



Northern Lights Fly Fishers (NLFF) November 2025 Newsletter

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

(at Queen Mary Park Hall, 10844-117 St., Edmonton,
doors open 7:00pm, program starts 7:30)

Nov 5th - Volunteers Still Needed! To help with introducing students at Vimy Ridge High School (near Bonnie Doon Mall) to the world of fly tying. First class 8:45 am to 10:50 am and second from 12:35 pm to 3:00 pm. We'll have tools and materials there and will be helping the students tie a Woolly Buggler. If you're willing to help, please phone Dick Slobodian at 780-868-2393 or email us at nlft.tu@gmail.com. Lunch costs covered if you're willing to help with both sessions.

Nov 12th - Fly tying with Dennis Southwick. Dennis will do a program using CDC followed by a couple of furred body flies. If anyone wants to tie along, bring cdc and olive, dark brown, tan or gold spooled antron or poly. **Note:** Amber Serbin was originally scheduled, but is not available. We will try to get Amber to the club after Christmas.



Nov 26th -Ken Kranrod, VP Alberta Conservation Association, will present an update on the **new Conservation Site** west of Edmonton, plans for its fishery, and more.

Dec 10th Pizza Night - Holiday celebration evening

Programs at Queen Mary park will be shared on [Zoom](#) subject to technology and speaker permissions.

THE FUTURE OF NLFF



After 47 years as a chapter of TUC and now this year of the rebranded corporation, Freshwater Conservation Canada, we face an uncertain future – our membership is declining, fewer members are attending our meetings and, after many years of service, some members have already indicated that they will not be standing for re-election at the 2026 AGM on Jan 21st - in particular our current president, external events coordinator, and treasurer/newsletter writer. All will continue to

help but without president and treasurer positions being filled the club cannot continue, at least as a chapter of Freshwater Conservation Canada; without newsletter and events the club will be less active and effective!

Anyone willing to volunteer or interested in finding out more about club executive roles can reach out to Ken Monk (nlft.tu@gmail.com) and/or attend an executive meeting. While we don't require paid membership in the Corporation to attend our meetings and events, our current constitution does require that exec. members be registered members of Freshwater Conservation Canada.

OCTOBER BUSINESS MEETING REPORT

Seventeen in attendance



- The issue of declining membership and attendance at meetings was discussed briefly. One suggestion was to fund a session or two with a well-known presenter in the fly-fishing world. Any thoughts/suggestions on who, and/or other ideas or recommendations about meeting topics, activities, and the continued future of Northern Lights Fly Fishers? We urgently need your input please (nlft.tu@gmail.com).
- Ken Monk requested approval to use up to \$2,000 of club funds to cover additional costs related to our Arctic grayling data logger/DNA work which were not initially anticipated and thus not included in the grant we received from ACA. The motion was approved unanimously.



- We need to confirm (before the end of November) whether we will again provide a **kids' fly-tying booth** at the 2026 Edmonton Boat & Sportsmen's Show to be held at the Edmonton Convention Center from March 19 to 22. To do so we need a volunteer organizer of the fly-tying stand and sufficient volunteers to cover the 4 days of the show (15 or so, depending on whether volunteers are willing to do more than one half-day shift). Please consider volunteering. It just involves helping kids (and the occasional adult) tie a woolly bugger in the colours of his or her choice. All materials and equipment provided along with any expenses you may have for food and parking, and you will have free admission to the show on days for which you volunteer. Let us know soon please at nlft.tu@gmail.com

MUIR LAKE CLEAN-UP

On Sunday 5th Oct, seven club members along with 5 of their family members met at the lake for the annual clean-up. There was surprisingly little trash to pick up compared to previous years (apart from a semi-carved pumpkin), perhaps because of reports of very few anglers and even fewer fish being seen, let alone caught. The lake water, however, was very muddy with a surface slick around the dock and parts of the shoreline. All of the 8 educational signs showed water damage and the 'Welcome to Muir Lake' sign was faded and in poor condition.

We reported the water condition and fishing reports to Alberta Environment and received a written commitment that staff would follow up and try to figure out what was causing the problem and the loss of what used to be a great fishery. We also passed that on to Parkland County and the ACA which aerates the lake each year.

