

STEELHEAD NEWS

A Publication of the Lake Superior Steelhead Association

www.steelheaders.org

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What it's all about!

Jason Kopp, photo by Tom Cawcutt

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Lake Superior Steelhead Association

PO Box 16034

Duluth, MN 55816-0034

LSSA's Mission:

For these reasons and more, the Lake Superior Steelhead Association exists: to protect our rivers and fish; to help preserve Lake Superior and its bounty; to learn more about the resources we enjoy and foster discussion, research and sound fisheries management practices; to educate anglers and the public about all these things. The LSSA has taken all these tasks upon its shoulders. These issues are too important to leave to chance or the vagaries of bureaucracies and politics. Our mission is to protect and improve the cold water fishery of the Lake Superior region and to bring various groups of anglers together in an atmosphere of friendship, so they can work for their and the resources common good.

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*Past LSSA Presidents

Membership Renewal

The 2016 membership renewal drive is underway. You will be receiving a membership renewal note in the mail soon, if not already. Look at the notation on the mailing label. If it says 2015A or B, 2014A or B and maybe even 2013A or B, that is the date you last sent in your dues. If you have paid through 2016, you will not receive a renewal notice. You can also look on all newsletter labels for same this information. If you have any questions, or if our records are not correct, please contact Kevin Bovee at 218-525-5960 or by email at outriderduluth@msn.com. You can also send a note through the LSSA's webpage and that will get back to the proper people.

Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo 2016

The LSSA will again be at the Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo, sharing a booth with the Brule River Sportman's Club. The Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo is now being organized by MN Trout Unlimited and has moved to a new location at Century College in White Bear Lake MN. Visit their website at greatwatersflyexpo.com or find it on Facebook. The LSSA booth will be organized by Vic Stark and Scott Thorpe. We always need fellow anglers to help us sell memberships, merchandise and such, no experience needed. Let us know if you can help. There is always ample opportunity to see the rest of the Expo. Scott Thorpe 612-669-9601 or email at scott@scottthorpeflyfishing.com.

2016 LSSA Youth Mentoring Gearing Up

Planning is well underway for the LSSA's sixth season of providing youth instruction in steelhead fishing in conjunction with Hartley Nature Center. Each year has become better and better. We continue to provide better tackle packages thanks to Marine

General in Duluth. And we have been working to include interested parents in our instruction. We figured by including parents, there is more likelihood of a youth having someone to fish with or at least drive them to the river! The program includes two classroom sessions and two river sessions, actually fishing. We are calling now for mentors to help with the classroom sessions which will be held on March 12 and March 19th. Dates for the filed session will be set when we have a better idea of timing of the run. Please contact Gary Siverson at 218-390-3916 if you can help this year.

Crystal Springs Hatchery Temporarily Closed

The Crystal Springs trout hatchery near Altura in southeastern Minnesota was closed in December so the facility could be depopulated and disinfected to remove a pathogen that causes furunculosis, a disease that forms boils and lesions on fish and eventually kills them.

Crystal Springs produces brook and lake trout that are stocked in Minnesota rivers and lakes, primarily in southeastern and northeastern Minnesota. Lake trout from Crystal Springs are stocked only in Lake Superior, a practice now being reviewed as part of the revision to the 10-year Lake Superior fisheries management plan. If the decision is to keep stocking Lake Superior, lake trout from Ontario could replace some of the fish now provided by Crystal Springs.

Flood waters from the Whitewater River likely carried the pathogen, a bacterium called *Aeromonas salmonicida*, into the hatchery. The pathogen occurs naturally and can cause fish kills in the wild when conditions are right, but is more likely to infect and kill fish kept in confined areas. The DNR's pathology lab first detected the pathogen in July 2014. Treatments – three in 2014 and two in 2015 – did not eliminate the disease

agent, which is contained in water the hatchery releases into a holding pond that drains into the river.

