



Cross Currents

May, 2003

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



MIKE KRUSE FEATURED IN TROUT MAGAZINE

Members of our Trout Unlimited chapter have known for many years what an extraordinarily gifted biologist, conservationist, and fisherman Mike Kruse is. Now, over 125,000 Trout Unlimited members nationwide know, too. Mike is currently being featured in the Spring, 2003 issue of Trout Unlimited's magazine, *Trout*, and on T.U.'s national Web site:

Mike Kruse of Columbia, MO, is a volunteer who both embodies the spirit and purpose of TU's conservation mission and has contributed greatly toward TU's growth and evolution as an organization.

From the mid-1990s until 2002, Mike chaired TU's Embrace-A-Stream (EAS) program, which provides funding for grassroots fisheries restoration, research, and education. Rivers restored, dams removed, youth introduced to the wonders of fish-these and more efforts are featured in EAS' portfolio. Behind the success stories is a committee of volunteers who evaluate the many project proposals submitted by chapters and allocate funding.

"Overseeing the grant review process demands coordination, knowledge of fisheries, and consensus-focused facilitation," says Joe McGurrin, the TU staffer who administers EAS. "Mike has these skills and is a superb conservation leader. His combination of technical knowledge and communication skills were a perfect fit for EAS."

Under Mike's guidance, EAS grant awards grew to nearly \$200,000 in 2002, funding 41 projects in 22 states.

A longtime member of the Mid-Missouri Chapter, Mike is a fisheries research biologist with the state Department of Conservation. He currently oversees the chapter's work on behalf of Missouri's 200 miles of habitat. Despite his quiet, modest nature, he's known throughout Missouri as a gifted angler; indeed, a day fishing with him always attracts top dollar as an auction item at the Missouri Council's annual banquet. He's also the creator of "Mike's Mohair Leech," a streamer pattern found in fly boxes wherever big trout are pursued.

In 1992, Mike received MMTU's Nello Donati Award, and in 1998 he received our Trout Conservationist Award. Thanks again, Mike, for all your fine work.

MAGNIFY YOUR PLEASURE A THOUSANDFOLD

“Oh, m’ God! Oh, my Gawd! Ooooh, myyy Gaaahd!” Not the most intellectually stimulating conversation I’ve ever had with myself, but the best I could think of at the moment.

Its first leap must have cleared the water by four feet. No – make that six. Its second leap, maybe by eight. The third, if there was one, prob’ly cleared the overhanging sycamore branches by...? I’m still a little fuzzy on that.

The red stripe down its side? Maybe six inches wide, maybe ten. Maybe it’s not a stripe at all. Maybe its entire side is more scarlet than a harlot’s reputation. The fins? Fluorescent electric orange, with snow-white tips. And long? A foot and a half on the first leap, maybe two feet on the second. Between leaps, just an enormous, brilliant, scarlet stripe dashing valiantly about the narrow pool, desperately seeking the potential freedom of the undercut roots lining the far bank.

At last in hand, it’s a little over 16 inches by an honest tape. Two pounds, tops, prob’ly a little less, but a genuine trophy in this tiny spring creek. And wild - all wild. No trace of hatchery blood in this magnificent creature for at least 50 generations.

It’s a male with a small hookjaw. Close inspection reveals a slight imperfection in the corner of his mouth on the righthand side, the same place I’ve hooked him. He’s been caught before and released, just as I’ll do after we have a little chat - - a “thank you” from the fish for his regained freedom, a “thank you” from me for the exciting experience, and for temporary respite from my burgeoning cynicism about the human condition.

I’ve caught half a dozen lesser fish this morning, too, little seven- and eight-inchers. Year-and-a-half olds. I enjoy them as much as the big one. In country where wild, streambred trout are few and far between, the little ones tell me that something very special is happening here. That’s tremendously comforting, even inspiring, to me. It’s a deeply personal thing.

I’ve known this little stream for 30 years, now, and my encounter with this magnificent fish brings back

a flood of memories, both of good times and bad. Of bad times when some of the landowners didn’t care much for the trout or their home, or did care but didn’t know how to go about it. Of bad times when the U.S. Forest Service actually fought against the Conservation Department’s plans to protect the trout because they’re a non-native species. And of bad times when self-annointed, professionally untrained “experts” did stupid things just because they had the authority and, worse, the self-serving emotional need, to.

