

SMITH RIVER TU NEWSLETTER

Fall 2025

UPCOMING EVENTS

August 16, Trash Float. River cleanup at Smith River Sports Complex – 9:00 am - lunch. Join SRTU as we partner with DRBA to clean up the Smith River. Bring your canoe, jon boat or kayak and float down the river picking up trash along the way. Or stay on land and clean up roadways along the river. Contact Jason Collins for details. Jaymcoll81@yahoo.com

August 23, Smith River Fest, Smith River Sports Complex, Axton. We will have a booth and talk to festival attendees about fly fishing, conservation, TU, casting instruction and also demonstrate fly tying. Jason Collins is the lead, Jaymcoll81@yahoo.com

September 4, September Regular Meeting. The meeting will be held at Hugo's Restaurant at 6:30pm. Jason Collins is the lead, jaymcoll81@yahoo.com

September 19-21, Virginia Council annual meeting to be held at Graves Mountain Lodge. The sign-up deadline is September 17. Lead is Eric Tichay, erictichay@yahoo.com

October 18, River/Road Clean Up. We will designate a section to clean. Assemble at 8:00 am at Bassett Canoe Access, 271 Trent Hill Dr. (off Route 57 E. in Bassett). Lunch will be provided for those participating. Matt Tuggle is the

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER



Hope everyone is having a great summer so far and Fall will be here soon. The Smith River Fest is approaching us. This is always a great event and a way for members and friends to meet. If you have a chance stop by The Smith River Trout Unlimited booth and say hi. Also if you are interested in volunteering to assist in fly casting or fly tying please let me know. In September we have a chapter meeting and a trip planned. Also in September is another Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources culvert assessment class. If anyone has a trip or a conservation idea please let me know. Hope everyone has a great remainder of their summer.

Jason Collins,

Smith River Trout Unlimited President

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Recent Chapter Events

June 25th – DWR Sampling – Members joined biologists from the Virginia Dept of Wildlife Resources to conduct a sampling of the trout population in the Smith River



Honoring a Local Legend: Aquatic Insects of the Smith River, Virginia – A paper written by Robert “Bob” Jenkins

by Eric Tichay

Robert “Bob” Jenkins was a professor of biology emeritus at Roanoke College. According to the Roanoke College Faculty News, Obituary, dated August 18, 2023, Bob died on July 12, 2023, at age 83. His family, friends, colleagues, and the many students he influenced over 40 years of teaching at Roanoke were left to marvel at his accomplishments as an ichthyologist, naturalist, teacher, author, angler, marathon-runner, music lover and father. Bob was recognized as one of the foremost ichthyologists of our time.

Bob Jenkins and Noel Burkhead, biologist, colleague and friend of Bob Jenkins, co-authored a book, “*Freshwater Fishes of Virginia*”. Noel remarked that the book was Jenkins’ proudest professional achievement. Published in 1994, it also featured several chapters co-authored by Roanoke College students. It remains one of the most comprehensive books published on the subject and is still considered an essential guide to the fish of Virginia and central Appalachia.

Here is Bob Jenkins’ paper on aquatic insects of the Smith River written exactly as it was found among other Smith River Trout Unlimited chapter historic papers.

Aquatic Insects of Smith River, Virginia
2 June 2011

Bob Jenkins

The following is based on this angler-entomologist’s observations, occasional collecting and preserving of specimens, or simply inadvertent hand-capture of stream insects on the Smith, mainly in the SRS and

Bassett, during 1976-86 and April-May 2006. I never had a year of continuous intensive “following the hatches”, and during 1978-79 my days on the river were rare. Primary attention was on the mayflies including emergence schedule. Midges and small crane flies frequently were common but not identified. Stonefly adults were rarely seen; nymphs were uncommon in bottom sampling. Caddisfly adults may have been usually present but not noted, as their appearance on the water surface generally is very brief, and adults tend to be less obvious in flight than some groups; caddis larvae were uncommon to common, especially net-spinning hydropsychids.

Bluewing Olives, baetids, family Baetidae – Including tiny spp. such as the formerly-named, tiny *Pseudocloeon*, and somewhat larger spp. (*Baetis*?). Heavy tiny-dun hatches and spinner falls in autumn; once a good but brief hatch early on a summer morning.

Smith River “Hendrickson”, *Tsalia beneri* (monotypic genus) – Sparse to moderate hatches, sometimes seeming to predate Sulphur hatching, sometimes during Sulphur hatches. Hatches now reduced?

Sulphurs, *Ephemerella invaria* and *E. dorothea* – In the 70s and 80s hatching was mainly in May to about mid-Jun, maybe mainly or almost entirely of *dorothea*. I don’t recall that other persons and I noted the “larger, earlier” species (*invaria*) to precede the hatches of the “smaller, later” *dorothea*, which latter surely were plentiful. However, in late Apr and early May 2006 hatches of apparently *invaria* regularly occurred, and in early May I collected many female *invaria* spinners from a flying group.

