



## February 2012 Newsletter

### Bluegrass Chapter **Trout Unlimited** #478

*"...conserving, protecting and restoring North America's coldwater fisheries and their watersheds."*

President: Gary Rose

[gssociates@windstream.net](mailto:gssociates@windstream.net)

Vice President: Ken Wells

[kwells@whitakerbank.com](mailto:kwells@whitakerbank.com)

Treasurer: Steve Slade

[f.slade@insightbb.com](mailto:f.slade@insightbb.com)

Outings: Robert VanOnselder

[geneslusher@yahoo.com](mailto:geneslusher@yahoo.com)

Conservation: David Cummings

[dwc100@att.net](mailto:dwc100@att.net)

Webmaster: Mark Hanni

[mhanni@windstream.net](mailto:mhanni@windstream.net)

Newsletter: Doug Gradek

[dgradek@foamdesign.com](mailto:dgradek@foamdesign.com)

Fundraising: Kyle Adamson

[kyledesigns@hotmail.com](mailto:kyledesigns@hotmail.com)

Membership: Charlie Ebling

[charlyn124@gmail.com](mailto:charlyn124@gmail.com)

First Cast: Jeff Steele

[jsteele@deltagas.com](mailto:jsteele@deltagas.com)

Programs: Connie VanOnselder

[cvanonselder@aol.com](mailto:cvanonselder@aol.com)

Trout in the Classroom: Don  
Thompson

[donlesterthompson@gmail.com](mailto:donlesterthompson@gmail.com)

*\*for more contact information,  
please visit our **New Website***

[www.bluegrasstu.org](http://www.bluegrasstu.org)

## Next Meeting

Meetings take place at 6:30 at Columbia Steakhouse, downtown Lexington, 201 North Limestone, **February 14**. The title of the Program is "Alaska the Way you Want it!". It is going to be an informative and entertaining talk on how to fish Alaska on your own on a shoestring budget using the road system all the way to the complete fly-out lodge.

Our speaker is Dave Barron. As Dave says, "Be forewarned, once you experience Alaska, you never truly go home, you leave a small part of yourself that yearns for your return for the rest of your life." Alaska contains some of the most pristine waters and beautiful views on the planet and the fishing is truly unbelievable. He is an Orvis endorsed guide who lives in Wisconsin but leads guided trips to both Alaska and the Patagonia region of Argentina.

So make it a Valentine's Day date to bring your wife, husband or significant other to this meeting and learn to plan your trip of a lifetime!! Hope to see you there!

## Fishing The Cumberland River According To Gerald McDaniel

By Robert Go

As mentioned in last month's newsletter Gerry was indeed the cornucopia of information about fishing on the Cumberland River as Robert told us he is. He opened his dam gate and had difficulty closing it later against the outpouring of information. The river of knowledge and experience inundated us like the Cumberland River has done in 2011. His comments were not stained or off-colored so we fared better than the fish did in the Cumberland (2011 is now in the record books as the wettest year on record for the area).

McDaniel gave us some background information about himself. He was fishing the Cumberland River before it became a trout fishery so he has seen many changes to the river. He did not start out being a trout fisherman. His passion was for bass and bluegill. Then around 1981 he finally had enough of jet skis proliferating on lakes and settled on the Cumberland River to escape them. He started fly fishing when he was 12. At that time his father had told him to figure it out so he did and has been fly fishing ever since.

Gerry's love of the Cumberland River was apparent in what he revealed to us. For one thing, though he has fished out West and out at Yellowstone, he boasts that the Cumberland allows him to do things he can't do elsewhere.

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## President's Message

I'm pleased to announce through the efforts of Sandy Broughman we have filled the position of Trout in the Classroom, Coordinator formerly referred to as the Director. Bill Davig of our Chapter who resides in Richmond and is a retired Professor from the College of Business and Technology at Eastern Kentucky University has agreed to fill the position. In discussions with Bill and Sandy it became apparent some program management changes need to be made as the Trout in the Classroom program has grown to a point of requiring almost full time management. With this in mind the discussions lead to the need of forming an Advisory Committee to assist the Coordinator with operation of the program. Bill and Sandy have identified some very good candidates for this committee—if you are contacted to serve please say yes to get involved, if you want to volunteer to be involved contact either Bill at [bill.davig@eku.edu](mailto:bill.davig@eku.edu) or Sandy at [wabiii@prodigy.net](mailto:wabiii@prodigy.net).

