



Official newsletter of Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited

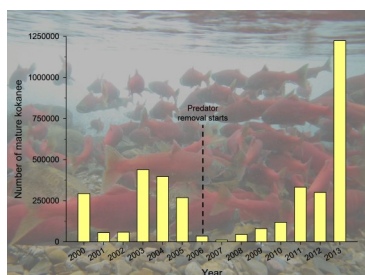
Volume 3, Issue 1

Winter 2014

***aáy** (pronounced "ahh-ee") is the Salish word for bull trout.*

Our mission: To conserve, protect and restore valuable wild fish and their habitat in Northwest Montana

More good news from Lake Pend Oreille



We got a note recently from Andy Dux of Idaho Fish and Game on the current status of the kokanee population on Lake Pend Oreille and it looks like continued good news. As you all know, Idaho Fish and Game began netting predatory lake trout in Pend Oreille in 2006 following the crash of

the kokanee population and severe drops in the numbers of native fish and Gerrard rainbow trout. Those netting efforts have shown positive results in recent years, particularly in the numbers of popular kokanee salmon. Last year was the first year since 2000 that they were able to reopen a limited fishery for kokanee. This year they did an extensive survey of the lake shore areas and they are seeing a dramatic resurgence in kokanee which can be attributed to the netting program. Here's the report from Andy Dux and above is a great chart showing the continued explosion of the kokanee population.

I wanted to update everyone on the status of kokanee spawning in Lake Pend Oreille. There is still some spawning activity occurring, but it is mostly completed and continued on page 4



Bob Beck of Columbia Falls and "girlfriend" with a fine mess of Flathead bull trout in 1936

Officers

- President..... Larry Timchak
- Vice President..... Jim Johnson
- Secretary.....Chris Schustrom
- Treasurer..... Glen Anacker
- Banquet Chair..... Dan Short



Rocky Mountain Whitefish
Prosopium williamsoni

Learn more
on page 4

***aáy** is a quarterly publication of the Flathead Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited.*

Contact: 406-260-1198, flatheadtu@gmail.com, www.flatheadtu.org

*"Time is but the stream I go
a-fishing in. Its thin current
slides away, but eternity re-
mains.*

~Henry David Thoreau

From Our President



Larry Timchak—FVTU President



Donate to Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited today! Please visit our website at www.flatheadtu.org and click on the “Donate” button to support our efforts. Thanks.

Newsletter content does not necessarily reflect the views of Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited, it's membership or Montana Trout Unlimited.

FVTU welcomes submission of photos or content from our valued members. The newsletter is published quarterly throughout the year. Publication dates will be approximately Oct. 1, Jan. 1, Apr. 1, and July 1. Please send contributions at least ten days prior to publication to the newsletter editor at:

lucky@flatheadtu.org

is available online at the FVTU website.
www.flatheadtu.org

Newsletter editor: Lucky Sultz

2013 proved to be a busy but good year for the Flathead Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited. There's no reason to believe that 2014 will not be equally busy and hopefully as good or even better.

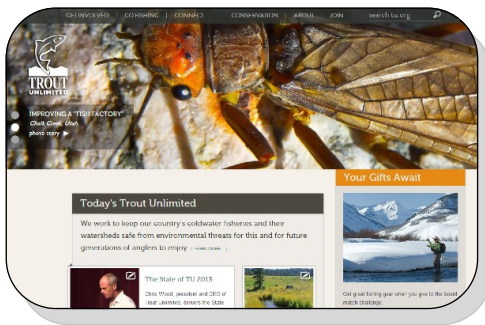
Chapter membership continues to grow, now approaching 350 members who help magnify our voice in support of cold water fisheries conservation issues. Our active participation in the Flathead Lake Lake Trout Suppression EIS resulted in significant public response in favor of the selected Alternative D, the maximum suppression alternative. Our Chapter will remain engaged as the State and Salish-Kootenai Tribe grapple with co-management issues and the next steps to implement the plan. The good news is that Mack Days continues to be a success, kokanee are responding to lake trout suppression in Lake Pend Oreille, and initial results from applying electrolysis to lake trout spawning beds in Swan Lake appear promising. Our Chapter has invested dollars towards several worthwhile projects including the new aquatic invasive check station near Coram, Swan Lake lake trout netting, lake trout telemetry in Yellowstone Lake, a Public Service Announcement on the status of bull trout including proper catch and release techniques, and support for the excellent work accomplished by Montana Trout Unlimited.