Cahills, *Maccaffertium* and *Stenacron* (all formerly in genus *Stenonema*) – Gray Fox/March Brown hatches occasional, usually sparse in Apr and or May. Good hatches of cream (or white) Cahills seen during some Sulphur hatches, and occasionally sparse to moderate hatches in summer. Yellow Cahills occasionally seen in summer and early fall. All gone now?

Slate Drake (or Mahogany Drake), *Isonychia bicolor* – Adults seemed rare, singly or in small groups.

Golden Drake, *Anthopotamanthus* (1) *distinctus* – This beautiful, moderately large mayfly seemed a major mid to late summer hatch. Gone now?

Mayfly spms. identified from collections donated to Va Tech were very rarely seen in the 70's or 80's – Green Drake, *Ephemera guttulata*; Cream Drake, *Ephemera varia* (creamy); Brown Drake, *Hexagenia atrocaudata*; *Hexagenia ?munda* (creamy).

(1) spelling correction *Anthopotamus distinctus*

Is it too hot to fish for trout?

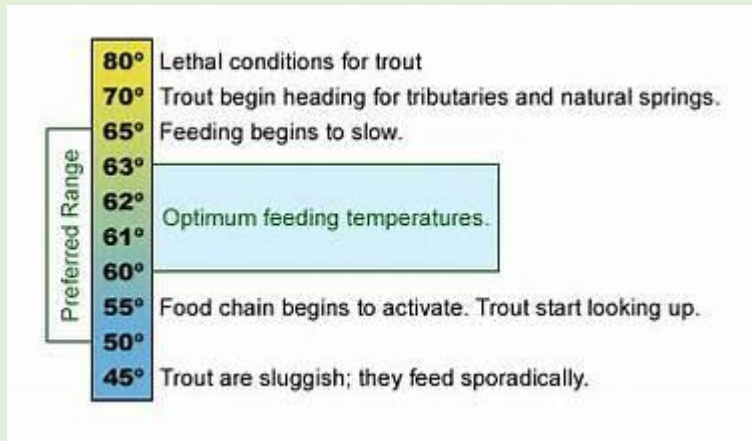
It's important to be mindful when summertime air temperatures consistently climb, the water temperatures will soon follow. Due to extended heatwaves many of our favorite trout streams and rivers reach dangerous temperatures for the fish we target.

As trout conservationists we should do our part by fishing at the right times and in the right places regardless of wildlife commission warm weather mandates. Knowing when to give trout a break is



important and so is maximizing time on the water. These tips will help minimize the impact we leave as anglers.

What Water Temperatures are Safe for Trout?



67 Degrees Fahrenheit & Above

Fishing for trout in water over 67 degrees Fahrenheit (F) is **highly discouraged** as your catch will unlikely survive the fight to the net regardless of how quickly you land it.

65-66 Degrees Fahrenheit

Fishing for trout in water temperatures between 65-67 degrees Fahrenheit poses an increased risk to fish survivability and is discouraged.

65 Degrees Fahrenheit and Below

Prime trout feeding water temperatures are between 45°F and 65°F. Any warmer and we run the risk of playing a fish to exhaustion. Any colder and those trout will become lock-jawed as they do their best to conserve energy. These are guidelines, however, playing with the warmer end of the spectrum can have dire consequences for the trout on your line.

What can we do when water temperatures rise?

Tip #1 Use a Thermometer:

Having a stream thermometer will help ensure that you don't fish in water that's above 67°F. Stream thermometers can also be used year-round to help find prime feeding water and help time various hatches.

Tip #2 Land Fish Quickly

Landing fish quickly is a good practice in general but is extra important when water temperatures rise. Getting fish to the net quickly will help reduce the amount of stress they go through. Over-playing a fish in warm water is a surefire way to kill a trout. To help land fish quicker, go up a size in tippet i.e. use 3x or 4x when you'd normally use 5x.

Having a longer handle net can also assist in landing and releasing fish quickly and safely.

Tip #3 Fish Early

Most anglers prefer fishing early mornings, however, it's extra important to start extra early during hot summer months to maximize your time on the water. Getting off the water before the peak heat of the day can help reduce the stress that angling places on a fish. When there's a risk of high water temperatures, get off the water around 12pm. This also leaves plenty of time for other summer activities.

Tip #4 Find Cold Water

Western Alpine lakes and backcountry streams will almost always stay in the safe zone (below 65°F) throughout the summer thanks to being fed by the last melting snowpack.

Central and Eastern U.S. tailwater rivers and spring feed streams with temperatures in the safe zone (below 65°F) are potential cold water resources to safely fish for trout.

