



The Flyline

The Newsletter of the Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association

December 2025



"Red Sandy"

Salmon Fly tied by Jeff Moore

Lance Zook will mount this fly in a lighted case to be auctioned at HFFA Show.

2026 HFFA 50th Anniversary Annual Meeting & Show
Save the Dates February 27th, 28th & March 1st, 2026



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The President's Hatch

Fly Fishing Shows

Our annual show is fast approaching. This year's agenda features an excellent lineup of speakers and presentations that you won't want to miss. Below are general notes and tips for getting the most out of our shows.

Prep for the Show

1. Review the Agenda

Start by going through the show agenda and marking your *must-see* presentations. Make note of the times so you can plan your weekend.

2. Research the Speakers

Take a look at who's presenting and what their areas of expertise are. Check out some of their online content—YouTube videos, blogs, or articles—to get a feel for their style and insights. Knowing a bit about them ahead of time makes the sessions even more valuable.

3. Check Your Personal Fly Fishing Gear

Sort through your gear and make a list of items you'd like to upgrade, replace, or need. Shows often have great vendor deals, so this is the perfect opportunity to pick up quality gear at a discount.

4. Review Fly Tying Inventory

Do a quick inventory of your fly-tying materials and tools. If you're running low on supplies, consider buying from vendors at the show. This not only supports our organization but also helps sustain the local fly-fishing community.

5. Plan Travel and Logistics

Complete your registration, book your hotel, and get familiar with the area. Check out any points of interest in the area. For example, I usually support my coffee addiction but finding someplace local that isn't a chain.

6. Spread the Word

If you know local anglers or friends who'd enjoy the show, let them know! Share event details or social media posts to help get the



Kirk Rosenow

word out. The more the community grows, the better the experience for everyone.

During the Show

1. Embrace Iowa's Fly Fishing Community

Take time to catch up with fellow members, old friends, and new faces.

2. Thank the Show Committee

Seek out the committee members sometime during the weekend and thank them for their hard work. These events take an incredible amount of planning and effort, and a simple "thank you" goes a long way.

3. Take Notes During Presentations and Ask Q

There's an incredible amount of information shared in just a few days, so take time to jot down key takeaways and ideas—those valuable insights can easily fade once you're back home. Engaging directly with industry leaders and professional guides—some of whom spend over 150 days a year on the water—provides a depth of knowledge and perspective that far exceeds what online content can offer,

especially when you can ask follow-up questions and dive deeper.

4. Talk with Vendors

Spend time visiting vendor booths and learning about their products. It's the best place to dive deep into gear like float tubes, fly rods, and other fly-fishing essentials. You'll often pick up valuable knowledge about new trends and innovations in the industry.

5. Sit Down with the Fly Tyers

Sit down with some of the senior fly tyers, watch them work, and ask questions. These informal conversations are great opportunities to pick up new techniques, hone skills, gain knowledge on new materials, and get motivated to tie new patterns.

6. Acknowledge the Volunteers and Leaders

If you spot a board member or coordinator, take a moment to thank them for their time and dedication. Their commitment keeps our organization's lights on. Positions such as Flyline editor, secretary and treasurer can be thankless positions with a lot of work.

I hope you can make the most out of this year's show and we can continue to help you grow in this amazing sport.

Kirk



Each person registering for the 2026 HFFA Show will receive a monogrammed fly box. Register at [hawkeyeflyfishing.com](https://www.hawkeyeflyfishing.com)



**Help Support
Port-a-Potties at N&S Bear Creeks
Go Fund Me**
<https://www.gofundme.com/port-a-potty>

Contacts & Meetings

2025 Board of Directors

Kirk Rosenow, President
Waukee, Iowa
kcrosenow@gmail.com

Ron Stahlberg, Vice President
Swisher, IA
flyfish@southslope.net

Dale Tayloe, Secretary
Cedar Falls, IA
tayloedb@gmail.com

Ronda Long, Treasurer
Oskaloosa, IA
rondalong67@gmail.com

Davis Horton, Past President
Colo, Iowa
dhorton@hardincountyia.gov

Patrick Burns, Director
Dubuque IA
parickburns14@gmail.com

Marty McVey, Director
Boone, IA
martymcveyflyfishing@gmail.com

Rob Kundert, Director
Dubuque, IA
robbiek244@gmail.com

Martin Acerbo, Director
Des Moines, IA
macerbo@iastate.edu

Quad Cities, Director
Vacant

**Cameron Aker
Conservation Chair**
Ames, IA
cameronaker87@gmail.com

Work Day Coordinator
Vacant

Don Otto, HFFA Flyline Editor
Knoxville, IA
hawkeyeflyfisher@gmail.com

Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing

Meets 1st & 3rd Tuesday of Month
7 to 9 pm
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Iowa Chapter
7025 Hickman Road Ste #1
Urbandale, IA
Contact: Paul Wright
blackwolfe47@yahoo.com

Quad Cities Chapter

Meets 3rd Thursday Every Month
6:00 pm to 8+
Riverdale Town Hall
310 Manor Dr.
Riverdale, Iowa
Contact: John Channon
jc.channon@icloud.com

Dubuque Fly Fishers

Meets 2nd Monday 6:00 pm
September to May
Swiss Valley Nature Center
13606 Swiss Valley Rd., Dubuque,
IA
Contact: Rob Kundert
robbiek244@gmail.com
facebook.com/dubuqueflyfishers

Central Iowa Fly Fishers

Meets 3rd Saturday 9:00 am
September to May
Our Lady's Immaculate Heart
Church
510 East 1st St., Ankeny, IA
Contact: Kirk Rosenow
kcrosenow@gmail.com

