

LEE WULFF CHAPTER OF TROUT UNLIMITED

In This January 2026 Issue

- President's Message & Upcoming Chapter Events
 - Bob Olach's Fly of the Month
 - Grumpy's Page by Kurt Haberl
 - Action Center
 - Upcoming Non-Chapter Events
 - Chapter Officer Listing
 - Join Trout Unlimited

President's Message & Upcoming Chapter Events

Greetings fellow LWTU members,

I hope you all had a healthy, safe, and enjoyable holiday season and were able to connect with dear family and friends.

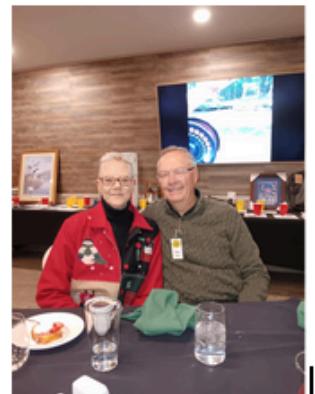
Now that the new year is upon us, our **January Monthly Meeting** will take place at [Village Pizza & Pub \(145 N John F. Kennedy Dr, Carpentersville, IL 60110\)](https://www.villagepizzaandpub.com/) on Thursday, January 15, 2026 with social hour starting at 6:00 PM. Consider joining us even if you live further out, tollway access is convenient.

Our program will feature **Caleb Schnitzler**, Fisheries Biologist out of the Decorah, Iowa Fisheries Management Office. Caleb's presentation will feature fishing opportunities in

the Iowa Driftless, ongoing stream restoration and habitat improvement work, and the hatchery's role in Iowa's trout program.

Our **book exchange** program will once again be available at in-person chapter meetings. Purchase books for as little as \$5, and then optionally return them after reading for a \$3 exchange credit. There will also be prize-drawings! Tickets will be available to purchase at \$5 each.

The chapter's annual holiday banquet and fundraiser at Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation was a lot of fun and a financial success. Fortunately the weather cooperated and the snow was cleaned up prior to the gathering. We are once again to Scott Lammers for organizing a wonderful event. Thanks to all who contributed in making this a great event. If you missed the event in 2025 be sure to plan to join us in 2026.



Scenes from the 2025 Holiday Banquet at Max McGraw Wildlife Federation

Don't let the cooler temperatures keep you from getting out to fish. Remember that [Iowa trout season](#) is **open year round**, so head on over there if you need to scratch an itch. [Wisconsin Early Catch and Release Season](#) opens Saturday, January 3 at 5 a.m., so you'll soon be able visit your favorite Wisconsin spring creeks and local haunts.

Once some warmer temperatures arrive, it will be time to think about **Lake Michigan tributary fishing** for big chinook, coho, steelhead, and brown trout. Rain drives fish into the tributaries, but be mindful of [water flows](#) and do not wade if levels are unsafe. If you need a few pointers, feel free to ask fellow chapter members for tips at our monthly meetings.

Our **Trout in the Classroom** program will be running in two classrooms at Crystal Lake North Elementary and Elgin Math & Science Academy. Due to technical difficulties, we will be working with rainbow trout instead of brook trout as in the past. We expect to populate the tanks in January 2026 and release the fish sometime in the spring. Please email me at prez@leewulfftu.org for further information.

Winter Fly Tying will happen on Tuesday nights beginning January 6, 2026 through late March 2026. Both long-time tiers and beginners are welcome to join in the fun. This year we're asking folks to share with the group a pattern or two they enjoy tying and fishing. Please contact Ralph Lessor at tying@leewulfftu.org to ask questions or express interest.

Please track your **volunteer hours** and report volunteer hours to the chapter treasurer by 4/10/2026 at treasurer@leewulfftu.org.

Upcoming Chapter Events

- Winter Fly Tying - January 6, 2026 on Tuesday evenings - Village Pizza
- January Chapter Meeting - Thursday, January 15 - Village Pizza
- February Chapter Meeting - Thursday, February 19 - Village Pizza
- March Chapter Meeting - Thursday, March 19 - Village Pizza
- Spring Driftless Outing - Late April 2026 - Westby/Viroqua

Do you have an idea for a **future speaker** or program? Please email speakers@leewulfftu.org.