Once depopulation and disinfection of the hatchery is complete, the hatchery will resume operation using uncontaminated brook trout brood stock and be regularly tested for any reoccurrence of the pathogen. However, a hatchery must be disease-free for three years before fish produced there can be stocked in Minnesota waters. Brook trout brood stock takes three years to produce, meaning eggs can be available in 2018 and fish for stocking in 2019. The Lake Superior fisheries planning process will determine whether lake trout production will resume at Crystal Springs. (Source: MN DNR website)



From the Editor

Its minus 9 right now, and that's too cold for me to fish unless of course I become an ice fisherman. I have never had much luck at that but trust me, I've tried. I used to spend a weekend or two each winter off the mouth of the Sioux in Chequamegon Bay, fruitlessly drilling holes and soaking dead smelt while others around me iced splake and browns. I've tried for loopers off the French many times with no luck. I have finally resigned myself to being a river angler. Traditionally, this meant a January 1 opening day on the Whitewater in SE MN, no matter what the temperature. Thereafter, I set a more reasonable temperature threshold. If the forecast will break 20 F by mid day, I am in! With SW WI now having a winter season, I have abundant nearby opportunities to fly fish and avoid cabin fever while waiting for the real season to begin on the Brule Opener. There are also many events in March like the Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo, and the Fly Fishing Film Tour, so the countdown will pass quickly. Volunteer to help at the LSSA booth and volunteer to mentor at our youth clinics at Hartley Nature Center. Keep busy and it will be steelhead season in no time.

This issue contains another installment on the battle to clean up the Blackhoof River. Thanks Dennis for all your efforts on this effort.

There's also an essay by Tom Cawcutt, whose photos also grace our photo gallery. Thanks for your contributions Tom.

Although no way as significant as Dennis's efforts, Vic Stark and I did a little river clean-up ourselves. Instead of fishing one morning, we decided to extract the balsam tree that has been blocking half of the Pine Tree hole on the Brule last November after losing a few flies in it. After thirty minutes of sawing it into manageable sections with a tiny bow saw and roping it ashore, we were amazed at the amount of gear it had accumulated. We untangled sixteen nymphs of various designs including

x-legs, hares ears, and pheasant tails; three pegged beads; one streamer; one crawler harness; two spawn sacks; one orange Rapala; two Vibrax spinners; one Mepps spinner; one Panther Martin spinner and a dozen assorted hooks. No need to bring tackle to the river, just forage

As always, this newsletter is always in need of news. Please e-mail me with articles and photos at scott@scottthorpeflyfishing.com or text at 612-669-9601.

Upcoming Events

Fly Fishing Film Tour
Feb 6, 2016

Alvord Theatre, Northland College,
Ashland, WI

Fly Fishing Film Tour
Feb 12, 2016

Park Theatre, Hayward, WI

Fly Fishing Film Tour
March 5, 2016

Pepito's Parkway Theatre, Mpls, MN

R4F River Falls Fly Fishing Festival
March 11, 12, 2016 (Includes Fly
Fishing Film Tour)

Riverview Ballroom, UW River Falls,
River Falls, WI

Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo
March 18, 19, 20, 2016

Century College, White Bear Lake, MN

LSSA Spring Banquet
April 16, 2016

Mr. D's, Duluth, MN

LSSA Youth Mentoring Classroom
Sessions

March 12 & 19, 2016

Hartley Nature Center, Duluth, MN

LSSA Youth Mentoring Field
Sessions

TBD

LSSA Planking Party
TBD

Brighton Beach, Duluth, MN

Brule River Spey Day
October 8, 2016

Sponsored by LSSA

McNeil's, McNeil Rd, Brule River, WI

Fly Tyer Brian Bergeson

By Scott Thorpe

Ask local musky aficionado and acclaimed fly tyer Brian Bergeson about how he got started fly fishing and his answer is unequivocal: in the shadow of his grandfather, Tim Carroll, a long time north shore steelheader, LSSA member and one of the last of the old timers. Brian was practically raised by his grandparents and had a phenomenal childhood, fishing alongside his grandfather on the Sucker hole of the Knife River. Besides steelhead, Brian chased tiny brook trout in the urban creeks of west Duluth and graduated to pursuing anything else that swam. He also started tying his own flies.

