



NEWSLETTER
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www.wacoflyfishingclub.org

NEXT MEETING:

Tuesday, July 12, 2016

LOCATION:

Lake Waco Wetlands

PROGRAM:

Fly Tying and Tall Tales - About 6:00 p.m.
The Durango Area with Dale Connally- About 7:00 p.m.

JUNE PROGRAM- FLY FISHING THE DURANGO AREA WITH DALE CONNALLY

Well, not actually fishing with Dale, but the next best thing - having Dale tell you where to go and how best to fish when you get there. Club members have dubbed Dale the "Trout Whisperer". He can catch Trout like Johnny Elkins catches White Bass. Dale has presented several programs for us in the past and always delivers an entertaining and educational program. He has a knack for making you want to pack up and go fishing.

Dale will cover fly fishing the Durango area. Of course, there's the San Juan, but Dale will take a closer look at the other waters in Colorado around Durango. For San Juan fans this will give you the option of fishing some new water on your next San Juan trip.

FISHING ACCESS

Years ago we vacationed in Red River, New Mexico. It is where I rediscovered fly fishing. Many fond memories of family, Trout fishing and showing others the basics of fly fishing. On one of our last trips to Red River I purchased one of those flip frames aptly labeled "Fishing Memories". The frame has multiple plastic sleeves to hold photographs which are displayed two

at a time, side by side. To display different photographs you flip a sleeve over like turning a page in a book. Every so often I add a picture of one of my catches that was somehow special. Every so often I flip the sleeves to surprise myself with fresh images. It is a nice way to re-live the catching of those special fish.

Recently I flipped a sleeve to display side by side pictures of keeper Stripers caught just below the Lake Whitney dam. It was the summer of 2011. I had just returned from one of those Red River vacations and decided to make the fly club meeting that month. Lloyd Fason and Jim Cox had been fishing below the Whitney dam and told me about herds of big Carp sipping small mayflies off the surface at about sunrise. I was told that stripping a Clouser while waiting for the sun to rise might produce some White Bass, etc. They may have mentioned Stripers, but the focus of the discussion was the big Carp.



With a 5 wt still rigged for New Mexico Trout fishing I gave it a try one morning. It was just past sunrise when I arrived and it was quickly evident that, if anything, Lloyd and Jim had down played the number of Carp in the area. There were many cruising around with their mouths half out of the water sipping something small which had to be the tiny light colored mayflies carpeting the surface.

I promptly hooked a giant fish on a size 20 or so Adams and lost the fish after it made a power run into my backing. The 5X tippet I had on was woefully inadequate. Hooking Carp with a tiny fly and light tippet was fairly easy, but there was no hope of holding the fish for long, much less landing one. As the summer progressed I began a process of using heavier and heavier leader material and got up to a size 16 or so Adams which was too big, but specially tied to match the color of the light bluish, grayish white of the mayflies.

By the time I got my tackle to where I might actually land one, the rig was so unnatural in presentation that the Carp would not take the fly. I would put the fly in front of a Carp mouth, watch it cruise directly for the fly, deviate its course around the fly and resume course after passing the fly. There were so many mayflies on the water that it was common for a Carp to take one that was so close to my fly that the wake from the take would bobble my fly. I finally got a hook-up on 10 pound test and landed the fish. It was big, but truth be told, it was below average. The one and only Carp I have ever hooked and landed on a dry fly.

What offset the frustration of the Carp fishing was throwing a Clouser in the dark before sunrise. On the second trip to try for Carp with a slightly beefed up rig I under slept and got there well before sunrise. The Clouser thing worked well producing Whites, Bass, Catfish, big Perch and baby Stripers. The Stripers were amazing. For the most part they were about 16 inch fish and very strong. On several mornings I was playing a fish on for the majority of the morning before the sun came up. I would land a Striper, release it and hook another one after just a cast or two. By sunrise the Striper bite was over, but that is when the Carp appeared

I started using heavier tackle due to the fight in those Stripers and, I hoped, a big Carp that might take a big Adams. One morning, after a cast or two I hooked something huge - and fast. That fish ran so hard that my seven weight reel was spinning line into a potential bird's nest. Realizing I had the drag set too light I palmed the reel which actually burned my hand so badly that I pulled away, the line tangled and the fish broke off.

A week or so later a friend showed me a picture of a huge Striper he caught from the same spot, almost the exact same spot. He kept the fish and it weighed in at 42 pounds and was 39 inches long or maybe 42 inches and 39 pounds. Either way, a great fish. When I asked, he told me there was no Clouser broken off in its mouth. I decided my fish was still out there.

I did catch a few big Stripers that summer, not as big as the monster my friend caught, but keepers up to twenty-two inches. A keeper Striper will put a nice burn in your forearm. Two of those keeper are the ones in my flip frame.

