

WACO FLY FISHING CLUB

January, 2015 www.wacoflyfishingclub.org Volume XX: No. 1

Next Meeting:

Tuesday, January 13, 2015

Location:

Waco Wetlands Center

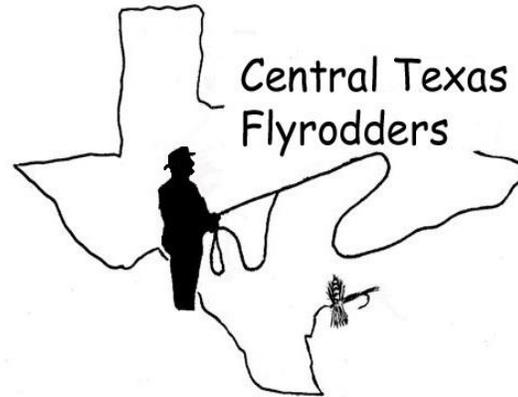
Program:

Alaskan Guide Rob Fuentes

About 7:00 pm

Fly Tying and Tall Tales

About 6:00 p.m.



JANUARY PROGRAM FISHING ALASKA WITH GUIDE ROB FUENTES

Alaska's Bearclaw Lodge sits on the shores of Lake Aleknagik, a remote location about 350 miles southwest of Anchorage. The lodge is so remote that it is powered by generators, which allows for all the comforts of home. Actually, saying all the comforts of home is misleading. Not many homes have an on-site chef. And, there are not many homes that offer fishing for Rainbow Trout, Grayling and Salmon.

If you want to rough it a bit, there is also a tent camp, the Nushagak King Camp, a mere 45 minutes away by float plane. The camp is located on the Nushagak River which supports impressive runs of King Salmon as well as Sockeye, Chum and Silver Salmon.

By the way, the Rainbow Trout you will catch out of Bearclaw Lodge are natives. Many of us have caught Rainbows, not many of us have caught native Rainbows.

Guide Rob Fuentes will tell us all about Bearclaw Lodge and the fishing opportunities surrounding it. What better way to spend a cold (by Texas standards) dark January evening. If you want to whet your appetite, Bearclaw's website is: www.bearclawlodge.com



Original Range of Rainbow Trout

Thanks to John Laughlin for setting up this program for us.

DECEMBER PROGRAM - THE CHRISTMAS PARTY

The pizza at Rosati's was outstanding and the fellowship even better. As is our tradition, we ended our official year with the Christmas Party. Gifts were exchanged and stolen, but the thievery was no big deal because there wasn't a bad gift in the lot. There were fly reels, boxes

crammed with special flies and even a classic Wheatley fly box. The Wheatley was empty, but who cares, it was a Wheatley. The "anonymous" donor of the Wheatley did stick several of John Maddux's poppers into the gift bag to sweeten the pot, err bag.

Speaking of John, guess who won the Glass 4 wt. crafted by Billy Whitehead? Karma will come up again in this newsletter, but let it be said that John has earned plenty of good Karma with his tireless work for our club and has a new fly rod to prove it.

DUES ARE DUE - INCENTIVES TO PAY AND RECRUIT

We are on a calendar year so dues are due for 2015. As an incentive to get your dues paid, all paid members as of the meeting on Tuesday, March 10, 2015 will have one chance in a prize drawing. You will be in the drawing if you pay your dues at or before the March meeting.

If you recruit new members, you will receive another chance in the raffle for each recruit who is paid up by the time of the drawing. A new member is anyone who was not a paid member in 2014. It is the responsibility of the recruiter to confirm his new members with Treasurer/Membership Guy, David Beyer before the drawing.

There will be a number of great prizes in the drawing. The club officers just haven't decided yet what the prizes will be. There will be at least a partial list in the next newsletter.

The way the drawing will work is that the first name drawn will have his/her pick of the available prizes. Second name will have a pick from what is left, and so on until all prizes are gone. You need not be present to win, but if you cannot make the meeting give a list of prize preferences to Treasurer, David Beyer with your dues payment.