Looking ahead to 2014, our Chapter contributed to the Montana TU effort to create a \$10,000 reward for information that would lead to the arrest and conviction of a person or persons who have illegally stocked fish into Montana waters. Northwestern Montana is the “bucket biology” capital of Montana as most illegal introductions have occurred in our region. The impacts from these illegal introductions are profound and extend well beyond the boundaries of our state. Northern pike and walleye introduced in Montana are spreading into the Columbia River system in Idaho and Washington posing a direct threat to steelhead and salmon smolts as well as other native fish.

Our Chapter is also tracking fishing regulation changes including removal of the lake trout slot limit on Flathead Lake, elimination of the 2 westslope cutthroat trout limit on Flathead River sloughs, and no limit/no season for northern pike in the Flathead River above the lake. We recently learned of potential bull trout mortality associated with ice fishing for pike on the sloughs. As “every bull trout counts”, we are working with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to monitor mortality.

Another issue we are tracking is the significant increase in unit oil trains travelling down the Middle Fork from the Bakken oil field. An accident along the river would have tragic consequences for trout and the ecology of the cold and relatively infertile river. Our position is that when extraordinary resources are at risk like Glacier National Park and the Wild and Scenic Flathead River, extraordinary measures are required to protect them. We will work with regulatory agencies and other partners to ensure Burlington Northern/Santa Fe is doing all they can to prevent derailments, using the best technology and are prepared if a an accident happens. *Continued on page 4*

TU.org is All New



Check out the new look and new features on the National Trout Unlimited website! TU.org has added many new features. One of the new and fun features is the addition of Groups. Groups are areas for people to gather around a common interest, like a body of water, a group of like-minded friends, or an interest, like fly tying. Each chapter and state council has a group that you can join. You don't have to be a TU member to join a group.

Chapter groups are a set of social tools, not a website in and of themselves. Chapter and/or council groups can hold all of your chapter or council information and take advantage of many social tools and functionality.

You can find the Flathead Valley TU group at <http://www.tu.org/connect/groups/085-flathead-valley>. We hope you will join us, take part in the conversation and contribute to our group.



A 13-POUND, 10-OUNCE Dolly Varden landed by Mrs. Jim Frye of Lakeside last weekend is just a sample of the fine trout caught in Flathead Lake. Mrs. Frye caught the big fish off Angel Point while fishing from her husband's sonar-equipped cruiser.

*Kalispell Daily Inter Lake
July 13, 1961*

Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited holds monthly meetings on the third Tuesday of each month October through April. Meetings are held at the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks conference room at 490 N. Meridian in Kalispell beginning at 7pm. Please join us for our regular meetings and program offerings.



FVTU Calendar

- General Meeting: Jan. 21, 2014 Chris Downs, Fisheries biologist from Glacier National Park on current and future direction of fisheries management in the Park.
- General Meeting: Feb. 18, 2014—Larry Timchak, Planning a self-guided trip to Alaska
- General Meeting: March 18, 2014—Dave Kumlien, Montana TU, Invasive Species, prevention and management
- General Meeting: April 14, 2013 Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks—Update on fisheries management issues in NW Montana
- Saturday, May 17, 2014—Don't forget our Annual Fund-raising banquet and auction at Grouse Mountain Lodge in Whitefish. Stay tuned to www.flatheadtu.org for more details

Lake Pend Oreille—Continued from Page 1

we have finished our annual surveys. We had a tremendous increase in the number of spawners this year. We estimated about 1.2 million spawners (hatchery and wild combined), which was by far the highest total since we started those estimates in 2000 (see attached graph). The hatchery trapping also went well and we collected 11.4 million eggs, which will essentially fill the Cabinet Gorge hatchery.

Last week we finished a visual survey of the entire shoreline of the lake. This was a more comprehensive survey than we've done in recent years because there finally are enough spawning fish to warrant this kind of effort. We saw a major expansion of spawning activity from predominately the southern bays (Scenic and Idle-wilde) to many shoreline areas in the southern half of the lake. In addition, there was some spawning on the northern half of the lake, which has been rare for some time now.