As everyone knows our Annual Conservation Banquet and Auction is the highlight of the year, this event being our primary fund raiser to support the Chapter Activities.

**Date: March 3<sup>rd</sup>**

**Time: 6:00pm**

**Place: Tates Creek Country Club, Lexington, Kentucky**

**COME ONE COME ALL ENJOY THE FUN, FELLOWSHIP  
AND FUNRAISING!**

**Bucket Raffles, Silent Auction, and Live Auction**

**Guided Trips, Lodging, Fly Rods, Reels, Flies, Clothing, Gift Certificates, and more things you can't afford to do without!!**

**PLUS**

**New Fish Pond Game of Chance**

This is our Big Event of the year, we need you in attendance joining our members of **Trout Unlimited and Fellow Fly Fishing Enthusiast** to make this year's event the biggest ever. If you want to help with the event contact Kyle Adamson ( [kyle@redoakdesign.com](mailto:kyle@redoakdesign.com) ) our fund raising Director.

Gary Rose  
President



*Mark Hanni with a Muskie*

*(Cumberland continued)*

A second thing is that not only is he a Cumberland River guide and a Cumberland River fisherman, he also contributed to the success of the river's trout fishery. In the early days of the fishery he recognized money drove everything. To keep the fishery going, he knew it had to show economic value.

His solution and contribution was to produce a map book on how to access the Cumberland River. He made sure we understood it was not a book on how and where to fish on the Cumberland. He was not about to help promote the fishery yet end up having it fished out. Callers tell him the map book has been a lifesaver for them.

Gerald promoted Kentucky's fishing by telling us the state has more streams than any state except Alaska. To him the Cumberland River is a place with world class fishing. A way the river is better than other world class streams is that you may only encounter 2 or 3 people fishing on the whole river below Winfrey's. This he pointed out is not possible on other world class streams.

He lamented what the Wolf Creek Dam repair work has done to the river. The need to regulate flow from the dam according to the weather makes it difficult to guide on the river. Guides can't schedule by the unpredictable flows. The flora and fauna are affected as well. A 3 inch rain may raise Cumberland Lake's water level by 15 feet overnight. This amount of water takes 30 days to drain. When all generators are operating the lake's water level only drops 6 to 8 inches in 24 hours. There have been times it took 110 days to drain the rain water. Whenever it rained the flow rate would be increased except for when the towns and cities downstream might get flooded. Long periods without rain meant restricting the amount of water being let out of the dam. These low water periods caused gravel beds to dry out and kill off the insects living there.

After the dam work is completed in December 2012 (note, since the meeting he has corrected the date to December 2013) the facility will be back to its mission as a peak generating power plant and start generating between 6AM and 8AM (and shut off in the evening). With a regular schedule, the fishery will be restored. Guides will be able to plan trips according to the water level they want at a given location. When the water level right below the dam is rising, it will still be low downstream at Burkesville for hours. Gravel beds will also not dry out much.

Mr. McDaniel indicated he would tell us about the fish in the river, what flies to use, places to go, and techniques that work. He commented on the avian life forms that one is likely to encounter on the river. Osprey and blue herons are present. According to Gerry the presence of blue heron rookeries mean the water is pristine. They won't build rookeries on lower quality water. The osprey's normal range is the Mississippi River basin yet they have taken to coming this far east to make the Cumberland their home.

To know what flies to use, a fisherman needs to know what food is in the river and what do the fish like to eat. Gerald made changes to the contents of his fly box upon seeing the results of an insect survey done on the river by Brett Billings 8 to 9 years ago (Brett is a videographer with the state's fish and wildlife agency). Then the results of a stomach survey caused him to make further refinements in his fly selection.

What the surveys revealed is that a major food of trout is the Giant Salmon Fly (the number one food is the Black Fly Midge). It takes 4 years for the nymphs of these flies to mature. Therefore they are found all year around in the water. The habitat for the nymphs is broken rock. They cling to rocks and when dislodged, "they arch their backs and wriggle until they get back on a rock." McDaniel ties his imitations on size 4 hooks that cause the fly to move and roll in the water like a dislodged natural. He also likes to tie jointed stonefly imitations to obtain the same effect. For matching immature stoneflies he uses Kicker Princes. The giant salmon flies hatch around the first week of May. The hatch is not large so fishing nymph imitations is the way to go.