WHY PERCH ARE SO SPECIAL

Author John Gierach is talking about Rocky Mountain Brook Trout, but this applies equally to Texas Perch (Sunfish if you want to get picky):

"*** we do like them because they fill a need. In fact, they may actually embody the complete aesthetic of the sport. Fly fishermen have an investment in being serious while at the same time not actually taking it all too seriously, so we like these little fish precisely because they're little and easy, even though as a rule we're into trout [substitute Bass or other large game fish] that are large and difficult."

Gierach always has good things to say about the fish we call Perch. He is a firm believer that they are prettier than they have to be.

PUBLIC ACCESS



I learned to fish on public water like most of you did. Unfortunately access to our public waters, particularly streams, is getting harder and harder to find. With fewer places to fish it is no surprise that there has been a drop off in the recruitment of new anglers. The average age of a fishing license holder in Texas has climbed to something like 44. Since those who fish lead the way in taking care of the fish and the places they live, there is room for some concern.



Former North Bosque River Access

One factor in the loss of public access is the lawlessness of a few. Usually the problems are relatively minor as crimes go, things like litter and disturbing the peace. Sometimes the crimes are more serious and "exaggerations" of the crimes occurring can really blow things out of proportion. I once had a private landowner tell me that public access to the Middle Bosque had lead to rampant gun and drug running along the river bank. Obviously, with more public access drug cartels would start holding their annual conventions under the FM 3047 Bridge.

Even without exaggeration, the occurrence of minor crimes often leads to efforts to block a public access. And, from a selfish standpoint, who wants to fish in dump or endure an obnoxious drunk.

Help protect the access rights we have. We can no longer look the other way if we want to have places to fish. If you see any level of illegal activity from littering to putting undersized fish on a stringer please call the Game Warden. Our local Game Wardens want us to help because they cannot be everywhere. More detail on this in a future newsletter.

A second, more positive factor related to public access is a program of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department that provides angling access through private property. This is angling access only, not camping, picnicking, nude sunbathing, mining or anything not directly related to fishing. Several leases are already in place on the Guadalupe, Colorado and Brazos Rivers.

I recently attended a meeting at the TPWD offices in Austin to discuss the current expansion of this program. Basically, there are dedicated funds available to lease angling access rights from private landowners. The landowner can receive payment for access or something more flexible can be arranged. In one case on the Colorado River near Austin, private groups cleaned up a property best described as a trash dump and TPWD provided fencing with a locked gate. To access the property you call the landowner and get the current combination.

In selecting private properties for the program, TPWD is interested in "partnering" (a popular word with the Department) with private groups to have help with monitoring the lease, keeping it

picked up and things of that sort. The IFFF and related fly fishing clubs, like ours, are taking a lead in working with TPWD in this program.

I will provide updates in future newsletters. If you know any private landowner that might be interested in participating in this program please let me know.

Bob Hanley

SOME HAVE "LAID ASIDE BUSINESS AND GONE A'FISHING":

Life is short so get out there. Let's get more reports in the newsletter.

THE MUGGING AT BARKING DOG - A TRUE CRIME STORY

That river access meeting at TPWD was the Tuesday of our Christmas Party so why bother to work on Monday? Instead I traveled to the Guad to put in a day and a half of fishing.

The fishing started Sunday afternoon. The section of river where I started was above the weir that is just downstream from Rio Raft. The river had recently been stocked and this is a section of the river where fresh fish tend to stack up. The problem was that the river was crowded. Rio is public access and the public was accessing. (Rio is one of the TPWD access points discussed above) One group of kayakers was actually chasing a school of Trout and then wondering out loud why they weren't biting. The fish were terrorized by all of the activity so the fishing started slow.