Iowa City Contact

Contact: Ryan Maas
maas_ryan@yahoo.com

Cedar Rapids Contact

Contact: Lance Zook
l.a.zook@mchsi.com

TROUT UNLIMITED NORTH BEAR CHAPTER

Meetings held second Thursday
of month
September – May, Starting at
6:30 pm.
Johnston Public Library
6700 Merle Hay Road
Johnston, Iowa
Website: tu-northbear.org
Jay Leach - President
president@tu-northbear.org

TROUT UNLIMITED DRIFTLESS CHAPTER

Meets the first Thursday of the
month October through May @
7:00 pm in the basement of
T-Bocks Sports Bar and Grill,
206 Water St. Decorah
www.iadriftless.org

Iowa Women Fly Fishers

Join us for good fishing
and good company .
[https://www.facebook.com/
groups/170891783425206](https://www.facebook.com/groups/170891783425206)
katelodge25@gmail.com
willacamp@gmail.com

Trout Unlimited Spring Creeks Chapter

3rd Thursday September - May
Location To Be Announced
Ronda Long – President
Check Their Facebook
www.facebook.com/springcreekstu

Iowa's Coldwater Conservancy

Tom Murray
jandtmurray@gmail.com

Event Calendar

<u>December 2025</u> <u>January 2026</u> <u>February 2026</u> February 20 - 22 Mid-Iowa Bass Masters Swap Meet & Boat Show 4-H Building State Fairgrounds Des Moines, IA www.midiowabassmasters.com February 27- 28, March 1 HFFA Annual Fly Fishing Show Hilton Garden Inn Cedar Rapids, Iowa Mike Jacobs hawkeyeflytyer@yahoo.com <u>March 2026</u> March 1 Fly Fishing Film Tour Hilton Garden Inn Cedar Rapids , Iowa 1:30 to 4:00 pm Mike Jacobs hawkeyeflytyer@yahoo.com March 7 Fly Fishing Film Tour 10 am to 2 pm Varsity Cinema, Des Moines North Bear TU jjleach27@gmail.com March 13 - 15 Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo Hamline University St. Paul, MN info@greatwatersflyexpo.com March 28 Fly Tyers Rendezvous Spring Creeks TU Eagles Club, Monticello, IA Facebook.com/springcreekstu	March 26 - 28 Sowbug Roundup North Arkansas Fly Fishers Mountain Home, AR www.sowbugroundup.org March 21 Cornhusker Fly Fishers Spring Fling tlgoodwater@gmail.com <u>April 2026</u> <u>May 2026</u> <u>June 2026</u> June ? Fly Tying & Fly Casting Event Johnston Public Library Johnston, Iowa 2 to 4 pm Sponsored by HFFA, TU & Johnston Public Library Volunteers Needed kcrosenow@gmail.com Wisconsin Women's Fly Fishing Clinics June ? Intermediate June ? Beginner Need to preregister! Avalanche, WI wisconsinwomenflyfishing@gmail.com <u>July 2026</u> July 31 Iowa State Fair Fly Tying Competition Deadline for Fly Submission PO Box 57130 Des Moines, Iowa, 50317 <u>August 2026</u> <u>September 2026</u> September ? Brule River Spey Day Lake Superior Steelhead Assn. Brule river@ McNeil House Brule, WI www.steelheaders.org	September ? Iowa Driftless Classic Trout Fishing Tournament Impact Coffee Decorah, Iowa 8 am to 4 pm www.iowadriftlessclassic.com September 17 - 19 Northern Rodmakers Gathering 10th Annual West Fork Sports Club Avalanche, Wisconsin northernrodmakers.com September ? Fly Fishers International Fly Fest Grand Rapids, Michigan flyfishersinternational.org September ? HFFA zoom Board Meeting kcrosenow@gmail.com <u>October 2026</u> October 2 - 4 2025 Casting for Recovery Camp Ewalu's Stone Retreat Center Strawberry Point, IA 52076 Must Register norrisl@ihaonline.org October ? FFI - Women Connect 2025 Rendezvous Whalen, MN Registration on line March 2025 <u>November 2026</u> November ? HFFA Board Meeting Manchester Hatchery In person 1 pm kcrosenow@gmail.com
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The Flyline is the official publication of the Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association. It is published in April, June, September, and December. The HFFA is a chapter of the Fly Fishers International. Articles may be submitted as MS Word or as a text file. Typed, printed or clearly handwritten documents are also accepted. Photos can be submitted digitally. Send original jpeg. Deadline is one month before publication. Send all materials to:
Don Otto, The Flyline Editor
hawkeyeflyfisher@gmail.com
641-230-1468

HFFA Business Report

Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association Meeting Minutes November 8, 2025

Location: Manchester Hatchery

Meeting called to order at 12:06pm

Those present: Kirk Rosenow, Dale Tayloe, Ron Stahlberg, Partick Burns, Marty McVey, Martin Acerbo, Don Otto, and Cameron Aker. Absent: Davis Horton, Ryan Maas, Ronda Long, Rob Kundert

Old Business

Follow-up on Spring Branch Project- Cameron gave an update on the completion of Tibbett Easement/Spring Branch Project. He offered to take board members on a walk to show the added features just downstream from the hatchery after the board meeting. Cameron added that a sign listing improvements and donors (including HFFA) has yet to be placed near the stream where the improvements were made.

