



President's Letter

I can't help but reflect on the dramatic year OBTU had in 2020. We had a strong start in Jan & Feb 2020 with great speakers & very well attended meetings. In March we began Covid-cancelling everything. All we could see were clouds on the horizon. We took a deep breath. Like the rest of the world, we began figuring out how to conduct our business online which was an intimidating prospect for some of us old codgers on the OBTU board.

In many respects 2020 was an outstanding year for OBTU. As it turned out the technology challenges were much easier to overcome than expected. We were soon conducting most of our board & committee meetings online using the miracle of Zoom. We held our first remote online Chapter meeting in May with an excellent speaker from Alaska providing an insider view of efforts to stop the Bristol Bay's Pebble Mine. **Our continuing monthly Zoom Chapter meetings have been well attended peaking at 45 participants** attending our January 2021 Zoom session with a very engaging speaker presenting from Michigan's Upper Peninsula. While we have had to forego a number of our usual in-person programs, OBTU forged ahead with online Zoom meetings and online fundraising campaigns. **Thanks to the ingenuity & generosity of OBTU members, the best fundraising performance in many years was achieved. The funding enabled OBTU to have a banner year in contributions to Midwest region cold water conservation projects.** While we were forced to curtail many in-person events and youth education programs, OBTU did enjoy several outdoor, socially distanced, conservation work days and fishing outings.

OBTU's signature accomplishment of 2020 was being awarded an "Embrace a Stream" grant from TU National. Our grant, combined with added OBTU contributions, and matching funds from the Wisconsin Blackhawk & Coulee chapters, were instrumental in the restoration of Conway Creek, a tributary of Tainter Creek in the Kickapoo watershed near Viroqua in the heart of the Wisconsin Driftless Area.

Read all about OBTU happenings and plans in our 2021 winter edition of "The Flyer" newsletter.

"The Flyer" 2021 Winter Edition

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Thanks to all who contributed effort and monies to OBTU's cause! Please feel welcome to contact me with anything OBTU that you may want to discuss. I will enjoy hearing from you.

Willie Beshire
President, Oak Brook Trout Unlimited
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1. OBTU 2020 Conservation Report

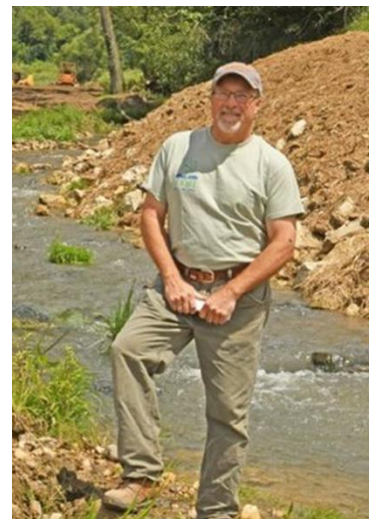
Despite the challenges of COVID-19, 2020 turned out to be a remarkably successful year for OBTU Conservation efforts! While spring and summer in-person activities had to be cancelled, we were able to conduct the Fall Coldwater Macroinvertebrate Survey and the Fall DuPage River Cleanup Day. In addition, based on the chapter's sound financial position, and with the help of some innovative fundraising, we were able to provide financial support for many worthwhile projects in 2020.

Below are brief descriptions of conservation projects worked on in 2020.

Trout Unlimited Driftless Area Restoration Effort (TUDARE)

In recent years, OBTU has contributed to help cover administrative costs of the Trout Unlimited Driftless Area Restoration Effort (TUDARE). TUDARE is a long-term initiative to protect, restore and enhance cold water rivers in the Driftless Area of southeast Minnesota, southwest Wisconsin, northeast Iowa, and northwest Illinois. It has helped raise \$65 million for stream restoration projects with over 500 miles of public fishing access added. TUDARE relies greatly on the work and passion of TU volunteers.