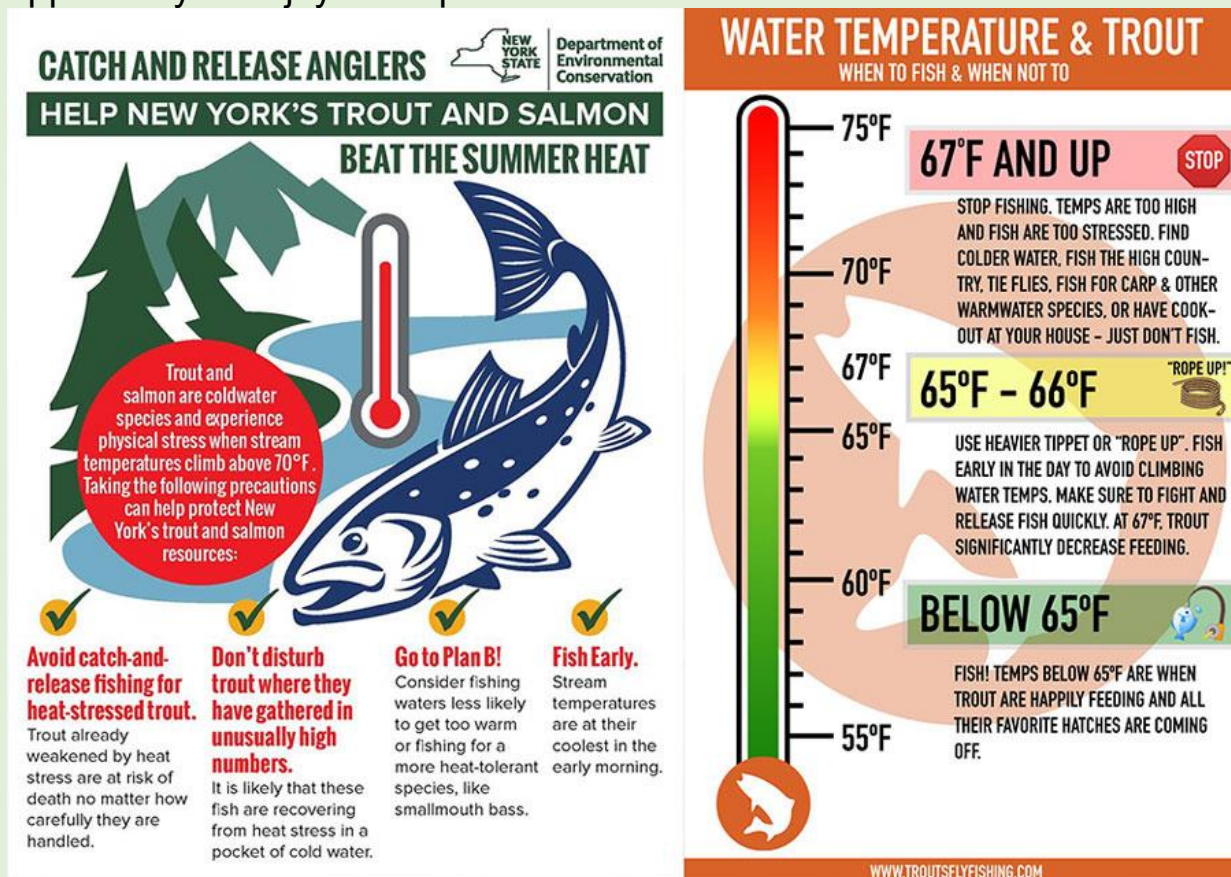
The Smith River, Virginia below the Philpott Lake Dam is a coldwater tailwater river. Sections of the river are often, but not always in the temperature safe zone. On July 27, 2025, at 12pm, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Water Data monitoring showed the water temperature at 47.3°F below the Philpott Lake Dam, 51.1°F at the North Bassett Canoe Access, and 65.3°F below the Martinsville Dam. Temperatures were in the safe zone 65°F between the Philpott Lake Dam and North Bassett Canoe Access, and marginal below the Martinsville Dam. Reference USGS water monitoring data before heading out to the river.

Tip #5 Find New Fish

Summer is a prime opportunity to chase warm water species like bass, carp, and a variety of sunfish like bluegill and crappie. These species present new challenges and allow you to vary your fly fishing tactics. Casting poppers to eager warm water pond fish is a blast.

Tip #6 Give 'Em a Break

Simply, if water temperatures are over 65°F it's best to pack up your trout gear to find colder water temps, pursue other species, or take an opportunity to enjoy other past times.



Resourced from the article by Evan Garda, A Water Temperature Guide to Trout, *When is it too hot for trout?*, Fly Lords Magazine June 16, 2021.