It appears that targeted netting of lake trout really does pay off. There was also an interesting article in the Mis-

soulion on the increased number of eagles seen this winter around Lake Pend Oreille due to the large numbers of spawning kokanee salmon. See more about Lake Pend Oreille in the "News Briefs" section on page 6. "[Spawning kokanee turn Idaho lake into eagle](#)"

Presidents Column—Continued from Page 2

And let's not forget the fishing! We are offering fly tying classes this winter, provide coaches for Casting for Recovery and other volunteer events, and attend Sportsman's Fairs throughout the year.

My thoughts often turn to spring and the first hatches of the year. The list of flies to tie is long but there is something inherently optimistic about tying flies on a cold winter day knowing that another spring is just around the corner.

Thanks again for your membership with Flathead Valley TU. I hope you have a wonderful year full of good fishing trips, friends and adventures.

Larry Timchak, FVTU President

Forgotten Cousin

In our efforts to protect and restore coldwater fish in the Flathead we tend to be a bit myopic and focus on our



Mountain Whitefish
Prosopium williamsoni

the iconic trout species, the bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout that have been drastically reduced by the bloated population of lake trout in Flathead Lake. Most of the time, we overlook that other important native trout, the native Mountain Whitefish.

Long-time local angler, Bob Beck of Columbia Falls recalls a time not all that long ago when the whitefish ran up our rivers in large numbers to spawn. *"There used to be millions of them around Flathead Lake and the rivers. A lot of people can remember going out east of Kalispell to the steel bridge. In the fall you would see the Rocky Mountain Native Whitefish so thick you could not see the river bottom."*

"Like its trout and salmon cousins, the mountain whitefish has a cylindrical body. It has a gray-bronze back fading to silvery sides, larger scales than those of trout,

and a small mouth overhung by the upper jaw, giving it a suckerlike appearance. It can easily be distinguished from suckers and pikeminnows, however, by the presence of an adipose fin on its back just forward of the tail fin. Meriwether Lewis described the mountain whitefish as a "bottle-nosed fish" when he saw it in the upper Missouri drainage in 1805. Mountain whitefish average about 12 inches in Montana, but anglers regularly catch larger specimens. The state record mountain whitefish, just over 5 pounds, was caught in the Kootenai River." - John Fraley, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

Our native whitefish is also a fine fighting and eating fish and although many consider it a "trash fish", some say it rivals the texture and taste of any of our native trout.

Mountain whitefish, along with the long-gone kokanee salmon were always a favored food of our native bull trout and westslope cutthroats and their near-demise in the Flathead River drainage has made a large contribution to the decline of our other native fish. So, the next time you pick up one of these fine native fish, treat it gently, and remember to respect this often forgotten member of our native trout family.



A century ago, tens of thousands of bull trout roamed the waters of Flathead Lake and the Flathead River system. By the mid-1980s a spawning run of 10,000-15,000 fish still provided exciting fishing opportunities. Today there are less than 3,000 adult fish left in Flathead Lake and the North and Middle forks. Due to our misguided actions and inattention, these magnificent fish are on the brink of extinction in our home waters.

FVTU is proud to announce the release of our exciting video, *Jewel in The Crown*. This DVD examines the plight of native fish in the Flathead with a focus on current problems facing bull trout.

Through conversations with the last generation of anglers who were able to legally fish for bull trout in our home waters and many historical photos as well as interviews with local fisheries biologists and managers, we examine the current situation and where we need to go now to preserve our native fish heritage in the Flat-

head Basin.

Get your copy today: *Jewel in The Crown* is available for only \$12 (+ \$2 shipping and handling) and can be obtained on the FVTU website www.flatheadtu.org, at several participating local fly shops, or at our monthly general meetings.

Board Members Meet with New Glacier National Park Superintendent



Jim Johnson, Jeff Mow, Kim Hall, Larry Timchak, Lucky Sultz, Phil Wilson, Chris Downs

The Flathead Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited recognizes the importance of our public lands including the iconic Glacier National Park. As part of our continuing effort to maintain relationships, work together on partnerships and collaborate on issues of common interest, Board Members Larry Timchak, Lucky Sultz and Jim Johnson met with new Glacier Park Superintendent Jeff Mow and his staff this past October.