But there were good times, too. Times when conservation-minded anglers bought out the uncaring and inept landowners, and gave protection to the precious trout and their home. Times when dedicated and professionally remarkable fisheries biologists successfully overcame the ignorance and lethargy of the Forest Service and others. Times when new information came in proving that the fish were doing their fair share of the job whenever we did ours. And times when the needs of the fish, rather than the emotional problems of their caretakers, came first.

I’m eternally indebted to my parents and others who instilled in me the sense that conservation is not only everyone’s obligation, but it’s a lotta fun, too. I’ve invested my heart, sweat, time, reputation and bankroll in this fish and its home for more than half of my life, and that heightens my pleasure in our transitory meeting a thousandfold. For all of these reasons and more, this wonderful rainbow finning slowly in my trembling hands represents a personally vital part of me, and that swells its otherwise modest size to leviathan proportions.

Few things bore me more than listening to heroic tales of angling prowess from folks who benefit from our sport without giving anything to it in return. Just as bad is the old, “By God, I pay my taxes, and they. . .” Well, you know the rest.

I hope that somewhere, each of you has invested at least a small part of your heart, sweat, time, reputation and bankroll in a fish and its home. If you won’t do it for the rest of us, do it for yourself. And do it until it hurts at least a little bit. It’s the most rewarding way I know to magnify your fly-fishing pleasure a thousandfold.

- **CHUCK TRYON**

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Great PR

The banquet ended in a great good-news/bad-news story. The good news is that for about \$200 dollars we had our TU Banquet advertisement in front of 25 million viewers. The bad news is that it happened a month after the banquet was over. Somehow our ad was shown on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* a few Mondays ago. Leno, of course, made a joke about the vasectomy.

Spring is in the air finally and I expect most everyone is doing yard work and thinking about fishing. When you do make it to the stream, savor the moment, life is short. Many feel the planning and anticipation is, if not better, is at least as enjoyable as the trip its self. Last month's presentation by Lynn Kleopfer of a recent trip to the Middle Fork was very enjoyable and informative.

At the May meeting, Jeff Bridges will be giving a program on first aid. And at the June hot-dog burn Bill Lambert is busy planning a casting clinic. These are great ideas, I hope you are there.

- JEFF WITTEN

THEY'RE AT IT AGAIN

Got a minute?

You can do yourself and the conservation community a great favor by writing or e-mailing your local state representative or state senator. Tell them you oppose the diversion of conservation funding in Missouri.

A bill in the Missouri house would divert one-half of the 1/8 of 1 percent conservation sales tax to education spending. It would be a drop in the bucket in terms of education, but an incredible blow to the conservation program in Missouri.

In the Senate a measure calls for people to vote every four years to re-authorize the conservation sales tax. Instead of managing fish and wildlife, conservationists would be spending their time preparing for elections.

The Missouri Department of Conservation gets no funding from the Legislature. All money comes from the sales tax, the sale of permits and some federal programs.

According to MDC statistics, the Department has an annual budget of over 100 million dollars (this is less than 1 percent of the total state budget) but Missourians and non-residents spend nearly two *billion* dollars annually related to fish, forest and wildlife recreation. These expenditures generate over four *billion* dollars annually of business revenue in Missouri.

Statistics also note fish, forest and wildlife recreation spending generates annually over 89 million dollars of state sales tax revenue. The annual expenditures related to fish, forest and wildlife recreation support 54,800 jobs in Missouri.

The Missouri Department of Conservation is one of the best agencies of state government and something all Missourians can be proud of. The agency has a national reputation and has been a leader — since 1937 — in non-political fish, wildlife and forestry conservation. Let's keep it that way.

MMTU CALENDAR

May 6, 2003, 7:30 p.m. Jeff Bridges will present a program on first aid following discussion on some important issues of interest.

June 3, 2003, Bethel Park - Our annual "Hot Dog Burn" will once again be showcasing the culinary talents of MMTU's premier chef, Curt Morgret. There will also be a casting clinic, so make plans now to attend.

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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.

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