



Cross Currents

October, 2002

M i d - M i s s o u r i C h a p t e r , T r o u t U n l i m i t e d



BENNETT SPRING HATCHERY MANAGER FINISHES NOTEWORTHY CAREER

Can you shepherd a king's ransom worth of fish and still maintain an interest in fishing? According to Ron McCullough you can. McCullough has recently retired from his long-time position as hatchery manager at Bennett Spring State Park.

McCullough grew up in Ohio. He attended Kent State and then transferred to and was graduated from Kansas State. After spending 2 years in the Army, he worked at an agricultural station in Ohio a few months. In 1970 McCullough became the assistant manager at

Shepherd Hills Hatchery at Branson. On Feb 1, 1977 he moved to Bennett Spring.

During his tenure, Bennett Spring produced over 12 million trout for stocking in the park and the Niangua River. During spawning season hatchery workers took over 26 million eggs. Of his time at the hatchery, McCullough says floods provided some of the toughest work. He notes that foraging river otters were a minor problem.

“Keeping production up was rewarding work. We went from rearing 200,000 pounds of trout when I came here to 370,000 some pounds; that was the most we raised one year. We didn't really increase the facilities much, we just renovated and fixed them up.

“Keeping up with the demand and then getting the fish to grow in some years of low water conditions was demanding. Working to serve the public here could be difficult ... there are so many different interests. But I enjoyed it.”

McCullough says the floods at Bennett Spring usually seem to be the worst in the middle of the night. All of the leaves and other debris from upstream flows down into the hatchery and plugs up the intakes. Workers may toil through an entire night to keep the fish alive.

He recalls 1986 as the worst flood year — the arches on the stone bridge were blocked and the individual hatchery pools became one big reservoir. McCullough says Bennett Spring has had two 100-year floods during

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his tenure there. He compliments the hatchery crew for maintaining order among watery chaos.

He and his wife, a 20-year first-grade teacher in Lebanon, have two married daughters and a fairly new grandson.

McCullough has 15 elk. The elk were a hobby while he was working as hatchery manager. He has raised some elk and sold some.

“I hope to do more with them once I can devote more time to it. I enjoy raising them. We are building our house on the farm where the elk are; I can look out the back window and see them. It’s just up the road from the park. I’ve got two years of work there just getting things the way I want them.”

Of the elk, McCullough says they’re good eating. “At least I can hold out if things get bad,” he says with a smile in his voice.

And what about fishing after handling all those trout? “I love going out on the river and floating and fishing there, or sitting on the bank of a farm pond to fish,” he says. “That gets me away from all the people here in the park. But now that I’m free from that I may do some trout fishing. And I may even get a boat and do some crappie or walleye fishing.”

JIM AUCKLEY

MEMBERSHIP LOG-IN COMING TO WEB SITE

T.U.’s Web contractor is working on a function for individual members to log-in, check their membership information and then make changes, if necessary. They hope to have it ready in about two months. In the meantime, if you need to make an address change, send an e-mail to Wendy Reed in Membership Services at wreed@tu.org, or call her at (703) 284-9421.



SEPTEMBER MEETING

At our September meeting, we had the rare treat of having not just one, but *four* speakers.

Brian Sloss and Drew Lemberger started the meeting with a discussion of boating building. A beautiful wooden drift boat they built was proudly displayed in the parking lot prior to the meeting, and admired by all who attended.

Ethan Wright (photo above) then made a fascinating presentation on antique fishing equipment. In the future, it would be great to hear more on this topic from Ethan.

John Meyer (below) finished the meeting with a presentation on collecting bamboo fly rods. Like Ethan, John impressed us all with his extensive knowledge of the history of fly-fishing tackle. We were also very impressed with the fact that John’s wife Margie doesn’t mind him buying these expensive rods - especially since he doesn’t actually use most of them to fish with.