Finally, we are always seeking **volunteers** to help out the chapter. Please email me at prez@leewulfftu.org for further information. Here's an easy one - could someone take the initiative to **snap some photos at the monthly meetings?** We need to save some memories for posterity and obtain new content for our banquet slideshow.

Watch your email for **Evite** invitations to upcoming events. I hope to see all of you very soon.

Tight Lines!!

Jonathan Culli



When moving between bodies of water while fishing please be extra diligent in cleaning and drying your gear. Read [this recent press release about Previously Undetected Parasite Discovered In Wild Wisconsin Trout](#) to learn more about why this is so important.

Bob Olach's Fly of the Month

Orange Shuck / Collared Hare and Partridge

Wet flies and nymphs with dubbed hare bodies have been popular for many years, actually centuries, with many fly fishers. Hare's Ear and the softer rabbit fur dubbings are available in many colors and by changing the hackle feather, many of the dressings can be used in different dry fly and wet fly dressings.

Lately, I've been watching many YouTube videos of wet fly and salmon / steelhead dressings and decided to take bits from various dressings and put them into another fly dressing. No doubt the same dressing shown here has been made by other fly tiers but I haven't found any exactly like mine. So I just named it by the materials used.

Quite a few Irish and other European "loch" / lake dressings use multiple hackles but I decided to use the usual Hungarian partridge feather at the front with some orange dubbing made from a small piece of orange Antron behind the Partridge hackle.



Orange Shuck Hare and Collared Partridge Soft Hackle

Hook:	Daiichi #1550 /1560 or Mustad 3906 / 3906B sizes 10-12
Thread:	Orange Danville 6/0 thread
Body:	Natural or dark Hare's ear dubbing
Tails:	1/4" piece of orange Antron or Sparkle yarn
Ribbing:	Small gold wire
Back / Collar Hackle:	Dubbing made from orange Antron or Sparkle yarn
Front Hackle:	Hungarian Partridge

Grumpy's Page by Kurt Haberl



It was last July, not quite hot enough for us to worry about the trout overheating, and yet warm enough that they might hunker down in cooler depths or shimmy up headwaters until they found spring water to their liking.

"Did you ever wonder why your nymphs sometimes work?" Schnoz said as we were gearing up and encouraging each other to pull on waders.

"You've been reading again," I said. "You keep reading stuff, and that usually means we catch fewer fish or none at all. I asked you to read unrelated stuff, like gardening or philosophy or beekeeping."

"That's what I'm doing. Have you ever heard of PMA? It means Positive Mental Attitude. It means you can tap into benevolent forces of the universe, kind of like being an optimist. For the beginner like you, a short definition would be something like "If you think you can, then you can."

"Um, well, I think I can see another fishless day."

"No, this is real. It's kind of like that musical we were in before the director kicked us out for acting like Groucho and Shemp, remember in high school? The Music Man. It was about "The Think Method" where Robert Preston taught kids how to play the instruments he sold them by thinking about what it would sound like if they could actually play an instrument."

"But that band of kids sounded terrible."

"Of course they did. They were too scared to know what they were doing. I, on the other hand, have realized you can't fool the universe by stumbling halfway into anything. You have to 'know' and you have to be specific, and you have to let the universe set things in motion, and then 'pow,' things happen."

"That's crazy talk. I catch fish sometimes on a nymph when I'm daydreaming about something else like how I can get back in Annie's good graces after putting red socks in the laundry, and I get a nymph to drift in front of a trout's nose, and it looks like food, and the trout is hungry, and I catch it. There's no PMA."

"Ha! First of all, trout don't have noses. They have lateral lines, kind of like horizontal antennae to sense things the universe sends their way. Secondly, if you weren't paying attention, then catching a fish was just dumb luck. I'm saying a nymph works best when you think it does. You have confidence in that fly. You think, you visualize, you are

positive about your success, and when you get good at The Think Method after a lot of practice, you catch more trout than you ever thought possible. I've been practicing for weeks now. Remember when I told you Huldy made chocolate chip cookies? That was PMA."