One day, Tim read an article in Fly Fish America --the free fishing magazine given away at fly shops—and passed

it to his grandson. The article was a call for young anglers to submit an essay about fly fishing. Brian tied up some stoneflies, wrote an essay and submitted it. He got a phone call from the magazine, inviting him to Arkansas, where along with other young anglers, he met Dave Whitlock, and other fly tying and angling notables. In 1999, Brian joined the Team USA, US Youth Fly Fishing Team, resulting in trips to compete in Colorado, New Mexico and culminating in a competition on the trout loughs of Ireland. There, they practiced many days to prepare to fish using techniques foreign to most Americans—20 ft leaders, and a team of three wet flies, worked from a drifting boat.

But the young angler eventually burnt

out and drifted away from the sport. Life's twists and turns took their toll and Brian found himself in a struggle with substance abuse. After getting sober, he found himself looking for meaning in life. A trip to the Brule seemed the way to find some solace, and there by accident, he ran into one of his former team mates from 1999. Brian took it as a sign to get back into fly fishing.

These days, Brian works full-time as a project manager in the process controls industry, but his spare time is spent fly fishing and fly tying, with muskellunge and musky flies being his specialty. Thru his company, Rip Lips Musky Flies LLC., Brian sells premium fly tying materials and flies. He tries to tie every day, claiming his sobriety is contemplated at the vice. Brian produces 100 to 500 flies a year, but these are not crank-em-out 5 minute creations, but big, multi-articulated toothsome steamers, taking an hour apiece and retailing for \$15 to \$20 each at local fly shops. His expertise has won him a design contract with Montana Fly Company and one of his mega flies caught a record Taimen in Mongolia. He's not in it for the money as the labor and materials incorporated into each fly is greater than the market will bear. He says it's all about making people smile by helping people catch fish and teaching them to tie better themselves. Brian gives many clinics and demonstrations, with appearances at the Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo among other locales.

He still fishes steelhead and says he'll chase anything that swims. He is looking forward to a trip later this spring for permit in Mexico, a fish he has never caught. And Brian still keeps in touch with his grandfather, the mentor who showed him the way. Every few months, he visits Tim in Duluth, sets up the vice and Tim watches him tie.



LSSA 2016

Spring Banquet

dinner, raffle & silent auction



April 16th

- Mr. D's Bar & Grill
5622 Grand Ave,
Duluth, MN 55807
- 5:30 pm
Registration & social hour
- 7:00 pm
Annual meeting & elections
- 7:15 pm
full dinner buffet
- 8:30 pm
raffle winners announced

Banquet open to LSSA members & guests
Pre-Registration Required - No walk-ups

Raffle and auction items include fishing rods, reels, tackle, clothing, pottery, carvings, restaurant and hotel gift certificates, custom crafted cedar furniture and artwork.

Menu:

Roast Top Round of Beef, Au Jus
Chicken Cordon Bleu
Fresh Tossed Caesar Salad
Fresh Fruit Platter
Baby red potatoes w/parsley
Dessert, Coffee
Cash Bar

Please RSVP before April 4th

By phone: 218.525.5960
By e-mail: Kevin Bovee outriderduluth@msn.com
Or by mail: LSSA, P.O.Box 16034, Duluth, MN 55816



LSSA Member Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

of tickets: _____ @ \$25. Total enclosed:\$ _____

Blackhoof River Clean-up, Year Three

By Dennis Olson

This past summer, clean-up work continued on the Blackhoof River, a tributary of the Nemadji River to repair damage caused by the floods of 2012. This has been a work in progress as it has been very labor intensive. As a result of the flood, there were a total of 18 massive log jams blocking the river over a stretch of over 8 miles. When the hillsides slid into the river, the trees and soil blocked the natural flow of the current. Silting occurred for long stretches behind the log jams. This caused precious gravel necessary for trout spawning to be covered with sand. We have worked for two years in small volunteer groups consisting primarily of my friends to open a few of the log jams. I could see that it would take many years to open all the jams in this manner. Something else

had to be looked at. The trout habitat needed quicker results.

