Green Caddis Worm: Size 10-16
- Blue Winged Olive (Baetis) Nymph: Size 16-20
- Pheasant Tail Nymph: Size 14-20
- Hare's Ear Nymph G.R.: Size 14-20
- Little Crayfish Size: 8-14



Handling of Fish

Please handle the fish as little as possible. If photographing do it quickly with removing the fly first, preferably with fish in shallow water.

My Fly Fishing Websites

www.flyfisher.com
www.worldfishingforum.info
www.limestoner.com
www.flyfishingforbrooktrout.com
www.flyfishingforbrowntrout.com
www.yellowbreechescreek.com
www.letortspringrun.com
www.fallingspringrun.com
www.bigspringcreek.com
www.aquaticinstitute.com
www.eugenemacri.com
www.pennflyfishing.com
www.pennflyfishing.com/forum
www.riverkeeperflyfishing.com

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Available**

WINTER MIDGE FISHING ON THE CONEWAGO

BY

EUGENE MACRI

The Conewago and most similar type freestone streams have a lot of midge activity especially in the winter. Trout feed on midges all year but in the winter they are one of the few insects hatching. Because the fish feed on all stages of midges it's best to be ready for what you will find rather than to end up disappointed and frustrated when you find rising trout, yes rising trout in the winter.

On sunny days when the water temps hit the 40's you will find midge activity on the Conewago. You need to remember a couple of points however: 1) search an open section of water with the sun on it with holding water nearby and 2) scan the stream with your binoculars and try and find the fish first.

If you don't do this many of you will end up wading and spooking the fish before you have a chance to even cast your fly. Trout will rise and will feed on midges under the surface with even snow on the banks. Trout do not quit feeding in winter they just feed less in a freestone stream. Midge emergences allow the trout to feed on large quantities of food although small in size in a short period of time.

Equipment: You are better off with longer rods especially when midge fishing. Eight and half foot and nine foot rods give you an advantage in casting, hooking and playing the fish. If you have a 9 foot rod, a 9 foot leader and 9 feet of extending from the tip that's all you will need. For most fly anglers any more line and you won't hook the fish anyway. Your leader should not be too light. Try and get away with 5x or even 4x depending upon brand. It's not always the size but the suppleness of the leader that allows it to flow properly in the water and not cause drag rather than the absolute diameter. Make sure you have a decent drag on your reel because you should play the fish right off the reel.

Technique and Methods: You will fish up stream. You want most of the line off the water and a nymph indicator may help or hinder you depending upon the water depth. You might be better off watching where the leader enters the water and any stoppage strike side ways by rolling you wrist slightly and slipping the line through your fingers against the rod at the same time. This is a type of slip strike. If you strike too hard you actually just prick the fish. Your best rod action for this type of fishing is medium dry fly not super stiff like some graphite rods. A bamboo rod is actually a better piece of equipment for midge fishing.

You will be using very small shot (micro shot) around 10 inches above the fly. Bend the hook shank sideways slightly off set and it will give you more surface area in the fish's mouth.

You are looking for fish that are feeding but you can also fish the water in spots that "look fishy" or are known to hold fish. The fly is just flipped upstream and dead drifted downstream very carefully. On some days the fish will move for the fly, while on other days you need to almost put it in their mouth. Guide the fly with the long rod into pockets and get it deep and then let it rise naturally or raise the tip while it goes through currents. This is one of the secrets of midge fishing. The trout will almost hook themselves if you fish properly. You can use this method on just about every nook and cranny in the stretch and often pick up many fish you didn't know that were there.

When you find fish actively feeding especially against the banks do not line the fish with the cast. Notice if the fish has a cycle of feeding some fish will just pump but some fish seem to have cyclic feeding pattern and try to get your fly in that drift lane during that cycle. Watch for flashes in the water. Often these are trout feeding deep on the larvae or pupae drifting.



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Playing and Landing The Fish: Do not raise your rod high over your head when trying to play a fish on a midge. You'll snap the leader back and lose 75% of them. This technique widely used on television and fishing videos is for the those people who lack any serious understanding of what a fishing rod is. A fly rod is a lever. You want to make it shorter to land the fish and you don't allow the fish to run in any direction. You want the fish to run in one direction, preferably upstream to tire them. If a fish of any size gets below you with a size 20 hook you will have very little chance of landing most of them even if you are the best fly angler in the world like my friend Lefty Kreh. Nobody can land large fish against the current with midges and light tippets. Play your fish to the side at an angle and tire them quickly. Long handle nets are an advantage in any stream.

