



# Driftless Leader

We are a local chapter of Trout Unlimited serving Crawford, Juneau, La Crosse, Monroe, and Vernon counties. Our mission is to **conserve, protect, and restore** coldwater fisheries and their watersheds. We are proud to have helped protect and restore the waters of Southwest Wisconsin for over 30 years.

A Quarterly Newsletter (or whenever we get to it!)

February 2011

#### Liars at Yellowstone

Check out a great fish story from CRTU member Rick Stewart.  
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#### March Meeting

Location is still TBD, but check out the meeting agenda for March.  
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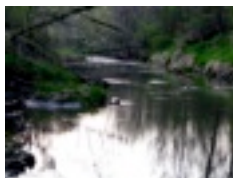


Photo credit: Curt Rees

#### Fly Pattern

Eric Rauch shares his pattern for tying the Gen X edition of the Coulee Slider.  
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#### Pebble Mine Update



The EPA recently weighed in on the proposed mine near Bristol Bay, Alaska  
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#### Story to Tell?

Always looking to share stories from CRTU members. Would love to hear about your first fish (trout or otherwise) for future newsletters  
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#### Early Season

Early Season Trout opens on March 5.



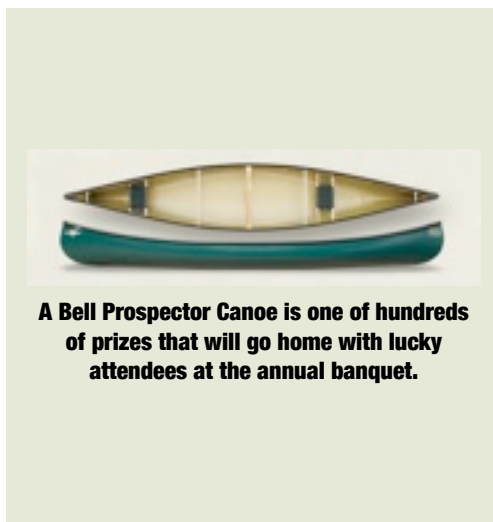
Photo credit: Tony Macasaet

## CRTU Banquet

The annual banquet will be on February 25, 2011 at the Cedar Creek Country Club in Onalaska.

Do not miss the 2011 Coulee Region Trout Unlimited Banquet!!! We have been hard at work collecting hundreds of prizes to be given away. Doors open at 6pm and tickets can be bought at the door or contact Eric Rauch at 608-787-1883 or [8088rauch@charter.net](mailto:8088rauch@charter.net) for early registration.

We will have games of chance, GIANT PLINKO, bucket raffles, silent auctions, 50/50 cash raffles, door prizes and much more. In addition to all of the prizes you will get an incredible meal, and an



**A Bell Prospector Canoe is one of hundreds of prizes that will go home with lucky attendees at the annual banquet.**

entertaining key note address by past president Richard Kyte who is rumored to be unveiling a list of his favorite fishing spots for everyone!

Prizes include: \$1600 Bell Prospector Canoe, SAGE fly rod, Allen fly reels, AD Maddox print, and literally hundreds of

other prizes. Stock up for the upcoming trout season opener, with prizes, food, fun and good conversation.

### Coon Creek Trout Festival July 23, 2011

Coulee Region TU members and the Village of Coon Valley are working hard to put together the first Coon Creek Trout Festival to be held on July 23. This family friendly event will have something for everyone: classic car show, food and craft vendors, rod demos, fly tying, flycasting lessons, fishing for kids, raffles, and live music. New attractions and events are continually being finalized and added, so check out the web site at [www.cooncreektroutfest.com](http://www.cooncreektroutfest.com) to see all of the details.



Photo Credit: Brett Colvin via Flickr



Photo Credit: Matt Champlin via Flickr



Photo Credit: Eric Rauch

## Local Liars on the Yellowstone River

*Rick Stewart is a middle school teacher in La Crosse. He tells lots of stories about fishing and life. Most of them are true.*

A few summers back my 16 year old son, Zach, and I decided to fish the East bank of the Yellowstone River downstream from Fishing Bridge. The first half mile or so is closed to all fishing, so a short hike is required. We determined that the walk would keep a few fishers at bay and might be a great spot to try.

We pulled into the Fishing Bridge gas station for gas and a final cup of lousy coffee just as they were opening for the morning. Four summer employees, two of them college students, and two retired gentlemen were grouped near the coffee pot. I asked if any of them had fished the section of the Yellowstone we were interested in. You could have heard a Royal Coachman drop. The four employees glanced at their shoes and began nervously shuffling their feet. A full five seconds of silence elapsed as they stared at the floor with a couple sidelong glances to each other. Finally, one of the older men said, "No, I don't believe there's much for fish in there." One of the younger employees chimed in, "I never heard of anyone fishing that section. Never been there myself." We paid our bill and left.

As we gathered our gear and headed up the trail, my son said, "What the heck was that all about?" "Son," I replied, "you have just witnessed four very bad liars. Based on that awful performance, I guess they don't fish

much, but I can tell you they have been catching fish here lately. Think about it, 'not much for fish' - in the Yellowstone? And, 'never heard of anyone fishing there' - in the Yellowstone River, half a mile from the famous Fishing Bridge?"