As the day waned the crowd thinned and the fishing picked up, really picked up. I don't know if I caught twenty or thirty or more, but fishing was very good. I would like to claim that my success resulted from a high level of skill on my part, but did I mention the river had been recently stocked? These fresh fish had never seen a woolly bugger or whatever it is a woolly bugger imitates, but their instinct demanded that they chase it and try to eat it. About the only skill involved was the need to occasionally throw a long line and to use a Johnny Elkins style of fast retrieve (rod tip in the water and short fast strips).

The next morning I tried the same technique a little downstream at Barking Dog and caught a few, but nothing like the afternoon before. I believe that time of day plays a role in the successful deployment of woolly buggers. The technique works best at day's end. Even sophisticated tailwater Trout get aggressively non-selective late in the day. I have this on personal experience, but also on good authority. John Gierach taught me the technique through one of his books.

Anyway, the highlight of the morning wasn't the fishing, but was an epic mugging at Barking Dog. I was the innocent victim.

We all know of the serious gravitational force exerted by a fish being caught by somebody else. You know, the irresistible urge to close the gap on the guy catching fish. Scientific studies have shown that the strength of this gravitational force is directly proportional to the catch differential

between nearby fishermen. It is a complicated formula, but simply put - if the guy just downstream is out fishing you, you are going to stealthily or not so stealthily be pulled in his direction. The power of this force is greatest when the other guy is really into them and you are catching nothing.

The science behind my mugging at Barking Dog might be simpler, the assaulter might just have been a horse's behind or phenomenally ignorant. It goes without saying that he was not a fly fisherman. I think he trespassed along the river bank because I did not hear him coming through the water. Even the hearing impaired can hear someone sloshing through the water and I had heard nothing. The description of the assault is pretty gruesome so stop reading if you are easily upset or subject to nightmares.

I was on a rock shelf, about calf deep, casting to deep holding water across the river. I couldn't get all the way to the far bank because the vegetation behind me limited my back cast, but I was getting way over there. That is where the fish were.

One fish put up quite a fight and needed a bit of resuscitation. After that it took a moment or two to get everything back in shape for my next cast. When I looked up, (ominous music in the TV version of this story) there was a guy on the other side of the river and slightly upstream from where I had been casting. Other than waders, he was not even properly attired in Trout fishing regalia - no fly shop logo cap, fishing vest or chest pack and no net. He was in a bright yellow wind breaker and holding a spinning rod (ominous music intensifies). It is important to note that there was not another human being in sight.

He was concentrating on reeling in so I decided to go ahead and make my cast. I also decided to claim my territory by casting back to the water I had been fishing for the last thirty minutes or so even though he was close enough to that spot to have possibly spooked the fish. Like I said, he had been quiet coming in, but mostly I wanted to establish a boundary so I might actually find a few fish a bit further downstream from the guy.

The guy finished reeling in and patiently watched my last few false casts. The mugging was fast and violent. When my line settled on the water he cast over it, about where my leader was attached to the fly line (ominous music crescendos or maybe switches to dueling banjos). Any serious mugger relies on the shock of the attack to prevail. About all I could do was stand there with my mouth open. The mugger blithely continued casting to the holding water I had been fishing. I guess I had lead him to the Trout. After some of my wits returned, I tried to stand my ground by timing my casts to hit the water as he was finishing his retrieve. My efforts had no visible impact on the mugger.

For some unknown reason the usual forces of nature did not come into play, specifically Karma. At one point the mugger, in his haste to beat me to the cast, threw his ungainly spinning lure over a tree branch. I was thinking Karma when he quickly got his lure back. The only consequence to him was that I beat him to the cast. He promptly cast over my line. How we never tangled is another mystery.

I'll confess to some level of disgust when the mugger actually caught a fish, one of my fish. I did take minimal consolation that it was a small one. Soon after that the mugger got tired of beating on me and waded through the holding water to continue downstream. He ultimately left the river to walk downstream on the bank, possibly trespassing on private property, to seek another innocent victim to show him where the fish were.