"You told me you kept repeating, 'Huldy, make ginger snaps. Huldy, make ginger snaps.' She probably heard you and made chocolate chip cookies to aggravate you and shut you up at the same time."

"I was practicing. I've got it down pat now. Want to take any bets? The one who catches the most fish gets—"

"Six donuts at the Countryside Bakery."

"Agreed."

By the time we finished that argument, we were stream side. I allowed Schnoz to go first, having seen that his tippet had a beadhead Royal Coachman on it, too big for July, and there hadn't been any grasshoppers yet. Schnoz usually chose a Royal Coachman because it was the prettiest fly in his box. With each drift, I could see his concentration cutting a deeper furrow in his brow, and after the third drift, I thought I could see a fine mist of steam coming out of his ears.

"I think I'm going to change flies," Schnoz said. "I'm no longer feeling mentally positive about this one. Go ahead and cast a few times even if it's futile."

"My fly sucks," I said. "My fly sucks." I cast it anyway, and midway through the drift, I saw the strike indicator dip, so I set the hook. A twelve-inch brown came to the net after a spirited tug of war on my 2-weight."

"What are you using?" Schnoz asked. "Just out of curiosity."

"An old zebra midge. Red wire. It's a terrible fly. It really sucks. I use it when there's no hatch and I don't care if I catch fish or not." On my third cast, I caught another brown.

The steam coming out of Schnoz's ears looked like it could pop popcorn.

"Well, I'm feeling positive mentally about a zebra midge, but I think it's better to use one with silver wire," he said.

"Good idea," I said. "Do you have to express your PMA out loud for the universe to take note? I'm asking just out of curiosity." He gave me a side eye. Huldy had mastered it, but his side eye looked silly because he couldn't help but crinkle his ample nose when he did it.

"I believe, no, I *know* this particular zebra midge is the best fly right now," he whispered.

"I think you have to shout it," I said.

He gave me another crinkled nose side eye. This was getting to be fun. On his third drift, his line went tight and he shouted, "Aha! See?" A minute later he pulled in a stick.

"Your stick is longer than either of my fish," I said. "But it doesn't count toward our bet."

"Bet?"

"Six donuts," I reminded him. The steam coming out of his ears seemed to turn black.

"I AM REALLY POSITIVE ABOUT THIS ZEBRA MIDGE!" he shouted. "THIS IS THE BEST FLY TODAY!"

Three drifts later, his line tightened. He set the hook and an epic battle began with a flashing golden warrior at least sixteen inches long. He gloated, said "See?" a half dozen times, and then as he added, "I told you my PMA is—" his mouth popped open as a fat sixteen inch golden creek chub came to my net. It was the largest one I'd ever seen.

"I think the universe is toying with you because you didn't say the word 'trout,'" I said. His ear steam suddenly stopped. His demeanor became that of a sullen, defeated teenager who had just begun cutting the grass as it started to rain.

After another hour, the tally was ten average trout for me, and three fish for Schnoz, a creek chub, a silver minnow, and a brown trout about four inches long. It was a silent drive to the Countryside Bakery, a gray mood changed only by my order for six donuts, three of which I knew were his favorites. As we wolfed them down, along with black coffee, he finally said, "I think I'm going to quit reading books."

"Well, don't read Harry Potter or you'll start trying to cast spells. Try some Maisie Dobbs murder mysteries, or Poirot, or maybe something you can't finish or understand like War and Peace."

"I don't understand trout," he said.

"Nobody does. Some guides are better than most, but even they get skunked. That's why it's so wonderful. Thanks for the donuts." He gave me another side eye. That one was better but nothing compared to Huldy's side eye. I guess we're all just practicing.