New Business

- 1) Treasurer's report- Prior to the meeting Ronda stated that she had written no checks since our last meeting and the only income for the treasury was interest income from bank accounts.
- 2) Social Media- Final Review of surveys; access, strategy, guidelines, desired outcomes- Recommendation for a 3-person committee made up of board members plus a show committee person; members selected on annual basis. Goal is 1-3 new posts per week regarding conservation and events (non-political in nature) on Facebook and Instagram linking to HFFA website when and where appropriate. Kirk will organize the first meeting of this committee looking to Ryan Maas for access. Committee will develop a queue for posts and name the person who will post to meet the 1-3 posts per week goal on a given platform. Marty to serve as a resource as needed.
- 3) HFFA Lending Libraries at streamside locations (yet to be determined)- Ron is currently assessing interest and feasibility. He presented a 7-page PowerPoint presentation outlining the idea and showed a representative box or cabinet (library) available from Amazon that would be deployed at various locations streamside for notes, low cost tools and supplies needed by fly fishermen, information, flies, messages, and lost & found.
- 4) TU Excess Funds- Cameron spoke of TUDARE projects completed in 2023 and 2024 including North Bear Phase 2 and 3 and Patterson Creek to which HFFA and other organizations contributed. All together these projects were completed for less than what was contributed. Rather than refunding amounts to the various organizations proportionate to their contribution, TU proposes the excess funds be used for a) a sign at North Bear recognizing groups who contributed to that project, b) an emergency fund for maintenance on fishing easement properties, c) future restoration projects on Patterson Creek Easement, and d) the Yellow River Easement project. Motion by Dale to allow TU to utilize HFFA portion of excess funds be used by TU for a), b), c), and d) as outlined above. Second by Kirk. Motion carried.

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn by Dale at approximately 1:41pm. Second by Kirk. Motion passed.:

Respectfully submitted- Dale Tayloe November 13, 8:27am

HFFA Annual Meeting & Show



The Hilton Garden Inn Cedar Rapids. Hotel address is 4640 North River Blvd NE, Cedar Rapids, IA. 52411.
Hotel phone number is 319-378-7404.

HFFA 2026 Annual Meeting and Show Agenda

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2026

- 5:00 Registration begins
- 5:30 Carol Jacobs - Card Making Class
- 6:00 Essential Skills for Finding and Catching Trout - Jason Randall
- 7:00 Streamer Tricks for More and Larger Trout - Jeff Currier
- 8:00 Demystifying Carp - Luke Annear
- 9:00 Hospitality room

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2026

- 8:00 Registration begins
- 8:30 Mike Siepker with the Iowa DNR update
- 9:30 Fly Fishing Warm Water Bass, Pike, Carp and more - Jeff Currier
- 10:30 Caleb Corona - River and Stream Techniques for Trophy Smallmouth Bass
- 11:30-12:15 HFFA Annual Business Meeting
- 12:20 When all Else Fails; Tactics to Catch Trout on Slow Days.- Jason Randall (working lunch program)
- 1:30 The World's Best Fly Fishing Destinations - Jeff Currier
- 2:30 If 90% of the Trout are Caught by 10% of the Fishermen, How do You Reach the Upper 10%? - Jason Randall
- 3:30 Four Seasons of the Yellowstone Trout Bum - Jeff Currier
- 4:00-6:00 Speakers room tear down then set up for banquet. Open hotel bar.
- 6:00 HFFA Annual meeting banquet followed by, HFFA awards, call auction
- 8:00 Banquet program by Jason Randall and Jeff Currier
- 9:00 Hospitality room. Ice cream and the fixins'

SUNDAY, MARCH 1, 2026

- 8:00 Registration
- 8:30 Nymph Fishing Secret Weapons - Jason Randall
- 9:30 Fly Fishing Through Midlife Heaven - Jeff Currier
- 10:30 "Giants Next Door; Fly Fishing Wisconsin Lake Michigan Tribs" - Randy Richter
- 11:30 Drawing for grand raffle rod, reel, line
- Noon Vendors tear down or they can wait as people arrive for Fly Fishing Film Tour
- 1:30 Fly Fishing Film Tour begins

HFFA Annual Meeting & Show

2026 HFFA Annual Meeting & Show Information

- 1. Speakers:** Nationally recognized experts Jason Randall and Jeff Currier headline the event. Fly Fishing experts Caleb Corona, Luke Annear, Randy Richter, and Mike Siepker will provide a broad range of presentations. Find speaker bios and their topics on the agenda and following pages.
 - 2. Registration:** Go to the HFFA website (hawkeyeflyfishing.com) to register and pay with your credit or debit card (no need for a PayPal account). Your successful registration will be confirmed by email. Cost is Friday only \$10, Saturday only \$15, Sunday only \$10. With a paid registration your spouse will get in free. Registration for all three days is \$30. Pre-show registration package is \$140 for all 3 days, plus 1 banquet ticket, plus 100 bucket raffle tickets. Students under 12 are free if attending with a paid adult. Any problems with your online registration, contact Ronda Long at ron-dalong67@yahoo.com.
 - 3. Fly Tying:** This will allow you to meet, chat, and tie with some of the best fly tyers in the Midwest.
 - 4. Vendors:** See some of the latest products, services and other information in our Vendors and Exhibitors area. Interested vendors and exhibitors, contact Hank Moeller at hankjmoe@gmail.com
 - 5. Raffles and auctions:** The show includes a grand prize rod raffle, bucket raffles, silent and live auction. Donate items for the raffles or auction by contacting Mike Jacobs hawkeyeflytyer@yahoo.com or 319-465-4704 or Ray Thys rthys74@gmail.com or 319-929-1468.
 - 6. Business Meeting:** The annual business meeting is at 11:30 on Saturday. Join us for "Lunch on the Go" by purchasing a meal (sandwich, chips, cookie and lemonade or tea) for \$20, when you register online. Meals cannot be purchased that day.
 - 7. Banquet:** Saturday evening's banquet includes a fine meal, fellowship, awards, a live auction, and a program by Jason Randall and Jeff Currier. Choose one of two dinner options (chicken cordon bleu or roast beef with red wine demi glaze) for \$38 when you register online. The meals come with garden salad, au gratin potatoes, green beans and dessert. Like the lunch, the banquet dinner has to be purchased online during registration. Special meals are available.
 - 8. Hotel Reservations:** Reserve a room for the discounted rate of \$129 per night, including parking. The discounted rate is available until February 7, 2026. Use link below to make reservations and to receive the discounted rate of \$129. <https://www.hilton.com/en/attend-my-event/hawkeyeflyfishingassn/>
 - 9. Photo & Essay Contest:** See rules on page 9. Contact Don Otto at hawkeyeflyfisher@gmail.com
 - 10. Fly Fishing Film Tour:** Tickets are \$20
- Show questions can be directed to Mike Jacobs at hawkeyeflytyer@yahoo.com or 319-465-4704. More detailed show information is available in the Events section of the HFFA website at hawkeyeflyfishing.com