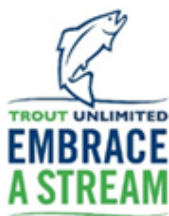
TUDARE staff play a key role in selecting, designing, planning, writing grants, and coordinating funding for stream restoration projects in the Driftless Area. In 2020, improvement work was completed at several sites, including Citron Creek and Warner Creek in the Kickapoo River watershed. Paul Krahm (pictured), TUDARE Stream Restoration Specialist, who was one of the speakers at our October Wisconsin Driftless membership meeting, oversaw these projects. Paul is also leading the design and management of a two-year stream improvement project on Conway Creek, a feeder stream of Tainter Creek which flows into the Kickapoo River.



Conway Creek

The Conway Creek Habitat Improvement Project is a key part of the Tainter Creek Watershed restoration, planned and managed by TUDARE. Conway is a major cold spring fed tributary to Tainter which, with habitat restoration, will provide quality spawning and residential habitat for brook and brown trout. The project will lower and reduce bank slopes so that erosion, phosphorus release, and flood damage are reduced significantly. Log weirs, embedded root wads, and mid-stream boulders will provide excellent insect and fish habitat. Stream corners will have stone reinforcement providing both erosion reduction and fish habitat. On either side of the stream, harmful box elders will be removed and replaced with native ground cover. As a result, a half mile of high quality cold water fishery will be created and the health of Tainter Creek itself will be improved.

Initial work was done clearing trees and brush along the banks in the fall of 2020 by a Wisconsin DNR crew, with habitat restoration scheduled to happen during the summer of 2021.



OBTU took the lead raising funds for the Conway project in 2020. OBTU Fundraising Chair Jim Dickens partnered with the Wisconsin Coulee Region and Blackhawk TU chapters to submit a joint grant application to the national Trout Unlimited Embrace-A-Stream program. OBTU was awarded a generous \$8,000 grant for the project. As pledged, OBTU and our Wisconsin chapter partners will be making an additional matching contribution of \$8,000 to the project. Additionally, OBTU also raised over \$4,000 in contributions and matching grants through the online Embrace-A-Stream Challenge held in November!



Section of Conway Creek to be rehabilitated (near its juncture with Tainter Creek)

Little LaCrosse River

Since 2014, OBTU has provided both volunteer and financial support to conservation projects that encompass work to reduce soil erosion and phosphorus discharge in Monroe County, Wisconsin, mainly within the city of Sparta. We are fortunate to have a strong local partner in Bob Micheel, Director, Monroe County Land Conservation Department. Bob has organized our LUNKER building workdays in recent years.



As we could not hold an in-person stream improvement activity last summer, Bob suggested we provide funds to help with maintenance of Monroe County fishing easements. Our contribution helped pay for a contractor who used mechanical equipment to clear brush and trees beside a long section of the Little LaCrosse River near Melvina, Wisconsin.

Coldwater River

OBTU continued our cooperative efforts with the Coldwater River Watershed Council (CRWC) that began over 15 years ago. Two macroinvertebrate survey workdays were planned, where members would collect stream samples from designated sites. By classifying and trending the population data, the CRWC gains a better understanding of how stream health is evolving. For the safety of our volunteers, the Spring Macroinvertebrate Survey was cancelled. Fortunately, with the necessary precautions, the Fall survey was able to be conducted in October.

We further expanded our Coldwater monitoring efforts by funding a Mayfly Sensor Station to provide online real time water quality information. The Mayfly Sensor Station is a solar powered, low-cost, easy-to-use water monitoring station designed to collect continuous temperature, depth, conductivity, and turbidity data. Data is then uploaded to an online database via cellular signal for real-time access to current stream conditions. These units are part of a national TU initiative for do-it-yourself water monitoring.