A meeting was organized at the Carlton County Soil and Water Conservation District (CCSWCD) headquarters in Carlton. Many groups attended this meeting; CCSWCD, DNR Lake Superior Area Fisheries Office staff from the French River Hatchery, DNR Wildlife Services staff from Grand Rapids, Minnesota Trout Unlimited, and myself, representing the LSSA. It was at this meeting that I met John Lenczewski, MN Trout Unlimited Executive Director. We were both working to get the Blackhoof back to normal after the flood. A plan was formulated and we went to work. John had written a Lessard-Sams Legacy grant and I went to the land owners to

get permission to access the log jams. John's grant was approved and he was able to hire the Conservation Corps Minnesota to do the work.

We started work in August and finished in September. The young workers from the Conservation Corps did a remarkable job at cleaning up the log jams. They completed removal of all 18 log jams, which was back breaking work. This was all done with no injuries which was totally remarkable. To see the results of this work was nothing less than sensational. The heavy rains of this past fall have benefited the recovery of the river. The sand is being carried away and the gravel beds are reappearing. The trout will once again be able to travel freely and not have to negotiate the log



jams. They also will have the gravel to make their redds and continue the next generation of trout. In walking and surveying this summer's work I saw a good number of redds from fall spawning Browns and Brook trout. It is a good feeling to know that what we did is having such positive results. I encourage everyone to get involved in any habitat work because you will see the fruits of your labor and know you are helping wildlife and the environment.

The next phase of this project is to stabilize the slide areas. John Lenczewski is presently writing a grant for this project and if approved, we will continue to make the river even better. I want to thank all who helped with this project and also

give a special thank you to John Lenczewski, a dedicated sportsman. Happy fishing this coming spring and I hope your lines are tight with fighting trout.



Opposite page and this page: Conservation Corps Minnesota workers clearing log jams on the Blackhoof River. Photos by Dennis Olson. The Conservation Corps Minnesota is a not-for-profit organization that traces its root to the 1930's Civilian Conservation Corps. It offers youth and young adult work programs in managing natural resources.



Matters of the Heart

By Tom Cawcutt

A trip to the river was unexpected and unplanned. Much like the events of the previous two days, and life in general at times. Word had come in early October on a Wednesday morning that my dad was being transported to a local medical center with concerns of a heart attack. News of this sort can snap you out of reality much the way a fall steelhead or lake-run brown will when they are on the take. I received a phone call Thursday evening, or it could have been a series of text messages, either way, I had reluctantly agreed to hit the water with a few steelheading brothers on Friday. We were Brule bound at zero-dark thirty.

A break from the hospital was accepted with hesitation considering the impending bypass surgery scheduled for Sunday. I am not certain who said it, or even if the saying "rivers heal the soul" is accredited to anyone, but I can assure you that there is a little bit of truth to everything. Plans were made to fish Brule on this early fall day and the conditions were ideal.

A low ceiling of clouds hung in the Brule River valley and gray skies shadowed the watery haunts. River flow for much of the fall hung around 140 CFS and bumped up beyond 180 around Halloween. On this day, the river held at 150, had great clarity, and a light rain had sprinkled our morning arrival. We arrived at dark, strung rods in the predawn light, and contemplated the drift. Yarn eggs dominated our offering selection and the first steelhead of the day inhaled a chartreuse pattern that we did not expect to see again. Fall steelhead can shock the system and accelerate the heart rate instantaneously. It was a delight to see the arched rod and the haphazard dance my fishing buddy was exhibiting in the slack water of the bank as the fish tore from pool to run and riffle to alder. The fish was a

large female and she provided a half-dozen pulsating runs before deciding to give us a closer look. Despite taunting and sarcastic advice from the two of us, Jason orchestrated the catch like a pro; the fish came to hand and high fives abounded. We were elated and started the day on a high note. This particular hole gave up another hen steelhead and we decided to bump down to other spots. Smolts were common on this day, and throughout the fall. We discussed the hope of good years to come and found fish in nearly every nook of the river. We found that getting away from fished water was critical if it could be found. The Brule River may not have many secrets left, but finding water that was further from the fisherman parking lots and boot tracks, proved a good decision.