2026 HFFA Show Grand Prize Raffle

Winston Air 2 9ft., 4piece, 4wt. Freshwater (retail \$1195)
Lamson Remix Fly Reel (retail \$259)
Rio Gold WF-4-F fly line with backing (retail \$119)
Total package value \$1573

HFFA Annual Meeting & Show

Speakers



Jeff Currier was born in Massachusetts in 1965 and grew up fly fishing throughout New England. After graduating from Masconomet Regional High School, his search for new fly fishing adventures led him to Northland College in Ashland, Wisconsin. After four years of hardcore fly fishing for walleye, northern pike and muskellunge, in 1987 he graduated with a Naturalist Degree. After graduation he headed for Wyoming for a summer of trout bumming. This led to a fly shop management job in Jackson, Wyoming that for the next 23 years would guide him fly fishing around the world.

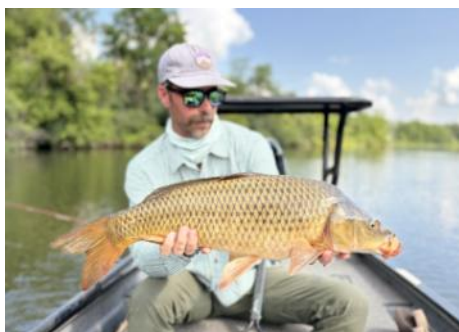
Today Jeff resides in Hayward, Wisconsin with his wife Yvonne where he bases his globe-trotting career in fly fishing. Jeff is an active member of the R.L. Winston Rod Co, Simms Fishing Products, Scientific Anglers, Bauer Reels, Yeti, Costa Sunglasses, Kate's Real Foods, Fly Fishers International, Outcast Sporting Gear, Aire Whitewater, Afuera Coffee and Yellow Dog Flyfishing

Adventures Professional Advisory Team as well as a fly fishing lecturer and well known fish artist. He has taught the skills of fly fishing, guided fly fishers throughout Wyoming and Yellowstone National Park and escorted fly fishers throughout six continents for many of the greatest game fish on Earth.

Jason Randall credits much of his passion for fishing to his father. "Some of my earliest and happiest memories involve fishing," he recalls. "I remember many trips to Canada or Minnesota for pike and small mouth." As a young man, he learned fly fishing from other mentors. The blessings we receive are meant to be passed on to others, so to share his passion and knowledge, in 2002, Jason began a career as an outdoor writer with feature articles appearing regularly in American Angler, as well as Fly Fisherman, Fly Tyer, Eastern Fly Fishing, Northwest Fly Fishing and many other outdoor magazines. His Oirst book, *'Moving Water: A Fly Fisher's Guide to Currents'* was released in 2012 by Stackpole/Headwater books. It studies the effect of current on trout, their prey species and our angling presentation. His second book *'Feeding Time: A Fly Fisher's Guide to What, Where and When Trout Eat'*, was released in August of 2013. It focuses on matching your fishing strategies to the trout's feeding strategies, especially when targeting large trout. In 2014, the third book in the 'Fly Fisher's Guide' trilogy was released *'Trout Sense; A Fly Fisher's Guide to What Trout See, Hear and Smell'*, which offers anglers an opportunity to know more about the quarry they seek.

In April 2017, Jason's fourth book was released from Stackpole/Headwaters Books. Titled *'Nymph Masters; Fly Fishing Secrets from Expert Anglers'*, this book explores the depths of nymph fishing and advanced nymph fishing techniques.

In 2017, Jason joined Luminaries Bob Clouser, Ed Jaworowski, the late Lefty Kreh and many others on the TFO National Advisory Team and was the lead advisor for designing the TFO Drift rod, the family of TFO Stealth nymphing rods and most recently, the award winning Elevare family of euronymph rods. Jason appears and presents at shows, clubs and events throughout North America.



To the left, Mike Siepker of Iowa Department of Natural Resources NE Iowa Fisheries Supervisor, Decorah, IA. Upper left is Caleb Corona, Regal Beagle Fishing, from Minneapolis, MN. Upper middle is Luke Annear, Fresh Water Flats Guide Service, from Madison, WI. Upper right is Randy Richter, Great Outdoors Fly Fishing, from Cedar Rapids, IA. These speakers will cover fly fishing opportunities right in your backyard almost.