IN-STREAM SAND AND GRAVEL MINING UPDATE

Kent Campbell's article in last month's issue has done an excellent job of bringing the gravel mining problem to the attention of many concerned citizens in this state. Giving us a big hand in this effort over the last month has been Ozark outdoor writer Charlie Farmer.

Charlie writes a column for the *Springfield News-Leader* and is the author of several excellent books, including *Unspoiled Beauty - A Personal Guide to Missouri Wilderness*.

In his September 18th column for the *Springfield News-Leader*, Charlie urged his readers to join us in speaking out against relaxed gravel mining regulations. Charlie's column can be read online at www.springfieldnews-leader.com/sports/farmer091802.html

If you'd like to thank Charlie for his help, you can e-mail him at cjoutdoors318365@aol.com.

to \$10,000, and 6) increase female members from "negligible to measurable."

Today I met with the class for two hours telling them about our chapter. Many questions were presented and I think they have a pretty good idea of what TU is all about. The last question from a girl in the back stopped me cold.

After so many questions asking facts and "have you tried this, or that," this student asked, "why do you like to fish for trout?"

How would you answer that? How would you answer that in front of 50 students? "I like the solitude of being on a trout stream with a good friend!" I said. Then I realized "solitude" and "being with" were possibly confusing them, I know it confuses me but that is how I feel. That is what I like, sharing the peacefulness, the beauty, the reward of catching something. But you can't beat sharing it.

The competition wraps up in the first week of November, so look forward to more info in this column.

JEFF WITTEN

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The MU J-School and Us

It is with great pleasure I can report that the University of Missouri's esteemed Journalism School will be producing a public relations program for our chapter. Juniors and seniors in a class only open to those with a 3.5 GPA or better will compete in about 8 teams of 7 students each to create a campaign for us. Recently they developed a campaign for the American Cancer Society.

Their goals are our goals: 1) "...to conserve, protect and restore North America's coldwater fisheries and their watersheds.," 2) increase our chapter membership from 270 to 325, 3) support the initiation of an affiliated club at MU, 4) increase banquet attendance from 150 to 225, 5) increase banquet net revenue from \$6,500

MMTU CALENDAR

October 1, 7:30 p.m. Del Lobb will discuss Lake Taneycomo minimum flow.

November 5, 7:30 p.m. Presentation on their 2002 Alaska trip, by Bob Hook, Jim Bridges, and Jon Deal. (Chapter officers have two-year terms. The next election will be in November of 2003.)

December 3, 7:30 p.m. 7:30 Photo contest

January 7, 2003, 7:30 p.m. TBA

February 27, 2003 (Thursday) Annual banquet. Holiday Inn Executive Center, Columbia. Details to be announced.

**Mid-Missouri Chapter
Trout Unlimited
P.O. Box 10285
Columbia, MO 65205**

**Mid-Missouri Chapter
Trout Unlimited
Officers and Directors - 2002**

President:	Jeff Witten	573-442-1516
Past President:	Tammy Atkins	573-446-4499
Vice President	Bob Suits	573-445-6082
Secretary:	Jon Deal	573-442-0931
Treasurer:	Mike Riley	573-817-0631
Membership:	John Wenzlick	573-634-3096
Resources:	Mike Kruse	573-875-2033
Conservancy:	Curt Morgret	573-446-4776
Member-at-large:	Spencer Turner	573-474-6477
Banquet:	Curt Morgret	573-446-4776
Newsletter editor:	Jim Washabaugh	573-893-3807

Cross Currents, the Mid-Missouri Chapter of Trout Unlimited newsletter, has a circulation of approximately 300. Regular chapter meetings are on the first Tuesday of each month, except for July. The meeting place is usually the Missouri Department of Conservation Fisheries Research Facility at Stadium and College in Columbia, Missouri. Meeting time is 7:30 p.m. See the newsletter for any changes.

Internet: www.tu.org
www.agron.missouri.edu/flyfishing/mmtu.html

E-mail: washabaugh@mchsi.com