Dowagiac River

The Dowagiac River is one of the closest rivers to our chapter with potential for a high-quality coldwater fishery. A substantial amount of the Pucker Street Dam in Niles, Michigan was removed in 2020. Removing the dam will open up the entire river system to migrations of steelhead, salmon, and other fish species. In fact, the dam had been lowered enough by the fall that migrating Coho and Chinook Salmon were already able to move upstream. Progress was also made stabilizing the river channel where needed and planting banks/riparian areas. Dam removal and channel restoration efforts are expected to be completed in 2021.

OBTU has provided volunteer and financial support to projects on the Dowagiac in recent years and it is anticipated the dam removal will expand opportunities to help with watershed planning and habitat monitoring. Conservation efforts on the Dowagiac River are driven by MEANDRS (Meeting Ecological and Agricultural Needs within the Dowagiac River System), of which OBTU is a Board member.



Pucker Street Dam as seen in October 2020

Au Sable River

As a one-time opportunity in 2020, OBTU joined with the Michigan Trout Unlimited Property Management Committee and numerous other partners to support replacement of a long stairway down to the Au Sable River. Our contribution to this project assures that this access site will continue to provide erosion-free access to a truly unique reach of the Au Sable River's Holy Waters.

OBTU has long history mentoring campers on the Au Sable during the Illinois Youth Conservation and Fly Fishing Camp.



Bloody Run Creek and Ten Mile Creek

New in 2020, OBTU helped the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to acquire land parcel additions adjacent to Wildlife Management Areas that will provide additional habitat/stream resources as well as provide expanded public fishing, hunting, and wildlife viewing access. Working with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF), we joined with over a dozen other conservation organizations/individuals to raise the private partner funds required to leverage grants to help acquire two properties and ensure transfer to the Iowa DNR. The first property, a 165-acre parcel on Bloody Run Creek, was transferred to the Iowa DNR in June. This parcel is located adjacent to the west end of the Wildlife Management Area and provides improved access to the special fishing regulations section. Bloody Run is probably the easiest Iowa trout stream to get to for Illinois anglers. The stream is directly across the Mississippi from Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. It is stocked year-round with catchable-size rainbows and also contains wild browns.

The second property is a 32-acre addition to Falcon Springs Wildlife Management Area in Winneshiek County that will provide additional habitat/stream resources as well as public access to Ten Mile Creek. The property contains 1,000 feet of cold-water creek frontage that supports wild brown trout. Iowa DNR Commissioners approved an Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHP) grant application to help fund the DNR acquisition of the parcel in October. OBTU's pledge helped the INHP reach the required 25% private match for the grant. The transfer to the DNR is expected to be completed in first half of 2021. The property and stream will then be available for public recreation. OBTU is looking forward to partnering with the INHF to help preserve Iowa's natural lands and waterways in the future.



DuPage River

OBTU began participating in the DuPage County Adopt-A-Stream program in 2019, with spring and fall cleanup days held on a stretch of West Branch of the DuPage River near downtown Naperville, IL. Unfortunately, our spring 2020 cleanup day was cancelled due COVID-19. Nevertheless, we had a great group of volunteers come out for our fall cleanup in October. After completing two years of clean ups, OBTU is eligible for an official Adopt-A-Stream sign. The sign with Oak Brook Trout Unlimited's name will be installed on S. Washington Street in the spring of 2021.



Participants of the Fall DuPage River Cleanup wore masks and practiced social distancing as they cleaned up trash and debris.

2021 Plans

Plans for 2021 include completion of the Conway Creek project, a tour of past Wisconsin Driftless Area projects, expanded water quality monitoring, spring and fall DuPage River cleanup days, spring and fall Coldwater Macro Invertebrate Surveys. In person activities will depend on COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions. Keep your fingers crossed and stay tuned for more information.

If you would like more information on any of the 2020 projects or are interested in volunteering in 2021, please contact Dave Carlson at dmcarlson@hotmail.com.

Volunteer and financial conservation efforts are made possible by the generous contributions of our Chapter members and friends. Thank you!

2. Education Update

I've been trying to figure out how to start an article without saying what a tough year it has been, but... well, you get the point.