Protect Clean Water

On November 17, 2025, the U.S. EPA and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (“the Agencies”) jointly announced a proposed rule to dramatically restrict which bodies of water are protected by the safeguards of the Clean Water Act. The new proposal would substantially weaken the Clean Water Act, one of the Nation’s most effective natural resource laws. ***Opportunity for public comment on this new proposal is now open. The comment period will close on Monday, January 5th at 11:59p Eastern. [Click here to learn more and to take action.](#)***

Safeguard Sensitive Trout Habitat by Supporting Oil & Gas Reforms

Responsible energy development and conservation need not be mutually exclusive, but it depends on smart, balanced policies that support diverse public land uses.

Rolling back key oil and gas leasing reforms would jeopardize valuable fish and wildlife habitat. Please [click here](#) to join Trout Unlimited in urging Congress to keep fiscally responsible leasing reforms and steer leasing away from sensitive trout habitats.

Tell Congress: Protect Roadless Areas

The [U.S. Forest Service recently announced](#) its intent to rescind the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. This action would remove protections for 58.5 million acres of national forest land across 39 states that are home to irreplaceable fish and wildlife habitat.

Roadless areas provide some of the most important habitat for trout and salmon in the United States. They are destination locations for hunters and anglers. Roadless areas provide the spawning and rearing grounds for some of Alaska’s most robust salmon and steelhead runs and serve as the headwaters for the majority of Blue Ribbon trout streams in the West. In the Midwest and East, roadless areas also conserve important trout

fisheries. For example, 64 percent of roadless areas in Michigan and 90 percent of roadless areas in New Hampshire provide habitat for native trout.

This issue affects trout and salmon fisheries across the country and anglers need to speak up for these important public lands. Right now, your members of Congress need to hear from their constituents how important these public lands are for our outdoor traditions. Later this summer, the U.S. Forest Service will begin the process of repealing the Roadless Rule – at that time sending messages to the agency will be crucial.

Please take a moment today to urge your members of Congress to support strong protections for Roadless Areas and to ensure that the Forest Service provides robust opportunities for the public to make their voices heard.

TU Impacted by US Department of Government Efficiency

On March 4th, TU leaders hosted an urgent Town Hall meeting to help spread the word that US DOGE actions have already hit TU hard. Some highlights shared during the meeting:

- TU restoration projects across the country, including the [Driftless Area](#), rely heavily on government funding, with a government-to-private funding ratio of approximately 4-to-1.
- TU recently suffered unprecedented delays in receiving promised payments (~\$17 million) from government agencies for completed and ongoing TU restoration work.
- Up to \$180 million of promised future government funding (including [TU Driftless Area Restoration Effort](#) funding) for TU projects is now paused and in question, forcing TU to put many major current and planned restoration projects on hold. While not a TU project, here is a paused conservation project that hits close to home, resulting in major negative impacts to our Great Lakes fisheries: [*"Asian Carp barrier project on Des Plaines River delayed as federal funds hang in limbo"*](#) (WGN News video)
- TU restoration work up until this current government funding pause has provided roughly 2,500 family-wage jobs across the US each year (staff and contractors), primarily in rural areas, and many of these jobs are now in jeopardy.

Now, possibly more than ever, is the time for TU members, friends, and family to stand up and take action. Here's what one can do to help:

1. Make a [special donation](#) to TU national. With government funding paused, your special donation will help sustain vital core TU operations and staff.
2. Get more involved locally at the grassroots level by volunteering for the Lee Wulff chapter (email volunteer@leewulfftu.org).

You can learn more about the impacts of the US DOGE on TU projects [here](#).

Soil and Water Conservation District Funding Slashed

The 103rd General Assembly of Illinois has finalized the FY25 budget. Sadly, this budget was signed into law with a roughly 48% decrease in Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) operational funding. Illinois' 97 SWCDs experienced a substantial funding shortfall in the FY 2025 state budget. SWCD operations funding was reduced by \$4 million from \$8.5 million in FY 24 to \$4.5 million in FY 25. The shortfall will lead to the loss of trained and qualified Soil and Water Conservation District employees which will take years of training to replace. Without sufficient funding, employees, much like unprotected soil, will erode away. Help petition to restore state funding [here](#).