Ecology: Midges (non biting) are usually called Chironomids. They have a complete metamorphosis. They have an egg, larva, pupa and adult. The trout feed on all three stages: larva, pupa and adult. Here's what these insects look like:



This is a midge larva. They come in many colors including red, white, cream, brown, grey and even purple like colors. Their sizes vary from a size 24 hook to a size 10 long shank. They live in the sediments and between rocks, pebbles and vegetation.



This is a pupa and will come to the surface to emerge into an adult. Once again these are in numerous colors and often have a bubble surrounding them when they are emerging.



Here's an example of a pupa becoming an adult. You can actually tie flies with these two stages on a larger hook. You can use a variety of materials including synthetics or fur. There are numerous books on midge fishing of various qualities. The adult fly doesn't usually stay on the water too long. Most of the flies taken are in larva, pupa or pupa to adult stage. Here are some simple patterns that I have used over the years that work very well.

Larval Patterns

- Larval Midge Patterns are very simple flies. Here's a secret that you won't find in most books or fly fishing magazines: Tie the same patterns in the same sizes in a variety of body materials. In other words, some of my patterns have bodies of simple colored thread, others are just fur mixes with thin wire wrapped around the body, while others are tied the same way with synthetics. Why? It appears depending upon lighting conditions some patterns work better against different backgrounds and substrates of the stream. Midge larva most likely appear to have a translucent glow underwater in my estimation on many streams. In these situations the fish may hit one body material pattern and ignore another. Also, try different hook types. English bait hooks give you a good curve but you'll have less of hooking percentage. But some days the larva tied on a curved hook shank will get you many more hits than a straight shank. Also, try tying the larva patterns on 3x and 5x short hooks which give you a bigger hook gap to increase hooking percentages. The flies don't look as pretty but they may give you a better day.

WINTER MIDGE FISHING ON THE CONEWAGO

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Pupal Patterns and Adult: Pupa land adult patterns for midges fall into two major categories general color patterns and specific patterns. You can catch a lot of trout when midge fishing by simply using extremely small soft hackle type patterns. These patterns consist of a very simple thread or fur body and some type of simple little hackle. You would tie these in cream, white, black, red, tan and brown patterns. These are very simple patterns that work at all three levels, deep, mid, and on the surface. These are the standard patterns that have been used in the Cumberland Valley for over 50 years on both freestone and limestone streams. Why do they work so well? Because in most instances in freestone streams the trout are feeding on many stages of these flies so a decent facsimile will catch all but the most selective trout. On limestone spring creeks in recent years these flies seem to work some days but fail on just as many occasions. Why? There are so many midges on limestone spring creeks and some of the little bastards emerge for days that the fish get a really good look at them and are really attuned to their methods of emergence and behavior. This is less true on a stream like the Conewago where you don't usually get 3 or 4 days of the same damn midge emerging.

To tie some specific patterns use a fur or synthetic for the body and then use small tufts of poly, nylon or other material to imitate the head region. You can also add some copper wire to the body so the shank will sink below the water and the tufts will be in the film. Another secret pattern that works on midge fishing on both limestone and freestone streams is a Grizzly Bivisible Midge in sizes 18 to 24. This was one that Charlie Fox and other limestone fly anglers most used patterns for fishing the midges. It works for lots of different hatches especially if you put a very thin red fur body! Winter fly fishing with midges can be productive and you don't need a lot of patterns. Find the fish or likely area on a warm day and follow my basic rules.

CONEWAGO FLY ANGLERS HOST HEALING WATERS



On October 23, 2010 the Conewago Fly Fishers hosted veterans and families from Walter Reed and various other centers in the Healing Waters Program. Tom Smithwick coordinated with Zion UCC Church in Arendtsville with Pastor Kim Blocher. Zion UCC provided lunch and dinner to participants. About ten club members helped with the guiding and all veterans caught fish (Steve Harry is shown above helping to land one which was quickly released).

Green Springs donated \$300.00 worth of trout for the small pond (brown trout pond) for the event which was covered by the local newspaper, Public Opinion of Chambersburg.

Pond Fishing

Pond fishing does not come with your membership. It is restricted to special arrangements made with Rob or Gene. Do not drive to the pond and fish without these arrangements. We have found dead fish from members who violated rule. The value of such large brook trout in our pond is usually only found in places like Canada so we must maintain proper handling and fishing to protect from abuse, however unintended. Questions Call Rob or Gene.