OBTU has a very active education program. Primarily we have been focused on youth outreach programs – Youth Fly Fishing classes, Trout in the Classroom, participation in the Illinois Youth Conservation and Fly-Fishing Camp. In the past few years, we have tried to reach out to our new adult members. Many may be new to the sport of fly fishing; others are just looking for opportunities to get together with others who share their interests and concerns. Of course, most all of these programs have been on hiatus, while we all sheltered and distanced. However, we have continued to meet (virtually) as a committee and are moving forward with our programs.

- Youth Fly Fishing is about to kick off for 2021, as a limited, hybrid program. We will conduct part of the program through Zoom meetings, and finish with a casting, fly tying, and fishing programs this summer in the Cook County Forest Preserves. There may be a few remaining slots in these classes. Check the website for our flyer, and more information.
- We hope to begin a STREAM Girls program in the next year. This is a wonderful cooperative between Trout Unlimited and Girl Scouts. We need volunteers to help with this new program. Check the STREAM Girls link on our Education page for a depiction of the program.

Moving forward, we hope to bring additional programs that reach out to our members, and the general public. We always need plenty of volunteers. The beautiful part of our programs is that you can easily pick the level of your involvement. We would like to hear from you, whether to pitch in on a program, or with your suggestions of things we should try.

Marvin Strauch
Education Chair
708-638-1318
youthed@obtu.org



The Trout Release



Entomology Day



Look What I Found!

3. Fund Raising Report

2020: Best OBTU Fund Raising In Many Years.

In recent years, OBTU has done well by conducting 2 major fund raising campaigns each year:

1. A spring fund raising drive through the mail
2. A holiday party in December with bucket raffles, silent auctions & rod raffle drawing.

Due to Covid considerations, both of these major events were cancelled. Also, meeting raffles and other ongoing fundraising activities were largely curtailed. OBTU was forced develop new approaches.



Led by the initiative of Jim Dickens, Fund Raising Chairman, OBTU began piloting online fundraising campaigns during the summer. OBTU took advantage of TU National's newly endorsed online fundraising platform provided by Eventgroove. During the 2nd half of 2020, OBTU launched into online fund raising and achieved favorable outcomes:

- A successful sweepstakes** was run during the summer months and exceeded its target. Prizes included an Orvis fly rod, 2 TFO fly rods, and 10 Ketchum release tools
- Due to a fast start, OBTU was awarded of an added \$1,000 prize** from Eventgroove for being one of the 1st chapters in all of TU to run a sweepstakes on the new platform.
- A successful online "crowd funding" campaign** was held last fall which also achieved target.
- Three online auctions of donated guide trips** were held late in the year. Thanks to Kevin Feenstra, Muskegon River; Jay Allen, Muskegon River, and Kent Kleckner of Decorah, Iowa, for each donating a guide trip for OBTU fundraising purposes.

The most significant achievement during the year was OBTU's award of an "Embrace a Stream" grant of \$8,000 by TU National to help fund the restoration of ½ mile of Conway Creek at its juncture with Tainter Creek, near Viroqua in the heart of the Wisconsin Driftless Area. OBTU thanks Dave Carlson, VP & Conservation Chair for his efforts over the last several years to maintain relationships with TUDARE leadership and position OBTU for this opportunity. Once again, we thank Jim Dickens, for taking the lead in developing OBTU's grant application. By winning the EAS Grant, OBTU became eligible to participate in the "Embrace a Stream Challenge", an online fund raising competition among the 17 EAS grant winning chapters throughout the US. Due to enthusiastic and generous participation by members, OBTU raised substantially more funding as well as capturing added prizes & matching funds provided by the EAS Challenge. With added matching fund donations by Wisconsin's Blackhawk & Coulee Chapters, **OBTU was instrumental in raising over \$20,000 for the Conway Creek Project.**

2021 Plans: The Board has approved a 2021 fund raising program. Highlights include a spring 2021 solicitation empowered by our new online capabilities. Our holiday party at Arrowhead Golf Club is booked for December 8th. Plans also include an online rod raffle, the pursuit of new grant application(s) and other events. With Jim Dickens recent move to Nevada, thanks to John Snyder for accepting the OBTU Fundraising Chair responsibility.