Jeff arrived at Glacier in August from his post at Kenai Fjords National Park in Alaska and is al-

ready well versed in park fisheries issue. The Park is faced with many challenges including the devastating effect of invasive lake trout. On the west side of the park, lake trout have invaded nine of twelve lakes to which they have access and are known to have severe negative effects on the survival of native fish populations. Two of the park's premier bull trout supporting lakes, Quartz Lake and Logging Lake, are at risk of losing their historically robust bull trout populations to non-native invasive lake trout.

Park Fisheries Biologist Chris Downs is working on several fronts to protect the Park's native fisheries. Unfortunately the government shutdown arrived just as the Park was to embark on several lake trout suppression projects including spearfishing spawners in Lake McDonald and netting on Quartz and Logging Lake. Chris is planning to update the Park's fisheries management plan and he will be the featured speaker at our January 21 chapter meeting.

Our Chapter looks forward to working closely with the Park on future projects and we heartily welcome Jeff to one of the best jobs in the Park Service- Superintendent of Glacier National Park!



Montana Reserved Water Rights Compact Commission releases report on the CSKT Water Rights Compact



Since its inception the Commission has negotiated and the Legislature has approved 17 compacts with six tribes and five federal agencies in Montana. The agreement between the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the State of Montana is the last compact to be ratified. The CSKT and the State of Montana and the United States have negotiated over many years to reach a proposed water rights settlement. The settlement was released to the public in November 2012. Ratification of the Compact will be addressed by the 2015 Montana Legislature.

In response to direction by Governor Bullock the Montana Reserved Water Rights Compact Commission has prepared a report addressing questions raised about the Compact during the 2013 legislative session and in response to the Commission's June 4, 2013 solicitation of additional comments. The report, comments and all Compact documents can be viewed on the [Commission's website](#).



Claret Bumble

"I love the way the mix of the blue head hackle and the claret dubbing came together on this one."

Fly Pattern by Peter McCallum.

Materials

Hook: Size 10. I used a Kamasan B175

Thread: Black

Tail: Golden Pheasant Tippet

Rib: Fine Gold Oval Tinsel

Body: Claret Seal, or substitute

Rear Hackle: Black Cock, palmered

Front Hackle: Jay or substitute. I used a Whiting Brahma Hackle dyed blue

This pattern came from the [Fly Patterns](#) section of the new TU.org website. Please visit the new [TU.org](#) and see what they have to offer for both members and non-members

FVTU News Briefs

Spawning kokanee turn Idaho lake into eagle buffet.—[Missoulia Jan. 2, 2014](#)

BAYVIEW, Idaho (AP) — Bayview residents say an abundance of spawning kokanee in their bay of Lake Pend Oreille have made this year's December eagle-watching season one to remember.

If the community had a mayor, it might be Ralph Jones, who has lived in the town for 25 years, and owns and operates the popular Ralph's Coffee House. His truck's Idaho license plate reads "Bayview."

He said the number of eagles this December is "tenfold" compared with past years.

"Living in a post card," Jones called it Monday afternoon.

He attributes the eagle turnout to the strong comeback kokanee have made

in Lake Pend Oreille. In 2013, for the first time since 1999, anglers were allowed to keep a limit of six kokanee from the lake. The kokanee also feed the lake's popular rainbow trout.

"This year the food resource is very strong on Lake Pend Oreille," said Jim Hayden, the regional wildlife manager with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

Slot Limit Dropped for South Half of Flathead Lake—Kalspell [Daily Inter Lake](#) Jan. 9, 2014

At their Jan. 8 meeting, the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission, recommended a change in fishing regulations to remove the slot-limit on the south half of Flathead Lake.

The slot limit, in place since 1992, prohibited anglers from keeping lake

trout between 30 and 36 inches long with the intent of protecting the lake's trophy lake trout fishery.

After March 1, anglers will be allowed to keep lake trout more than 30 inches long on the southern half of the lake where the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes have management authority.

Tribal fisheries biologist Barry Hansen explained that eliminating the slot limit is a component in efforts to reduce the abundance of lake trout, a non-native species that has had adverse impacts on the native and protected bull trout.

Commission Chairman Dan Vermilion said more needs to be done to suppress lake trout population, and he reiterated that the tribes are "exercising their management authority" on the south half of the lake.