Other stoneflies he has seen on the river include the Golden Stonefly during the summer and the Winter Black Stonefly. They are not that common on the river and in fact 30 years ago they did not exist on the river (the river was a warm water fishery before the dam impounded it). Some caddis flies existed on the river back then but no coldwater insects. The caddis flies are still there and are small case builders. Mr. McDaniel ties flies as chartreuse worms and uses peacock herl to imitate the cases. He finds adults are of little value to trout on the Cumberland. They don't sit on the water but fly away quickly. The pupas are a great food to trout as they sit under the film and are easy pickings.

Gerry mentioned that he likes Carl Richard's Chicago Fly (it is a mohair beadhead leech pattern from Michigan). He said not to rule out using hellgrammite imitations. A biologist told him there are no hellgrammites in the river (because the water is too cold). However, he says they are there and suspects they live in the creeks until they get washed into the river.

McDaniel noted that the river contains crawfish. They are not olive or orange ones. These are chocolate brown and the molts are pink. He said to use 2/0 hooks because the crawfish are 4 to 5 inches in length. The places to fish them are rocky banks with loose rubble and dropoffs. We were made aware not to expect smallmouth bass in the river. In his 30 plus years fishing the tailwater he only caught 3 smallmouth bass. The one he caught by Crocus Creek weighed 5.5 lbs.

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As far as mayflies go, he finds Sulphurs all the time on the river. The gravel area below Rainbow Run is the typical habitat for them. His flies of choice for them are reddish brown and coppery colored Copper Johns nymphs and Pheasant Tail wetflies. If you fish the river upstream of Winfrey's he said not to try mayfly imitations. This is because the river from the dam to Winfrey's is scoured. Only the stoneflies can cling to the rocks. Light green scud imitations would also be a good fly to try in that stretch of the river because they are found there with the stoneflies.

Once a client asked him about whether the Chernobyl Ant works on the river. Gerry related that he had fished with the inventor of that pattern the year the pattern was invented. The inventor actually made the fly to imitate the Mormon cricket. Fly shops renamed the fly Chernobyl Ant. Gerry found that the trout on the Cumberland do take the pattern.

Terrestrials he found the river trout feed on include the Japanese beetle and cicada. He recalled one trout that regurgitated 30 beetles. The annual black and greenish white cicadas are plentiful from July to October. One in four trout stomachs he examined contained a cicada.

Trout also eat minnows in the Cumberland. Thirty years ago he was told by biologists that the river was minnow poor. He finds plenty of sculpins and considers them the most important minnow to trout. These are found ranging in length from 1.5 to 14 inches. They live around gravel shoals. He said to fish these areas even during high water levels using sculpin flies. He favors a Zoo Cougar.

Mr. McDaniel loves throwing streamers. He uses 8 weights for this and carries 4 such outfits on his trips. He said the majority of his big fish were fooled by streamers. He recited a list of 21 inch or longer browns he has caught using them. A doctor he knows in Lexington set a striper record using a 15 foot rod and a 14 inch fly. Gerald fishes them even in January (though this year he said not to go because the water level is too high). Indeed his first fish with a fly was caught using a white Woolly Bugger. He ties his on size 1 and 1/0 Aberdeen hooks with a 3/16<sup>th</sup> ounce tungsten bead. The Aberdeen hook allows him to pull a stuck fly out from rocks and bend it back in shape for reuse. He told us to pull the fly out by pointing the rod right at the fly before pulling. A bent rod he claims, will not straighten the hook.

Gerry is most enthusiastic about using Teeny lines for streamer work. He uses such lines in sizes from 175g to 300g. A good size in his opinion is from 250g to 300g. He lauds the line for the way it loads a rod and how using it makes you into a better dry fly fisherman. You find it makes you learn to slow down your forward cast. He finds that even after 400 to 500 casts, he is still relaxed. He pointed out that if you use a sink tip line that it needs to have at least a 15 foot sinking section or it will rise to the surface on retrieve before the fly gets back to you.