HFFA Photo & Essay Contest

Photo Contest Rules

1. All entries must be 8 x 10 prints.
2. Subject matter must clearly relate to some aspect of fly fishing and its environs. Only HFFA members may enter the contest.
3. All submissions become the property of the HFFA, and may be used for any purpose deemed appropriate by the Board of Directors.
4. Judging will be by popular vote of the membership in attendance on Saturday of the Annual Meeting. Each member will receive one ballot to vote for his or her favorite photo. The photo with the most ballots wins. Second and third place prizes will also be awarded. Prizes will be gift certificates: \$100 for first, \$75 for second and \$50 for third.
5. In the event of a tie, the winner will be drawn at random from the entries that tied (e.g., if entry #1 and entry #2 tied for 2nd place, a drawing is held and the entry that is drawn gets 2nd place and the other would get 3rd place).
6. Winners will be announced during the Annual Meeting Banquet.
7. There is no limit to the number of entries, but each person may only win once (e.g., if Jane Roe submits 2 photos and each would have won a prize, the higher prize will be awarded to Jane and the lower prize will go to the photo that had the next highest number of votes).
8. Photos received before February 10, 2026, will be assured of having a frame for display. Depending on the number of entries, photos received after that date might not get framed.
9. If the source of the photo is digital, an email with the source file is preferred & greatly appreciated.
10. Send photos (jpegs are encouraged) to the address listed below.

Essay Contest Rules

1. Entries must not exceed 2,000 words in length. Shorter essays are welcomed.
2. Subject matter must clearly relate to some aspect of fly fishing and its environs. Only HFFA members may enter the contest.
3. All submissions become the property of the HFFA and may be used for any purpose deemed appropriate by the Board of Directors.
4. Judging will be by popular vote of the membership in attendance Saturday at the Annual Meeting. Each member will receive one ballot to vote for his or her favorite essay. The essay with the most ballots wins. Second and third place prizes will also be awarded. Prizes will be gift certificates: \$100 for first, \$75 for second and \$50 for third.
5. In the event of a tie, the winner will be drawn at random from the entries that tied (e.g., if entry #1 and entry #2 tied for 2nd place, a drawing is held and the entry that is drawn gets 2nd place and the other would get 3rd place).
6. Winners will be announced at the Annual Meeting Banquet.
7. There is no limit to the number of entries, but each person may only win once (e.g., if John Brown submits 2 essays and each would have won a prize, the higher prize will be awarded to John and the lower prize will go to the essay that had the next highest number of votes).
8. If the essay is available as a digital text document, an email with the source file is greatly appreciated.
9. To give due consideration, essay submissions must be sent by email or US Mail no later than February 10, 2026.
10. Send essays (digital copies encouraged) to:

HFFA PHOTO & ESSAY CONTESTS

Don Otto

730 Lucas St.

Knoxville, Iowa 50138

Or send via email to: hawkeyeflyfisher@gmail.com

IDNR Notes



Celebrating 150 Years of Brook Trout Management in Iowa

By Mike Siepker, Iowa DNR NE Region Fisheries Supervisor

As Iowa marks 150 years of trout management in 2025, we celebrate the first documented Brook Trout stocking from the Anamosa Hatchery in 1875. More information on the contributions of the Anamosa operation to early Iowa fisheries management can be found in Vance Polton's story on "[The Anamosa Hatching House](#)".

Today, we reflect on a rich history of trout management that has evolved from initial stocking efforts to a sophisticated restoration program utilizing technology like genetics and high-resolution satellite imagery. Once facing widespread extirpation due to stream degradation, Brook Trout are now a priority for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Trout Program, with dedicated efforts to restore and protect this unique native species. To celebrate this milestone, I thought it would be a great time to reflect on how far we've come with Iowa Brook Trout management. In 2022, I was able to attend the Wild Trout Symposium in West Yellowstone, Montana. Trout specialists from across the United States attended the event where I shared Iowa's approach to restoring our native Brook Trout. As part of the meeting, a symposium proceedings was published and is available online at wildtroutsymposium.com. In honor of 150 years of Brook Trout, I'd like to share the article previously printed in: Gregory, J. S., editor. 2022. Proceedings of Wild Trout XIII Symposium: Reducing the Gap Between Science and Public Opinion. West Yellowstone, MT.

Although the article below is now a few years old, it still provides a great history on the work to protect and restore Brook Trout in Iowa over the past 150 years. Since the article was published, some recent highlights include:

- Iowa now has 23 streams with some level of documented Brook Trout reproduction with more locations documented every year. Unfortunately, the recent drought seems to have reduced the abundance of Brook Trout in many of our streams.
- The DNR Trout Program worked with the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse to pioneer a new method using satellite imagery to locate coldwater streams. The report on this work can be viewed [here](#).
- The DNR Trout Program and Streams Research teams have expanded our sampling efforts on headwater streams to locate existing Brook Trout populations and find areas that are suitable for future restoration efforts. We've also worked with Upper Iowa University to further expand sampling efforts.
- Hatchery staff have advanced our native Brook Trout culture methods, now consistently producing over 30,000 fingerlings annually for restoration stockings.

Brook Trout Management in Iowa

By: Michael Siepker, Dan Kirby, and Mike Steuck

Introduction

Iowa is known for its rolling hills and rich, deep prairie soils that support some of the most productive farms in North America. Northeast Iowa, however, is unique with abundant rock outcroppings, many narrow valleys with cool fast-flowing streams, woodlands, and few glacial deposits. Also known as the Driftless Area of Iowa, the influence of glacial drift and loess is minimal, resulting in a landscape that is heavily influenced by bedrock (Prior 1976). This limestone and dolomite bedrock has been dissolved over time by surface and ground water, creating sinkholes and underground crevices, joints, and fractures in a landscape commonly referred to as karst. These rock conduits direct groundwater towards the surface creating seeps and springs.