I had stopped upstream from a large pool and decided the far bank littered with branches was worth a drift before leap-frogging ahead of my companions. Line shot through the guides, the cast was perfect. Despite the successful cast, I was distracted with concern about my dad. I went through the motions of the drift, which swept through the snags without issue. Then the line stopped and without focus, I assumed a woody end to this attempt at a fish. I set the hook with abandon not knowing if a branch was teasing me or if a pick-up was at hand. The fish was not pleased I had interrupted his morning lay in the mid-seam trough and decided to show his displeasure on the surface. Fall steelhead are powerful and aerial feats caused us to gasp and bellow in surprise as the fish fled downriver. I tore after the fish and coaxed him to submission after many moments of anticipation. It was a buck, a crimsoned cheeked male who filled me with emotion as photos were snapped along the grasses of the river edge. We caught many fish over the fall season, but this fish was special. My dad always appreciates a good fish

story and a photo of the opportunities the Brule provides. Regardless of what was to come, a story would be shared that evening.

Thankfully, modern medicine is much like the "drug" of steelheading. It is just what we need, in the right dose, given our current condition. Some say they simply enjoy being out, which I agree with a majority of the time. However, there will always be a part of me that is overjoyed and fulfilled with the experience of a fish.

The following weeks allowed my dad to recover after the double bypass. It also allowed me multiple opportunities to share the tales of the Brule River. Fall brown fishing was solvent nearly through the MN deer season and likely through season close. The catching seemed most productive with flows above 150 with a slight stain to the water. Both steelhead and browns were big this year. Some of the largest in year class size I have seen in some time. We fished a majority of the system from Brule through FF from late August through early November. A rule of the fall has been to focus on the pools and deep runs versus the riffles and shallow runs. That rule does not always hold true, but produced the most fish for us during our outings. We are looking forward to the season opener in the coming months and hope these pictures warm your soul and get your heart pumping!



Photo Gallery



Above left and right, Tom Cawcutt with two beautiful browns. Left, Jason Kopp with a steelhead. Below left, Brian Bergeson, with musky and Brian with one of his musky flies.





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The LSSA continues to build its base of friends and fans on Facebook. As of January 2016, we have 516 followers. Please check out our online presence and keep in touch. www.facebook.com/.../Lake-Superior-Steelhead-Association

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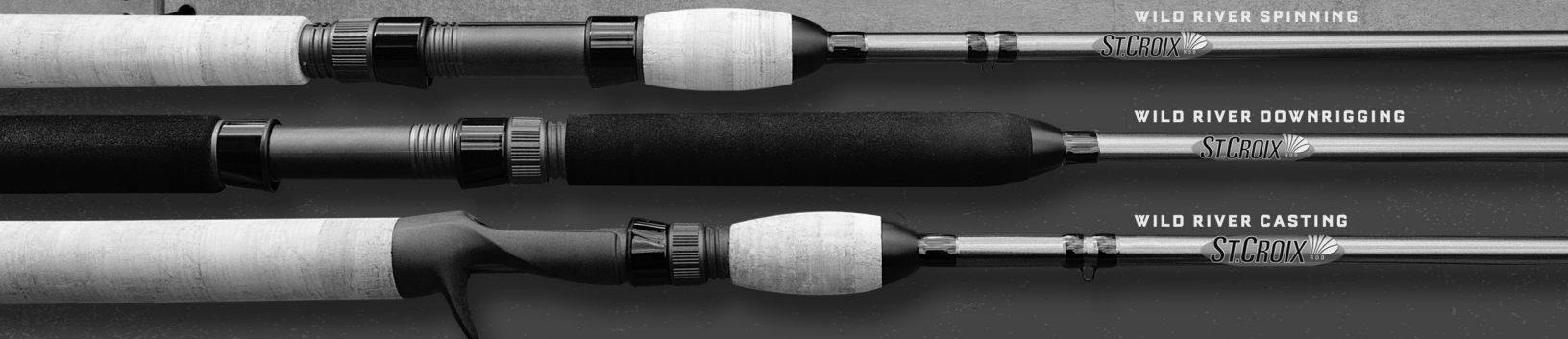
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