What does all of that have to do with fishing access? Well you can't fish there anymore, at least not wade fish. Those who govern us (not elected officials by the way) have closed the area below the Whitney Dam to wade fishing. Apparently, water releases from Lake Whitney will not be gradual or accompanied by a warning horn as in the past. In addition, more water will be released and the full release will be immediate. I have an image of a wall of water suddenly appearing from under the dam. I don't want to be anywhere close either wading or in a small boat. I don't know if there is anything that can be done to return this public access to what it has been for as long as I can remember. If anybody has any ideas, let me know.

ADDENDUM

After writing my two bits about fishing access below Lake Whitney I was going through the summer 2016 edition of *Trout* magazine and found a story titled "2065". I recommend it.

Bob Hanley

MEMBERSHIP

Every so often we do some housekeeping. If you have not paid dues for a while, but you still want to be a member of the club, please pay your dues this month. Club officers are working at upgrading our membership records and in the near future will remove those from the rolls that are not paid members in 2016. In order to be fair to those members who have paid their dues, and to get our club membership roster in good order, we have to have a membership expiration date. If you have not paid your current membership dues by the July meeting, we will assume you are no longer interested in being a member and the July Newsletter will be the last you receive until your membership is renewed. We hope you enjoy being part of our club and hope you will continue as a member. If not, we welcome you back anytime.

Also, if there is any problem with the way you receive the newsletter please contact Bob Hanley. We can deliver by email, U.S. mail or both.



**September 8-10, 2016
GRAPEVINE, TEXAS**

The Texas Council of the IFFF will host the third Texas Fly Fishing Expo beginning September 8, 2016 and ending September 10, 2016 at the Grapevine Recreation Center. For more information see - <http://txflyfishexpo.com>. If you enjoy fly fishing you will really enjoy the Expo and will leave inspired to hit the water as soon as possible.

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

Valles Caldera - Fishing in an Ancient Volcanic Caldera

Years ago I was traveling from the San Juan River to Santa Fe with two of my daughters, Michelle and Erin. The most direct route on the map took us through the Jemez Mountains on what we soon discovered were some very iffy roads. Fortunately we were in my 1984 Blazer (now semi-retired). I'm not sure any less ground clearance would have made it. There were two lessons learned - (1) be skeptical of maps of New Mexico roadways and (2) there is a place called the Valles Caldera which provides one of the most awesome vistas I have ever seen.

Later I learned that the Valles Caldera held several alpine Trout Streams, but that it was privately held - no public access. Still later I learned that the property had been transferred to a consortia of some sort and that public fishing was allowed on a limited reservation basis. Recently I learned that the property had been transferred to the United States Forest Service and that public fishing was allowed on a limited first come, first served basis.

We were in New Mexico for the wedding of a good friend's daughter. The San Juan was ripping at 4,000 CFS + so Michelle and I decided to try the streams in the Valles Caldera. Upon arrival, we were first greeted by a cow elk that crossed the gravel road as we drove to the visitor center. At the visitor center dozens of prairie dogs extended additional welcomes.

After getting our papers properly in order with the Feds, we set out for the fourteen mile drive across the Caldera to San Antonio Creek. Normally I am in a rush to get fishing, but I found myself driving slowly to take in the scenery, which includes Walt Longmire's cabin from the TV series. During season one, I figured out that the Longmire series was filmed in New Mexico and thought the cabin was in the Caldera. This trip confirmed it. They were actually filming on our last day there.

When we got around to fishing we found many cooperative Brown Trout, if you didn't spook them that is. Presentation was tricky because San Antonio Creek averages about a yard wide with undercut banks and overlying grass along the channel. When you hooked a fish these tight stream conditions made actually landing the fish a true challenge.

San Antonio Creek reminded me of the Rito Las Perchas in the San Pedro Wilderness where I fished for Rio Grande Cutthroats several years ago. A big difference is the nature of the fish. Those Cutts, bless their innocent little hearts, didn't seem

to mind your silhouette or a sloppy cast. The San Antonio Creek Browns would bolt for cover if they got even a glimpse of you. A slight wind moving the streamside grass around did seem to help camouflage a slightly sloppy cast.



Michelle hooked and landed the first fish and I quickly followed with a second. From there Michelle proceeded to out fish me. I no longer do the crouching, crawling around thing very well, at least not for long, so my stealthiness suffered. That's my excuse. I think we both missed and hooked many more fish than we officially landed, which is okay because we were going to let them go away. It's always nice how the catch and release ethic helps make an outing successful even when many or most fish don't quite make it to hand.



These were not big fish with the one exception that Michelle lost to an undercut bank. But, the fish were as pretty as Trout get and went nuts when you hooked one. This one is a little bit larger than average.



Bob Hanley