The influence of karst on northeast Iowa's streams is appreciable, creating suitable habitat conditions for trout. Seeps and springs supply many surface waters with an abundance of groundwater, moderating water temperatures year-round. As a result, the streams of northeast Iowa are home to many plant and animal species unique to the Driftless Area. Today, over 474 miles of Iowa streams are officially recognized as coldwater under the state's water quality standards (Iowa Department of Natural Resources 2015). Ongoing research suggests that the actual amount of coldwater streams in Iowa likely exceeds 1,000 miles, providing more opportunities for native Brook Trout *Salvelinus fontinalis* restoration than previously thought.

IDNR Notes continued

History of Brook Trout Management

Trout and trout fishing have a long and active history in Iowa. Trout are now widely distributed across Iowa as a result of fish culture and stocking efforts of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (Iowa DNR). Wild self-sustaining populations of Brook Trout and Brown Trout *Salmo trutta* are now present in more than 50 streams across nine counties of northeast Iowa following decades of fish management aimed at increasing abundance and availability of the popular sport fishes.

Given how ubiquitous trout are in Iowa today, it is noteworthy that there is some uncertainty about the presence and distribution of native Brook Trout in Iowa at the time of European settlement (early 1800s). There are several unscientific first-person accounts of trout by Europeans first settling in northeast Iowa (Alexander 1882; Bailey 1913; Faldet 2009). One of the earliest accounts from an 1836 issue of the Du Buque Visitor read “every stream is filled with them; and among them may be found the pike, the pickerel, the catfish, the trout, and many other varieties” (Du Buque Visitor 1836). Henry Rice, a local trader, was brought Brook Trout by the Winnebago, and “he was not long in finding out where they could be caught.” He was probably the first European settler to fish for trout in Trout Run near present-day Decorah (Decorah Republican 1894). Further, a manuscript written by frontier doctor Fredrick Andros describes traveling in 1845 to Siewers Spring near Decorah to trout fish (Faldet, unpublished writings). Later in 1854, Elisabeth Koren, an early Decorah area settler, wrote about receiving trout as a gift (Koren 1955). The first fishing regulations in Iowa, enacted in 1862, pertained to gear restrictions and seasons for trout fishing (Iowa General Assembly 1862; Harlan et al. 1987), which strongly supports the presence of native Brook Trout populations more than a decade before the first recorded stockings by the State of Iowa. In 1875, B. F. Shaw provided additional support for native Brook Trout when he wrote “He is a native of the northeastern part of Iowa, originally found in the tributaries of the Upper Iowa River, and some other streams, in large numbers; but the perseverance of fishermen, and improved appliance of civilization used for destroying them, even during their spawning season, have so diminished their numbers that stories of large strings of trout are quite mythical” (State of Iowa 1876). Unfortunately, the first scientific fish collections occurred in Iowa during the late 1800s at a historical point well past the time of settlement when trout stockings had already been conducted for several years. Meek (1890) observed Brook Trout in some Iowa streams but attributed their presence to stocking. Based on early accounts, it seems likely that Brook Trout were part of northeast Iowa’s native fish communities.

Stocking records from biennial reports of the Iowa Fish Commissioner show that stocking of Brook Trout occurred in Iowa in an official capacity as early as 1875 (State of Iowa 1876). Trout were common among the species distributed by B.F. Shaw from the first Iowa fish hatchery built near Anamosa in 1874. Stocking records from 1876 and 1877 report that more than 80,000 Brook Trout were distributed across Iowa, followed by more than 66,000 Brook Trout during 1879 (State of Iowa 1878, 1880). It is probable that early stockings of trout in Iowa did not all originate from native Iowa populations, with early records suggesting a mixture of potentially native stocks as well as Brook Trout originating from Wisconsin. Brook Trout produced at Anamosa in 1877 originated from the farm of H. Dousman, a privately-operated fish hatchery in Waukesha County, Wisconsin about 55 miles east of Madison (State of Iowa 1876). Brook Trout eggs received at the Anamosa Hatchery during 1884 and 1885 included Brook Trout from Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts and Northville, Michigan. The Anamosa State Fish Hatchery was short-lived with a period of operation from 1874 to 1887 before production of most species other than trout shifted to the new Spirit Lake Fish Hatchery in 1880.

Early stockings of Brook Trout from Anamosa State Fish Hatchery resulted in several first-person accounts of quality fishing recorded in biennial reports. For example, S. G. Van Anda of Manchester wrote to B. F. Shaw during April 1879 that, “We are catching some fine, beautiful Brook Trout in Spring Branch. I think you put them in from Delaware Station two years ago. I have seen them caught from eleven to sixteen inches long” (State of Iowa 1880). The Spirit Lake Hatchery had difficulty raising fish during the early years, and trout were never raised there to any great extent (Vance Polton, Iowa DNR, personal communication November 2018). Few trout for stocking were produced by the State of Iowa during this period, until 1918, when trout culture activity in Iowa was transferred back to northeast Iowa at Lansing (Cooper 1949). When trout production commenced at Lansing there had already been more than 40 years of largely unsuccessful trout stocking in areas beyond northeast Iowa. This led trout stocking efforts for the next 60 years to focus on northeast Iowa. During this period of limited state trout production, fish were obtained from federal hatcheries, including the Manchester Federal Fish Hatchery in Manchester, Iowa. Trout production at Lansing was eventually shifted to Backbone Fish Hatchery when Lansing closed in 1974 (Vance Polton, Iowa DNR, personal communication November 2018).