For the full article go to this link:

<https://flylordsmag.com/a-water-temperature-guide-to-trout-plus-late-summer-fly-fishing-tips/>

September Chapter Meeting



Please join us on September 4th at 6:30 for our June Chapter meeting at Hugo's Restaurant in Martinsville, VA. We'll review summer activities and maybe do some fly tying. Come early and grab a bite to eat!

Hope to see you there.

Rivercourse Youth Camp 2025

In 2024 Smith River TU held a fundraiser and successfully raised enough money to support sending a youth to the North Carolina TU Rivercourse Youth Camp. Evan (13) from Ferrum attended the camp this year. Camp ran from June 8-13 at Lake Logan in Canton, NC. Campers enjoyed not only learning how to fly fish, but also assisted in stocking fish, sampling a local river using electro shock and fly tying. They also had visits from speakers who discussed river ecosystems and also a visit from a hawk. Please enjoy some photos from the camp courtesy of the NCTU Rivercourse team. If you would like to donate towards a youth to attend camp next year please contact Jeff Deering at jdeer76@yahoo.com.









Sampling the Smith River

By Al Kittredge

On Wednesday, June 25, 2025 I was invited to accompany the Virginia DWR as they sampled the Smith River Trout Fishery from the North Bassett canoe ramp to

The Great Road canoe ramp. Before anyone says "You'll kill the fish - it's too hot to sample this time of the year", let me remind you the Smith River is a tailwater fishery. The water coming out of the bottom of Philpott Dam is 44 degrees. We monitored the water temperatures as we collected fish and it remained in the mid 50's. The only one suffering were the biologists who were working in high 80's to mid 90's air temperatures.



It didn't take long to collect a cooler full of fish. Now it's time for the entire crew to spring into action.



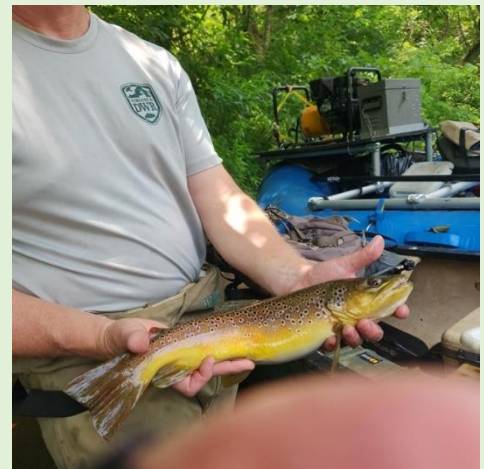
Each fish is identified, measured and weighed. A few from each run were sacrificed in the name of science and placed in a Ziploc bag for later dissection to determine what they have been eating and age. 99% are returned to the river unharmed where they are probably shaking their heads and wondering "what the heck just happened"?



All this data is carefully recorded and will be entered into a computer program which will help make informed decisions about the management of the fishery.

Kudos to the Virginia DWR Paint Bank State Fish Hatchery - they are stocking some nice Rainbow trout this year.

There's no shortage of fish. The raft only covers about a 6 foot wide section of the river. It's estimated 5-7% of the fish are collected using this method. Plus, during this sample, the water was real clear and the "net man" said he could see lots of fish spooking off to one side as the raft approached.



The cool water lowered the air temperature several degrees so it wasn't too bad working conditions. Plus, we are outside and see things the average person can only dream about. We'll be doing another section in a couple weeks. If you'd like to tag along as an observer or volunteer helper contact me via text or email and I'll try to arrange it.

COMMUNITY CORNER

Have an interesting article, fishing trip photo or some fishing tips you want to share in the newsletter? Please email us at smithriverchapter@tu.org. We'd love to hear from you.



For a fly fishing guide on the Smith give Matt a call.

Lucky Strips Fly Co.

www.luckystripsflyco.com

276-732-0517

Smith River, Va



Interested in fishing on the Smith but aren't sure where the best spots are? Are they biting on dry flies or nymphs? Call Smith River Outfitters and schedule a full or half day trip. Local guides are ready to put you on some fish.



Smith River Chapter

Trout Unlimited

Smithriver.tu.org

Visit our Facebook group where we share event announcements and photos.
<http://www.facebook.com/SmithRiverTU>



For story suggestions or to share photos from your recent fishing trips please contact us at smithriverchapter@tu.org

Smith River TU Chapter Officers

Chapter President – Jason Collins (jaymcol81@yahoo.com)

Chapter Vice President – Jeff Deering (jdeer76@yahoo.com)

Chapter Secretary – Adam Gordon (gordonadam81@gmail.com)

Treasurer – Eric Tichay (erictichay@yahoo.com)

Board Members

Roy Ford

Al Kittredge

Matt Tuggle

Membership Chair Danny Newman