Illinois House Bill 1873 Water Recreation Rights

As an angler, you know that the many beautiful streams in Illinois could be much greater recreational assets than they now are. Those streams could provide some of those same memorable, on the water experiences that are available to our neighbors in Wisconsin and Michigan just outside their back-doors. An Illinois Supreme Court decision recently called on the state legislature to reassert the public right to use state waters. The idea is to pass a new law clarifying and modernizing existing rights for river access. [HB1873](#) (104th G.A.) is the legislation that can get this done. Your help is needed to tell your legislators to support this much needed legislation. Please do it now. [Click here to easily take action in under a minute of your time.](#)

Save the Kish

Despite much opposition, the Woodstock City Council recently approved all of the preliminary measures that will allow the Lennar Riverwoods proposed high-density development along the banks of the Kishwaukee River in Woodstock to go forward.

Follow this situation [here](#). But it's not over until it's over. Voice any opposition you may have by emailing the Woodstock City Council at citycouncil@woodstockil.gov and [signing this petition](#).

Wisconsin Residents: Save Wisconsin's Essential Stewardship Program

Without legislative action, Wisconsin's iconic 30+ year old public lands initiative will expire in the summer of 2026. Bills have been introduced by both Republicans and Democrats to save this flagship Stewardship program, but little action has taken place since. [Click here](#) to ask your legislators to come together to find a compromise that works for all of Wisconsin and reauthorizes the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.

Learn more and explore Stewardship-funded projects here: <https://knowlesnelson.org/>

Additional Action Links

Trout Unlimited is not just about trout angling. [The national founders committed to conservation and preservation when they incorporated in 1959](#). In this spirit, please consider taking a few minutes to explore additional ways to take action:

<https://standup.tu.org/> &

[Upcoming Non-Chapter Events](https://www.tu.org/conservation/action-center/)

- [Chicagoland Fishing Expo](#) - Schaumburg Convention Center, Schaumburg, IL - January 22-25, 2026
- [19th Annual Driftless Area Stream Restoration Science Symposium](#) - Onalaska, WI - February 25 - 26, 2026
- [IF4](#) screenings in the region:
 - Sheboygan Falls, WI @ Laack's Tavern and Ballroom - February 28, 2026
 - Manistee, MI @ Vogue Theatre - March 7, 2026

- Hayward, WI @ The Park Theatre - March 21, 2026
- Decorah, IA @ Hotel Winneshiek - April 25, 2026
- [Fly Fishing Film Tour](#) (F3T) screenings in the region:
 - Cedar Rapids, IA @ Hilton Garden Inn - March 1, 2026
 - Grand Rapids, MI @ Wealthy Theatre - March 5, 2026
 - Ann Arbor, MI @ The State Theatre - March 6, 2026
 - Des Moines, IA @ Hilton Garden Inn - March 7, 2026
 - Novi, MI @ Emagine Novi - March 12, 2026
 - Madison, WI @ The Barrymore Theatre - March 19, 2026
 - Traverse City, MI @ City Opera House - March 21, 2026
 - Lake Forest, IL @ Gorton Center - April 12th, 2026
 - Menomonie, WI @ The Mabel Tainter Theater - April 13th, 2026
 - Holland, MI @ Knickerbocker Theatre - April 15, 2026
- [TU 2026 Midwest Regional Rendezvous - Roscommon, MI](#) - May 1-3, 2026
- [TU CX3 Event](#) - St. Paul, MN - **TBD**
- *Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing (PHWFF)* - Ongoing (click [here](#) to get involved)

Chapter Officers

President: **Jonathan Culli**
prez@leewulfftu.org

Vice-President: **Ken Bruckner**
vicepres@leewulfftu.org

Secretary: **Scott Lammers**
secretary@leewulfftu.org

Treasurer: **Marty Jandura**
treasurer@leewulfftu.org

Join Trout Unlimited



When joining Trout Unlimited (TU) at the national level, TU automatically assigns you to a local chapter based on your Zip Code and [this chapter boundaries map](#).

If not already a TU member, [click here to join TU for as little as \\$17.50 for your first year](#).

Already a TU member but not assigned to the Lee Wulff chapter? Call TU customer service at 1-800-834-2419 and make the switch to the Lee Wulff chapter (#448) today!