Threadfin shad is plentiful on the river. He uses 2 to 3 inch long minnow flies made with mylar (though the real thing grows to 8 inches long). McDaniel also likes using Kelly Galloup's articulated shad flies. We were informed that shad kills in the winter (February) at the dam means very good white streamer fishing. Shad bodies cover the surface and browns converge to gorge on them when that occurs. Don't be surprised if you hook a striper when using a mylar minnow for they too feed on shad. He says he uses a 2x tippet when using streamers. That he affirms is sufficient even for big browns and stripers.

Gerald enjoys fishing the river from a boat. He cited that in his custom 18 foot duck boat with customized platforms, clients are 4 to 5 feet above the water for better spotting and casting. He says a boat allows for longer drifts and boasts of attaining 2 minute long drifts at times from his boat.

We learned that when we see a runoff, to realize there will be an accompanying gravel bar that sticks out 100 yards. You won't be able to see it in high water. These are good places to fish with the best spot on the outside edge. There is one of these on the other side of Rock House. Mr. McDaniel said that what holds fish whether the water level is low or high, are submerged trees and rubble. The best position in these places is the downstream side of structures. Note too that he said "trees tend to pile up."

When talking about large fish Gerry put up a striking photo of a monster sized brown attacking a smaller rainbow. It turns out that this is a common occurrence during electroshocking surveys on the river. The stunned fish float on the surface. The nets can only scoop one fish at a time and many end up not getting netted. Big browns see the stunned fish and come out to feed on them.

His talk on big fish drifted over to stripers. The Cumberland River is loaded with them from spring to fall after they move out of Cordell Hull Lake. They eat about 20 % of their body weight each day. Stripers estimated at 80 pounds had to be pushed away from a 22 inch hooked rainbow and a 24 inch hooked brown. There are no wipers on the river. An interesting point he made about stripers is that they require 20 or more miles of cold flowing water for stripers to hatch. The Cumberland is suitable for that purpose.

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## Save the Date

The **weekend of April 21** for the Rock Creek cleanup/ One-Fly Contest and Camp Out. This is an annual event that is very conservation minded and a lot of fun. The pot-luck dinner is always out of this world. The fishing is also very good in April. Be on the lookout for detailed information in the subsequent newsletters.

*(Cumberland continued)*

Gerald does not have an answer to what happened to the big browns and stripers in the river after the drawdown of Cumberland Lake for dam repair work. He believes they are not growing like they used to. Before the repair work started the trout were growing up to 7/10<sup>th</sup>s of an inch a month. One of his clients Fred McClintock fought a 30 pound brown not so long ago but lost it after a 2 minute battle. Randall Gibson caught 3 browns each greater than 17 pounds. McDaniel says he still catches 20 plus inch size fish but not like he did before the dam repairs started.

Mr. McDaniel explained to us some ways to set up gear and fight large fish. Experience taught him not to use tippet stronger than 15 pounds even if you are after stripers. This is because the fly line could break instead of the tippet. If the tippet breaks, you can tie a new one on and resume fishing. If the fly line breaks, you are done fishing for the day. The vast majority of the fish can be brought to hand without it taking much line out but there will be stripers that decide to leave when hooked. They will take all the fly line and backing off the spool. In case you need to save the rod or the line, Gerry said pointing the rod at the fish will cause the tippet to break instead.

As a guide, he never allows clients to put a fish on the reel. Gerald said it is important to pay attention to the fish (especially the big ones) and not the reel. Fishermen lose fish when they are focused on the reel. He said fish actually seldom break off with the fly. The fish will shake its head to remove the fly. The motion rips a hole in its mouth so that the fly falls out.

The trick then is to put a stop to the head shaking. That is how he was able to land his world record striper (it is listed under 12 pound line class but he was actually using 8 pound line). The way to do it is as follows. As you hook it, allow the line to slip through the fingers holding the rod so the rod is bent and the fish is allowed to swim. Keep the rod bent. Do not allow slack. If there is no bend to the rod or you drop the rod tip, the fish will rip out the hook. By fighting the fish this way, Billy Pate the famed tarpon fisherman fought a record on light tippet for 9.5 hours and landed it. Pate even took 2 meals during the fight.