4. OBTU Web Site Re-Development

Check it out:

Our web site, <https://obtu.org/>, is new and improved and with key content up-to-date. **Most importantly, we encourage you to visit the Calendar on obtu.org which now accurately displays information on upcoming events.** We regret that OBTU's web site was not well maintained during the 2nd half of 2020 & offer apologies for any inconvenience. However, our communications team is now re-energized and much better prepared for managing obtu.org. Over the past 3 months, a re-development effort utilizing the latest WordPress technology has been undertaken to simplify web site maintenance and improve ease of use. Several members have been trained to make content changes which increases our capacity to keep things up-to-date and also offers backup in the event of personnel turnover. We are now much less dependent on contract services to maintain the site.

What Happened?

-First, Covid struck and our annual plan went out the window. Our budget was obsolete before the ink was dry. We went from orderly, routine business to crisis management almost overnight. With the developing crisis, web site maintenance was not high on the priority list.

-In May our Communication Chair left & we appointed a replacement. A short time later, the replacement Communication Chair moved out-of-state to pursue a new career opportunity. To compensate, a number of people pitched in to work on communications (& learn the requisite skills) in addition to their other duties.

-We developed an interim communications technology plan based on:

- Using "Constant Contact" to maintain communications with the OBTU membership
- Using Zoom as our virtual meeting platform
- Using the TU National endorsed "Eventgroove" platform for OBTU online fund raising

-While OBTU fell behind with the web site updates, business operations that could be safely conducted during the pandemic were successfully executed. Practical communications continued on our other technology platforms and good outcomes were achieved.

-The situation presented an opportunity to take a fresh look at obtu.org. Redeveloping obtu.org provided opportunities to eliminate redundancies in the old web site, get rid of unused and irrelevant components and simplify content. Also, parts of our old web site that were "hard coded" and required a contractor with specialized computer programming skills to maintain were replaced.

-The new obu.org web site was recently completed by Ken Wojcieszek, Owner of Creative Services, who also had built our original web site. Thanks to Ken for guiding OBTU through the redevelopment process and for the excellent service he continues to provide.



5. OBTU Meetings Report:

OBTU is holding chapter meetings via Zoom until the Covid vaccines are rolled out, case counts are low, and in-person meetings are deemed safe. **Zoom** sessions are at the normal OBTU meeting time: **7:00pm Central; 3rd Wed each month:**

January 17:

Seth Waters, Dark Waters Fly Shop & Guide Service

Topic: "Fly Fishing the Michigan Upper Peninsula

[Click Here for Dark Waters Web Site](#)

If you missed it, watch the recording:

[Link to Seth's Feb 17 Zoom Presentation](#)

Passcode for video: 8S%gFN=u



February 24:

Jon Ray: Fly Fishing Guide & Proprietor of The Mangled Fly

Topic: Manistee Fly Fishing

[Click for Mangled Fly Web Site](#)



March 17

Christopher Adams, PhD, Michigan Tech, Instructor

Topic: Michigan U.P. Coaster Brook Trout Study



April 21

Topic: Dowagiac River Restoration & Pucker Street Dam Removal; Niles, Michigan.

Panel Discussion Speakers Include:



Marcy Hamilton,
Deputy Executive Director,
SW Michigan Planning Commission
Dowagiac Restoration Overview



Jake Lemmon, TU,
Eastern Angler Science
Coordinator,
Stream Monitoring Technology



Jay Anglin, Anglin Outdoors,
Fishing Guide's Local Perspective
On Pucker St. Dam Removal,
[Click for Anglin Outdoors Web Site](#)



6. Membership

Free Trout Unlimited Membership: First Responders & Military Community.