Brook Trout were a common part of early Iowa fish stockings but disappeared from state stocking records by 1956. From 1977 to 1979, fingerling Brook Trout were stocked in North Cedar and the South Fork of Big Mill creeks as part of a Brook Trout special management effort. The stockings were unsuccessful and Brook Trout remained largely absent from the trout program until 1993 when fingerling and catchable Brook Trout stockings resumed in earnest. Brook Trout used for fingerling and catchable trout production that began in 1993 were acquired as eggs from the St. Croix Falls Fish Hatchery in Wisconsin (Dave Marolf, Iowa DNR retired, personal communication 2019). The St. Croix Falls population originated from the Nashua Fish Hatchery, New Hampshire (Hoxmeier et al. 2015). Between 1993 and 2006, nearly 319,000 fingerling domestic Brook Trout were stocked into northeast Iowa streams. From 2007 to 2018, an additional 5,000 domestic fingerlings were stocked into Dunning Spring near Decorah. Thousands of domestic St. Croix Falls Brook Trout were also stocked into Iowa streams each year as catchable-sized trout until the program ended after the 2019 stocking season. Although thousands of domestic Brook Trout have been stocked into Iowa streams, there is little information on how these stockings may have influenced the genetic status of Iowa’s wild Brook Trout populations.

Brook Trout management in Iowa was forever changed in June 1994 when the Iowa DNR purchased land that would become the South Pine Creek Wildlife Management Area. South Pine Creek was known locally as one of the last streams in Iowa with reproducing Brook Trout. The stream was sampled by Iowa DNR staff in the 1980s and again in 1994 (Scott Gritters, Iowa DNR, personal commu-

IDNR Notes continued

nication 2019); Brook Trout were found during both surveys. Some history on South Pine Creek was provided in 1994 when DNR staff received a letter from Mr. Gavin Sampson of Decorah, Iowa. Mr. Sampson wrote that he had been “intimately associated with this (South Pine) creek all my 72 years” and could remember Brook Trout being backpacked into the stream around 1955 by a state game warden. No other information is available related to the stocking in the 1950s. Mr. Sampson also mentioned Brook Trout reproducing in South Pine Creek around 1970. Regardless of how the trout came to thrive in South Pine Creek, it was the only stream in Iowa with known Brook Trout reproduction by the mid-1990s.

In 1996 a joint management and hatchery initiative began to experimentally introduce wild Brook Trout fingerlings of South Pine Creek origin into other coldwater streams (Iowa DNR 1996). The primary goal of the initiative was to introduce the unique South Pine genetic stock into other coldwater streams to prevent a catastrophic loss. Unfortunately, a reduction in mature Brook Trout in South Pine Creek by the early 2000s was thought to have been caused by the repeated use of South Pine Creek as an egg source for restoration efforts. An earlier genetic evaluation further complicated matters by recommending South Pine Brook Trout be managed as a relict population and not transferred to other streams (Fields and Philipp 1998). As a result, Brook Trout eggs collected from Wisconsin's Ash Creek were requested for stockings in 2006, 2009, and 2010. During those three years, 15,089 Ash Creek strain Brook Trout were stocked into Middle Bear Creek, Pine Creek near Sattre, and North Cedar Creek. Those streams now have self-sustaining wild populations of Brook Trout that are genetically distinct from native Iowa Brook Trout based on a recent genetic evaluation.

From 2016 to 2019, genetic samples were collected from known Iowa wild Brook Trout populations as well as the Iowa domestic Brook Trout housed at the Manchester Fish Hatchery. A total of 920 samples were collected and sent to Wes Larson at UW-Stevens Point for analysis as part of a larger Brook Trout genetic analysis (Erdman et al. 2022). Although the analysis does not provide concrete evidence that South Pine Creek Brook Trout are native to Iowa, it also does not provide strong evidence that they are not native. Similar to other studies, Larson (2020) placed South Pine Creek in a native node along with other Driftless wild populations. Nearly all streams restored with South Pine Creek stockings showed South Pine ancestry with moderate to high diversity; however, a few have low diversity and could benefit from future supplemental stockings. Two streams had self-sustaining populations of Brook Trout consistent with Manchester domestic ancestry. Ash Creek ancestry was also confirmed for three streams (Pine, Middle Bear, and North Cedar creeks) that received stockings of Ash Creek Brook Trout beginning in 2006. Larson (2020) supports South Pine Creek Brook Trout as a native Iowa ancestry and several restored Brook Trout fisheries exist on private and publicly accessible streams, helping to protect this unique Brook Trout lineage from a catastrophic loss event.

Brook Trout Management Today

Brook Trout are now considered a priority for the Iowa Trout Program as outlined in “A Plan for Iowa Trout Management” (Kirby et al. 2020). For example, Goal 1 of the plan guides program staff to maintain existing populations of native Brook Trout in Iowa by investigating the genetic status of existing populations and to phase out stockings of non-native strains, both of which have already been completed. Goal 2 proposes the restoration of Brook Trout in eight new streams, stream surveys to locate two extant populations of Brook Trout, and the development of a Brook Trout restoration plan. Further, Goal 6 of the plan suggests staff determine how certain Brown Trout populations could negatively affect Brook Trout recovery efforts. To this end, Iowa Trout Program staff are increasing management and hatchery emphasis on Brook Trout in several ways.

Work to locate extant populations of Brook Trout in Iowa has begun. Kelly et al. (2021) examined the distribution of Brook and Brown Trout in Iowa by sampling 138 headwater stream segments in northeast Iowa. Brook Trout occupancy was low (19 sites) and usually consisted of a small number of adults within an area that had already received restoration stockings. The Iowa DNR Streams Research Team continues to sample headwater streams following the approach of Kelly (2020), and focusing on headwater sections of coldwater streams that have not previously been sampled. This work continues to fill gaps in fish community information pertaining to headwater reaches of coldwater streams in northeast Iowa.