Sure enough, within 15 minutes of hitting the water Zach caught and released a 23-inch cutthroat. But, don't bother hiking there if you go to Yellowstone. I'm pretty sure that was the only fish in the river.

## March Chapter Meeting

*Location is to be announced. If you have any ideas, let Eric know.*

Bring your gear for fly tying and lure making, even your night crawlers to our March meeting on Wednesday March 16<sup>th</sup>. The spring season will be upon us and everyone will need to gear up and fill their boxes for the summer ahead. If you don't make your own flies or gear, come on down and learn how from the many "old" pros in our group. I'm sure you'll go home with some great new ideas and a handful of "handouts" to try on the stream.

## Websites to Check Out

*These sites certainly will get you excited for the season to open.*

[www.thisisfly.com](http://www.thisisfly.com)

[www.moldychum.com](http://www.moldychum.com)

[www.sleepinginthedirt.blogspot.com](http://www.sleepinginthedirt.blogspot.com)

[www.catchmagazine.net](http://www.catchmagazine.net)

## Fly to Try: Coulee Slider (Gen X Edition)

*Yes, it looks like a big wooly bugger / Pink Squirrel, but this fly is one of my best small baitfish imitations and seems to work best in the spring when stripped quickly. Good Luck! Eric*

Hook: I use #6 eagle claw bait hooks (cheap, extra wide gape)  
 Thread: Red Kevlar thread (extra strong)  
 Bead: Copper bead 3.5mm or so (the smallest I can fit on the hook)  
 Tail: Hen pheasant marabou (the best is grey with tan tips)  
 Tail: 2 or so pieces of flashabou on each side of fly  
 Body: Medium or light grey chenille  
 Hackle: Grizzly **SCHLAPPEN** wrapped tip first so it is larger at head of fly. Place the bead on the hook, start thread, and tie in marabou so it is the length of the hook and both light and dark segments are showing. Tie in flash on each side of marabou. Tie in chenille and large grizzly hackle (tip first) at base of marabou. Wind thread, then chenille, then hackle to just behind the bead. Make several turns of the Kevlar thread to build up a 2mm or so neck behind the bead. Whip finish and use loon hard-head to cover thread wraps.

To make the Coulee Slider (Old school edition, in picture) follow instructions above but tie in a small piece of bright pink chenille just behind the bead instead of the Kevlar thread wraps. Use gold bead.

*Open pit mining ruins watersheds. In Bristol Bay, our water is our life. I want my son Finn to be able to fish out here one day.*

*— Dylan Braund*



Photo Credit: [www.redgoldfilm.com](http://www.redgoldfilm.com)

On January 26, Viterbo University and Coulee Region TU hosted a screening of the film *Red Gold*. Speaking after the film were Curt “Ole” Olson (featured in the film and pictured above), and Jeff Skrade, both residents of and advocates for the Bristol Bay area. It was a beautiful film with a compelling story. Even better was hearing from Curt and Jeff and the passion they have for preserving the natural resources of the area for the people who live and thrive there. The following is a February 13 editorial from the *New York Times* on recent EPA decisions regarding the controversial Pebble Mine.

Last year, the Obama administration permanently banned oil drilling in Alaska’s Bristol Bay, America’s richest salmon fishery and the heart of a \$2.2 billion regional fishing industry. One huge threat to this

extraordinary ecosystem remains: a proposed gold and copper operation known as the Pebble Mine. If built, it would affect a huge area of clear-running headwater streams and wetlands that feed the bay.

Responding to urgent requests from nine native tribes that depend on the headwaters for subsistence, the federal Environmental Protection Agency has now announced that it will assess the risks to the bay from mining and commercial projects in general.

This is very good news. The agency obviously cannot prejudge the study’s outcome, but its announcement pointedly called attention to Bristol Bay’s “extraordinary importance” as a

salmon fishery and source of food and income for local residents. It also called attention to its obligation under the federal Clean Water Act to block any project that would have an “unacceptable adverse effect” on water quality and wildlife.

Anglo American, the London-based multinational powerhouse behind the project, says it can extract the minerals safely. But historically the mining industry has done a sloppy job of protecting the environment. Mining residues, like sulfide-laced rock, are toxic. No matter how hard the company tries to sequester them — it proposes to build a 740-foot-high dam to contain the waste — an earthquake or other disturbance can jar them loose.

The people of Alaska came close to blocking the project themselves in a 2008 referendum. Three former governors, including two Republicans, and Senator Ted Stevens spoke out against the mine. Industry, however, spent \$12 million on advertising about the mine’s economic benefits; that, plus a last-minute pro-mining push by Gov. Sarah Palin and her administration, turned the tide in industry’s favor.

The E.P.A. is right to do this study. We are certain it will find that the mine presents unacceptable risks and should not be allowed to proceed.

# Got a fish story to tell? Photos to share?

*I'm looking for stories from CRTU members. Fishermen (fisherwomen too, of course!) love to tell stories about their time on the water, thoughts on conservation, outdoor politics, etc. I would like to feature your words in future editions of this newsletter. No matter how long or short, I can use it. Better at fishing than writing about it? I can edit your words to share with other members. Just email me at [curtrees@gmail.com](mailto:curtrees@gmail.com). Send me your photos too!*

*Bad Axe River at Esofea, Keely Rees photo*



*Bad Axe River at Esofea, Tony Macasaet photo*



*Mormon Creek explorers, Keely Rees photo*