TU currently offers free introductory memberships to first responders and the military community (including veterans). Click on the following link for details and to apply for your free 1st time membership (a \$35 savings):

Invite your first responder & military friends to take advantage of this offer!

[Apply Here for Free Membership](#)

7. Amazon Smile

Get Amazon to Contribute to OBTU with no cost to yourself!



- Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to Oak Brook Trout Unlimited.
- AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know. Same products, same prices, same service.
- Support Oak Brook Trout Unlimited by starting your shopping at smile.amazon.com.

On your first visit to AmazonSmile (smile.amazon.com), you need to select Oak Brook Trout Unlimited as the charitable organization to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. Amazon will remember your selection, and then every eligible purchase you make at smile.amazon.com will result in a donation.

8. OBTU Volunteer Opportunities

The Oak Brook Chapter of TU needs volunteers to further its mission.

OBTU is registered as a not-for-profit corporation and has all of the functions you would expect of a small business. We are always looking for good people who are willing to help out. The following list of our committees provides an overview of our operational activities. Attending committee meetings and participating in various chapter events is a great way to get to know people, find out what's going on, and get involved with things you care about. Contact [Willie Beshire](#) for more info. Let us know where you may want to help out:

Conservation: Identify opportunities for OBTU to contribute to coldwater conservation, prioritize & manage OBTU grants to conservation projects; manage OBTU involvement in conservation work including chapter work days, actively advocate for the cold water environment.

Education: Youth Fly Fishing Training Days, Trout in the Classroom, Youth Camp, Adult fly tying sessions, casting sessions, etc.

Finance & Accounting: Financial Management including budgeting, financial reporting, treasury management, regulatory compliance, etc.

Fund Raising: Fund Raising Campaigns such as the spring mail fund raising drive in recent years, meeting raffles, online fundraising such as auctions, raffles & crowd funding. Pursuing Grant opportunities such as the "Embrace a Stream" grant and a Bass Pro grant which were recently awarded to OBTU.

Communications & Publicity: OBTU Newsletters, Announcements, Public News Releases, Support of Chapter Outreach such as Trade Shows, Management of business partner relationships.

Information Technology: Manage technology platforms & content including: OBTU web site, Constant Contact (relationship management system), Facebook, Instagram

Meetings & Events: Meeting room arrangements, program speakers, pre-meeting pizza parties, open houses, brat cookouts, fishing outings, Trade Shows, etc.

Membership: Lead the recruiting of new members; promote membership engagement, manage membership data, manage recruiting events such as Trout-on-Tap & Orvis 201 training.

Endowment: Manage the OBTU endowment fund; endowment fund raising; oversee endowment fund investment; safeguard endowment fund assets

Diversity: Promote the development of OBTU member diversity.

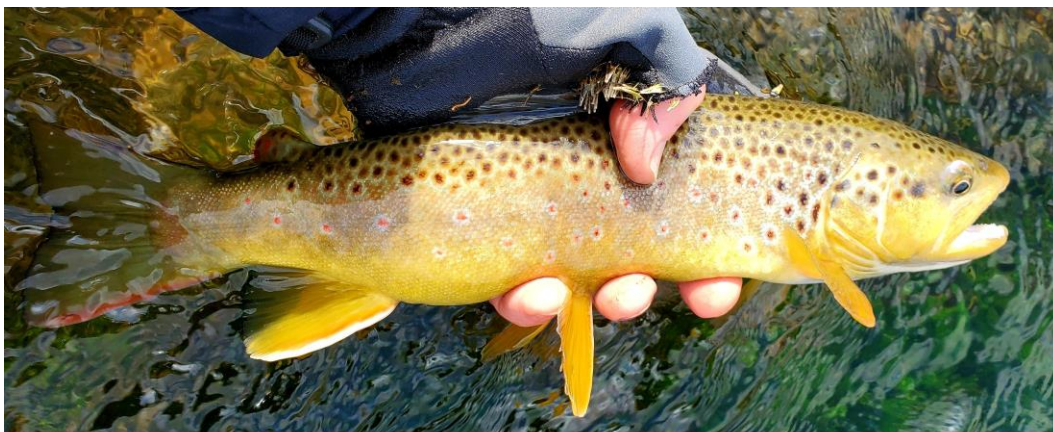
Leadership Development: Chapter leadership development & succession planning; nomination of OBTU officers and board members, recruit and position future chapter leaders.