Only 16 streams in Iowa have self-sustaining populations of restored native Brook Trout; therefore, expanding native Brook Trout restoration stockings continues to be a priority of the Iowa Trout Program. The domestic Manchester Brook Trout are no longer stocked in Iowa after Larson (2020) showed mixing with local native populations. Today, only South Pine Brook Trout are reared for restoration stockings throughout northeast Iowa. The number of streams stocked each year is dependent on the number of fingerling Brook Trout available for stocking. In the past, South Pine Brook Trout were spawned along the stream with no adults transported to the hatchery. While this did reduce mortalities of adults, it also limited the number of gametes collected each year. Prior to 2020, up to 3,000 fingerling Brook Trout would be available annually for restoration stockings, limiting the number of sites stocked.

In an effort to increase the number of fingerling Brook Trout available each year for restoration stockings, an expanded spawning process was adopted in autumn 2019. Stream-side spawning is still conducted annually, but 500 fingerling South Pine Brook Trout progeny are retained at the Manchester Hatchery each year for broodstock (D. Rosauer, Iowa DNR, personal communication). Two-year-old females are routinely checked and spawned when ripe. Milt from wild South Pine males is used to fertilize the eggs to limit the hatchery influence on fingerlings. Females are only spawned once and then released along with the two-year-old males as part of restoration stockings. Using this approach in addition to streamside spawning of wild Brook Trout has increased the total number of fingerlings available for stocking to over 30,000 each year, allowing 45 streams to receive restoration stockings totaling 117,388 fingerlings since the program began in the mid-1990s.

Brook Trout restoration site selection can be challenging. In rare cases, established relationships with landowners have allowed for

IDNR Notes continued

long-term water temperature or fish community datasets that could be used to determine if the site is a high-quality location where restoration stockings may be successful. Typically, little is known about the many springs and headwater stream segments found in northeast Iowa. Few have had fish community assessments completed and water temperature data seldom exists for headwater sites. Although Iowa has over 475 miles of streams currently classified as coldwater (Iowa Department of Natural Resources 2019), many of the reaches considered coldwater do not include headwater segments where Brook Trout restoration stockings are likely to occur. Current research by the Iowa DNR and the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse using high-resolution winter imagery to locate springs and segments of streams with high groundwater inputs shows promise for helping to locate potential restoration sites. Only sites with high levels of groundwater input remain ice-free during the winter months and are easily visible during periods of snow cover. These same sites may be good candidates for Brook Trout restoration stockings; however, additional research will be needed to confirm the usefulness of this approach.

Although Iowa is probably not a state that comes to mind when people think of wild trout, it was likely home to a native population of Brook Trout prior to European settlement. Soon after, rapid landscape conversions decimated trout numbers to the point that stocking has been required for decades to maintain trout populations. Only recently has the focus shifted towards wild Brook Trout management. Today, a renewed focus on Brook Trout management has initiated several research projects in addition to adjusted management and hatchery priorities. Together, these changes should expand wild trout conservation successes in Iowa that will increase the number of streams with thriving Brook Trout populations beyond the 20 streams where they exist today.

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2025 Casting for Recovery



Iowa's 12th annual Casting for Recovery retreat was held over a long weekend, culminating on Sunday, October 5th. Participants spent most of their time with volunteers at Ewalu Stone Retreat Center, Strawberry Point, Iowa, learning such things as tying knots, fly casting skills, and about the trout's diet in the stream environment.

On Sunday, each lady was paired up with a volunteer river guide, enjoying guided fly fishing for up to 1/2 a day at Backbone State Park or the Maquoketa River. All participants and volunteers then returned to the center for lunch and a fun program. Each participant had the opportunity to speak about their river helper and their experience together on the water.

Casting for Recovery (CFR), is a national organization whose mission is to "enhance the lives of women with breast cancer by connecting them to each other and nature through the therapeutic sport of fly fishing." The retreat is available to women who have or who have had breast cancer and is available at no cost to them. Volunteers include medical and psychosocial professionals as well as fly fishing instructors.

Iowa CFR 2025 River Guides: Martin Acerbo, Jason Hochstetler, Lisa Davis, Mike Jacobs, Ronda Long, David Kleme, Kate Lodge, Jody Milar, Jonathan Schmidt, Ron Stahlberg, Ray Thys, Dan Peterson, Kevin McVey and Lance Zook (Lisa, Mike and Ron have been guides all 12 years!!!)

Photo above is the group photo for 2025.

Photos and Text by Mick and Lisa McVey

Dubuque Fly Fishers Activities



In April Dubuque Fly Fishers sponsored a casting clinic with Brian Ramsey instructing. The photo on left above is from a previous clinic, but it shows the effort to recruit youth to the sport. The photo on the right is Dubuque Fly Fisher Gary Woerdorf introducing fly fishing equipment at the annual September Youth Sports Day at the Izaak Walton venue in Dubuque. Assisting were Mike Stallsmith, Gary Kruse, and Frank Potter. Photos and text by Frank Potter.



The Dubuque Fly Fishers (DFF) put together a basics of fly tying session at their meeting on Monday, October 13, at the Swiss Valley Nature Center. Lead by professional fly tyer, and DFF member, C.J. Klenske, five students of all ages learned basic techniques as, step by step, they tied a Wooly Worm and a Pheasant Tail Nymph. Each student was matched with a DFF member who helped them along the way. Because some students only had materials, some only tools and some didn't have anything, the DFF member filled in the gaps with what they needed. The session came off well. Another Basic Fly Tying session is on the schedule for the meeting on January 12. Photos and text by Rob Kundert.



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