McDaniel's own record fish took him 45 minutes to land. During the first 25 minutes the fish was not even seen. He said to be successful battling the big ones, one needed to practice on the smaller fish. When landing large fish, he warned us never to put our hand into the mouth of browns 16 inches and larger. They have teeth that would shred your fingers.

Finally, Gerry expounded on accessing the river by foot and locations for finding good fish. He put in at Wolf Creek Dam and floated downstream past Ray Mann's, Indian Creek, and Helm's Landing with hardly a comment. Then he anchored briefly at Rock Creek to comment that this location has a long fast chute (not easy to reach on foot) that holds some good fish. McDaniel then drifted to Winfrey's. He indicated that it is too deep here for wading on the north shore and it is private property on the south shore. At the next location, Big Willis, he described it as a great spot to fish except for having to get the landowner's permission and then having to take a hike down a creek.

Further down the river is Crocus Creek which has a bridge and a gravel bar. The current is strongest on the opposite bank and is not good for wading. The bar is 300 to 400 yards long and still growing. Gerald said to fish above the bar which is the end of a nice pool. After Crocus Creek he floated down to Burkesville. There he likes to fish by the public housing. At low water of 2 feet deep, a creek is visible there. He continued his trip until he reached his take out at Traces. This is a place he considers one of the best wading areas on the river. The spot he likes is the sluice at the C shaped rock wall. You access it from the south shore on public property.

Speaking of sluices, Mr. McDaniel says they are all great spots for fishing. On the Cumberland there are 3 sluices. They are located at Big Willis, Traces, and Wilburn Bar. At Wilburn there is quiet water on one side of the lagoon. By it is a rock you sit on and cast from. He calls it Sofa Rock. This spot was shown to him by a woman from the Louisville TU chapter. Over Thanksgiving weekend he caught 11 fish larger than 20 inches from the spot. She caught a brown over 8.5 pounds there and a former Smokey Mountains fisherman caught a rainbow over 5 pounds there as his first fish on the river.

Before he left us, Gerald admonished us to be careful on the river. He said never to take the river for granted. Be prepared. Water levels can change quickly. Put a marker where you got in the water. Try the tip of putting a \$10 bill or a \$100 bill on a dry rock. If you see that you are about to lose the bill due to rising water, then get out of the river. He himself has had his boat float away when the water rose and also have had it beached when water levels dropped. Don't run out of gas. 90% of the boat problems seem to be related to anchors. He recalled an accident where an anchored canoe was pulled under by rising water. Getting stuck on the river can also mean spending a night at 50 degrees during the summer. He let us ogle his fly box with all its large flies as we called it a night.

## An Evening of Fly-Tying Camaraderie Fly-Tying at The Lexington Angler

On Wednesday the 18th, a number of us met at the Lexington Angler for the first TU fly tying evening of the year to tie some of our favorite patterns. Fifteen members and about five non-members showed up, with a equal mixture of advanced, intermediate and beginners. It soon became apparent that a couple more tables would have been helpful as those who couldn't sit and tie, had to socialize, consume adult beverages and swap "truthful" fishing tales.

The more experienced tiers worked with the beginners on their first "Woolly Bugger". Alan Creech who is an excellent tier, took Gary's grandson under his wing and showed him how to tie the best looking Woolly Bugger that I have seen come from a beginner. I myself (a tier of ugly but functional flies) worked with Ron Watson and Brett Culp and we managed to produce some good looking bug-gers. Bob (sorry Bob I forgot your last name) worked with Kyle Keeney and their Woolly Buggers will definitely catch a 20 inch Brown trout on Kyle's next Cumberland trip. Jeremy Roberts, David Cummings and several others tied their favorite patterns throughout the evening.

Based on the enthusiastic response and the fun time we



all had, we'll continue to have these evenings every other Wednesday at the Lexington Angler (Gene has graciously agreed to make the store available for us) with the next one being on, February 1, starting at 6:00pm. I look forward to seeing all of you there again and for those of you that we unable to make it last time I hope you make it this time around.

Remember if you are a beginner there will be people happy to help you get started. Adult beverages are OK and we can order pizza if there is interest for that. There is no need to RSVP I will make sure there is plenty of tables and seating available. Please call the shop @ (859) 389-6552 or myself @ (919) -623-4620 if you have any questions.

Looking forward to seeing everybody there,  
Robert Van Onselder

PS And yes I will have enough tables this time.