There was no reason to keep fishing that spot after the mugger had waded through the holding water and it was almost lunch time so I soon drug my tattered remains out of the river to hit that hamburger joint across the road from the fly shop in Satler. I was pleasantly surprised when Dakus Geeslin arrived shortly after I ordered. Many of you will remember Dakus. He is the bug guy who tutored us in aquatic entomology at one of our meetings. His official title with TPWD is Aquatic Scientist and he is officially a great guy. We had a nice talk over our burgers and I suggested he try the lost GRTU Kanz lease and gave him directions to the easy way to stroll down there from the current GRTU lease at the Hideout.



The Plunge Pool at Kanz

After a nap induced by a large Swiss mushroom burger I headed for Kanz myself and found Dakus fishing the plunge pool below the busted weir. He broke one off as I approached, but didn't seem too upset, which made me suspect that he had been doing well. When you have been catching fish, losing one or two is no big deal. You can even laugh and say things like, "That's why it's called fishing and not catching."

Anyway, Dakus confirmed that he had caught many fish in the hour or so he had been there. His only regret was not hooking the Palomino Trout you could see fining around in the pool. He then

yielded the pool, having to leave for an afternoon meeting in New Braunfels. Good timing for both of us.

That pool had cooled some, but not much. This was drift fishing in heavy water, which gave the fish something to work with when you hooked one. I hooked and landed some nice fish, including some big ones. GRTU puts the biggest fish at the private leases because members will release them. The public sometimes keeps the one big Trout allowed by the regulations which makes it hard to catch it again. I didn't land the biggest three or four I hooked, but had them on for long enough to appreciate their size and power. That's why it's called fishing and not catching. For the first time on this trip I even took a picture or two.



Average Rainbow from Kanz

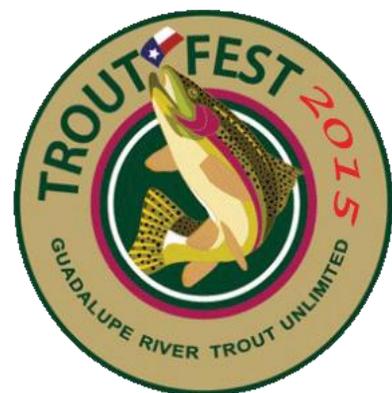
Walking back upstream I had another near mugging, this time by a very large wild boar, which was a real heart stopper. Fortunately it appeared to be asleep or, as I confirmed later, dead. I didn't know if it was alive or dead at the time because I did not stick around long enough to study the thing. I just continued upstream as quietly as I could so it wouldn't wake it up. I don't have a CHL so my only armament was my 5 wt.

I sent a text to Dakus to see if he had seen the Boar and learned it was there earlier. He saw it both times he had walked by it. Dakus was even brave enough to take a picture. That Boar was either taking one hell of a nap or was just plain dead. I was so busy studying the river on my walk in that I hadn't even noticed it.

Bob Hanley

TROUTFEST 2015

This year Troutfest starts with a banquet and auction on Friday, February 20, 2015. The exposition is Saturday and Sunday, February 21 & 22, 2015. If you have any interest in fishing the Gaudalupe River, Trout fishing in general or any type of fly fishing you will enjoy Troutfest. The location is right on the Guad at Rio Raft in Satler, Texas. For more information go to the GRTU website. www.grtu.org



Waco Fly Fishing Club
2015 Membership Application

Dues: Individual \$ 24.00
 Family \$ 36.00
 Student \$ 16.00

Were you a club member in 2014?

Date: _____

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Telephone: Home _____

Cell _____

Work _____

E-mail address: _____

How do you prefer your monthly club newsletter delivered? Mail
 E-mail
 Mail and E-mail

Comments, ideas, or suggestions?

Payments and this form can be turned in at regular club meetings or by mail to:

Bob Hanley
P.O. Box 8030
Waco, Texas 76714