



2017 Illinois Council of Trout Unlimited
Youth Conservation and Fly Fishing Camp
July 23-28, 2017

The Illinois Council of Trout Unlimited will again be holding its annual Conservation and Fly Fishing Camp on the banks of the famous Au Sable River in Michigan from July 23-28, 2017.

Campers learn more about conservation and fly fishing in a week at camp than most of us learn in a lifetime. It is an enjoyable and educational experience. Participants will learn about many aspects of conservation and preserving cold water fisheries.

The fly fishing instruction includes fly casting (roll cast, overhead fly cast, false casting, shooting line, even the double haul!), fly tying, knots, basic entomology and what fish eat, reading the water, safe wading techniques, catch and release, leave-no-trace, and other outdoors and fly fishing related skills. Most importantly, camp is fun!!!

The camp accepts young men and women ages 13 through 18. The camp is all inclusive and provides transportation to and from the camp, food and lodging. Instruction is provided by Trout Unlimited volunteers, faculty from Midwestern Universities, and local professionals. All necessary gear is provided by the Illinois Council of Trout Unlimited for the campers to use while attending the camp.

Consider the Conservation and Fly Fishing Camp for your daughter, son, niece, nephew or grandkids. The camp cost includes round-trip transportation from Chicago, lodging, meals and equipment. The tuition fee is \$575 (comprised of a \$75 deposit at time of application plus a \$500 remaining balance due one month before camp). Candidates should not send full tuition until notified of selection. If for some reason the application is declined, the deposit will be refunded. For more information including an application, please see contact information below. Sponsorship is available for campers with financial need.

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2016 Conservation and Fly Fishing Camp Overview

The 2016 camp lived up to its mission to develop the next generation of cold water conservation advocates while also providing a rigorous introduction to the sport of fly fishing on the famed Au Sable River. An experienced Trout Unlimited mentor team guided twelve 13- to 18-year-old young men and women through prime time morning and evening fishing sessions. Throughout the week, an abundance of "hands on" active learning opportunities were conducted during the fully loaded mid-day periods.

The camp mentors and instructors were comprised of Trout Unlimited members from Illinois and Michigan chapters along with biologists from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Michigan State University, Western Michigan University and a private company.

Highlights of the various camp activities follow.

A similar itinerary is planned for 2017

Electro-shocking Fish Survey

A Senior Fisheries Biologist with the Michigan DNR and his crew led our campers to conduct a fish counting survey on the South Branch of the Au Sable River near Roscommon, Michigan. Armed with a generator (floating in a small boat) connected to two electrical probes, the DNR crew searched under various river bed structures to find and stun fish. Campers were wide-eyed when a beast of a trophy-sized brown trout was caught in the small stream.

Stream Improvement Project

A professional biologist and owner of Northpoint Fisheries Management, and his crew supervised our campers who performed stream improvement work on the Au Sable River near Grayling, Michigan. Campers were in the water engaged in a variety of tasks including floating timber downstream to the desired work location, operating the water jet drill, inserting wood pylons deep into the stream bed, and anchoring various types of "lunker structures" and barriers to erosion.

A Day with the Professor

A professor from Western Michigan University lectured the group on the unique geology of the region and why it has produced river systems among the most stable in the world. He also provided an introduction to entomology and offered insights as campers captured and identified macro-invertebrates throughout a day in the stream. The professor also led a hydrology study to demonstrate how stream velocity and flow capacity are measured.

Macro-invertebrate Studies

Students used "D-nets" and "kick nets" to capture premature insects in their larva and nymph stages during one stream session. In another experiment, campers retrieved macro-invertebrate traps which had been planted in the Au Sable River three weeks prior to camp. Campers gained appreciation of the life cycle of insects such as May flies, caddis flies and stone flies. Campers also learned how professional biologists use insect populations and their diversity to monitor stream health.

Fish Dissection

A Michigan State University Professor captivated the campers as he led a session featuring the dissection of both native trout and perch. The biologist discussed the anatomy of these species and drew contrasts between cold water trout and warmer water inhabitants.

Introduction to Fly Fishing

Campers were taught the basics of fly rod casting and then coached on reading the water and various tactics for fishing dry flies, nymphs, and streamers both up and down stream. As expected, the morning Trico hatches demanded technical fishing with fine leaders and small flies (size #24-26). The evenings saw fish rising to take caddis, light Cahills, blue wing olives and others. Campers were also treated to an outing at Kneff Lake to demonstrate how they could apply their fly fishing skills in the Chicago area without ready access to trout streams.

Fly Tying Workshop

Each camper participated in an introductory workshop on fly tying, hosted by a TU member. Each camper was provided with a vice, tools and supplies to enable them to gain hands on experience tying a variety of flies.

A Day on the Au Sable North Branch

A long-time Michigan TU leader and local property owner, hosted our group for a day at his house on the North Branch. Our host led a tour of the North Branch of the Au Sable and discussed fluvial geomorphology (the process by which the flow of water changes the land). Other area property owners made the day special by personally guiding our campers while they fished several Au Sable private access locations while providing inspirational leadership.

History of Logging and Its Impact on the Au Sable River

A Michigan historian and local museum director provided a history of logging and its devastating effect on the Au Sable River. Campers learned how Michigan's forests were wiped out in the late 1800s to build Chicago and other major cities in the region. In the age before rail transport, logs were floated down river to market which scoured and widened the river beds warming the water. One casualty was the Au Sable grayling, the original dominant cold water fish species which was extirpated from the region by the early 1900s.