9. Chapter Fishing Outings:

Despite lower participant numbers due to pandemic concerns, OBTU was able to complete two enjoyable fall 2020 fishing outings. While Covid was not yet surging in the counties visited, caution was the order of the day. Most participants travelled in single cars; stayed in single rooms or camped; brought their own food or carryout; and made best efforts to socially distance. Of course, most of our time was on the streams where distancing was easy. Thankfully, all returned home safely.

For 2021 outings, see information on the [OBTU.org](https://www.obtu.org) Chapter Fishing Outings page and the Calendar.



Our September outing held in the Wisconsin Driftless Area was attended by 11 members. Seven members stayed in single rooms at [Nature Nooks Retreat](#) on the West Fork of the Kickapoo River near Viroqua. Others camped a short drive down the road at the [West Fork Sportsman's Club](#). We gathered at Nature Nooks on Friday and were treated to a blue winged olive hatch a short walk from our cabins. The flies were small and the fish selective, but, everyone enjoyed success. A couple of our newer members celebrated catching their first trout on dry flies. Vince Jones selected an ant pattern and quickly scored on his 1st trip to the area. Unfortunately, heavy rain Friday night muddied the water leaving the Kickapoo unfishable by Saturday morning. Those of us who ventured to the Timber Coulee on Saturday found stained, but fishable conditions. Our group landed a few naturally reproducing browns decked out in vivid fall pre-spawn colors. Mac McCall lost the largest trophy of his "distinguished" trout fishing career when his line snapped with fish close to hand. Mac will be back! Thanks to Bob Hutchinson for socially distanced Friday brat cookout and Saturday pasta nite at Nature Nooks.

Our October outing to the Decorah, Iowa, Driftless Area was attended by 7 members. The highlight was a prolific blue winged olive hatch on North Bear Creek which led to a very good Saturday.



Fred Moore of Bloomington, IL, made his first trip to the Driftless and enjoyed catching this colorful brown on an obscure parachute may fly. We encourage more downstate colleagues to join us on future outings!



10. OBTU Endowment

Consider a donation to the Oak Brook Chapter's Endowment Fund!

Some organizational endowments are the result of large major gifts from one or more individuals. Donors like funding endowments with large gifts because they feel that it is a way to fund a cause they believe in long after they are gone. Their gift becomes a part of their legacy. If you are looking for a good cause to include in your estate planning, please consider OBTU.

So far, at least, OBTU's Endowment Fund has followed a different course. Many Chapter members have recognized the need to plan for some future lean year, for the unforeseen stream restoration opportunity, and for a chance to routinely do a bit more to conserve, preserve, and restore aquatic habitat in the Midwest. For years, OBTU stalwarts have been knitting together memorial donations, those extra few bucks for the future and other small gifts to achieve that vision. These contributions have led to slow, but substantial growth of OBTU's Endowment over a period of many years.

Now, with the end of a very challenging period on the horizon, please help put the OBTU endowment on a faster track to a sustainable future! We urge you to act:

Go to the donate page on OBTU.org and press the Endowment Fund button

OR

Send a check Payable to Oak Brook Trout Unlimited and marked for the Endowment Fund to:

Oak Brook Chapter of Trout Unlimited
P.O. Box 5046
Oakbrook, IL 60522

OR

Contact us for more information or to discuss other options:

Ed Michael Michael223@comcast.net 847 831-4159

We will be pleased to work with you to tailor your giving to your specific priorities.