Thanks to the volunteers and in particular to Dick Slobodian, for bringing his barbecue, hot dogs, all the trimmings, pop and cookies! Much appreciated!

OUR WORK ON THE NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER

by Ken Monk

From 2022-2025 we sampled **walleye** in the North Saskatchewan River to gather more information about how vulnerable they are to capture by angling as well as some other data about the walleye population. We do this by catching walleye with fishing gear, measuring them, and inserting a PIT tag that transmits a serial number to a special reader. This technology is similar to what a vet would use to 'microchip' a dog or cat.

Several of the tagged walleye have been caught over a dozen times in the past couple of years. One has been caught 21 times since we first tagged it in August 2022 (Ed. Note - clear evidence, I think, of good fish handling and quick release).

We have some interesting data that tells us the walleye don't travel very far - most recaptures are found in the same section of the river in which they were originally tagged. There are probably far fewer walleye than people realize.

This work has been done by NLFF volunteers (citizen scientists) but we've had support from the Alberta Conservation Association as well as Alberta Environment and Parks.



In 2025, the focus shifted from walleye to **mooneye and goldeye**. We started tagging these fish in May 2025. The recapture rate is significantly different than walleye. Surprisingly, only one mooneye has been recaptured this year.

Some stats:

- The # times that the most frequently caught walleye was recaptured - 21!
- Total number of fish caught by volunteer anglers in the study

from 2022 to '25 - 1595

- Recapture rate for walleye 286/675 - over 40%; for goldeye/mooneye 1/346 – less than 0.3 %
- Number of different species caught -10 (walleye, mooneye, goldeye, northern pike, burbot, sauger, longnose sucker, white sucker, shorthead redhorse, lake sturgeon.)
- Number of volunteer hours spent angling - over 1,000

Concerns:

- The walleye population in the NSR near Edmonton should be considered very vulnerable. The data indicates a relatively small population with little movement of fish between locations on the river. Additionally, there are far fewer fish captured than just a few years ago – based on records kept by the same set of anglers.

- Mooneye and goldeye have a higher likelihood of mortality due to angling than walleye. A small delicate mouth and aggressive feeding behavior can lead to more damage from hooks.

What can be done?

- Report Poaching: Angling regulations are clear that the limit for walleye in the NSR is zero. We have seen evidence of poaching – either ignorance of the rules or blatant disregard. Poachers should be reported to the Report A Poacher line: 1-800-642-3800. This is a dedicated hotline for reporting illegal activities related to hunting and fishing in Alberta.
- Fish Handling: Good fish handling techniques are effective and can increase the chance of survival after being caught. Visit mywildalberta.ca or keepfishwet.org for more details. Some points to remember:
 - Air exposure is a significant factor in release mortality. Reduce exposure to air as much as possible. The best practice is to keep fish in the water.
 - Minimize the time that you fight the fish.
 - Prepare in advance to release your fish by choosing a hook that can be removed from the fish's mouth easily and use a landing net to ensure a quick release. Consider using barbless hooks.
 - When releasing a fish, never throw it into the water. If you have to handle a fish, release it gently and headfirst.

BEAVERS ON THE NORTH RAM RIVER (Stauffer Creek)



The North Ram has long been a favourite destination for members of NLFF as well as many other fly fishers. It's been under threat from gravel mining, to which we added our voice, and we have helped in tree and willow planting, protection of its riparian areas from livestock damage, trout redd counts and more. This year we helped the Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) with the costs of removing some beaver dams which were significantly

impeding brown trout access to their normal fall spawning areas from Hwy 761 upstream to the headsprings . . . most of it where the bigger dams are, upstream of the Lazy M Lodge, north of the Twp Rd 37-2. The work was suspended from mid May to mid Aug while the beavers were raising their young. It's expensive but necessary work in maintaining a healthy brown trout population in the creek as there's also a beaver population in the surrounding areas which can and does easily migrate to the NRR. ACA is constantly looking for different approaches and strategies that would reduce the costs and the problem. But it's difficult to maintain a balance, with permit and timing restrictions and, as one trapper said, 'smart' beavers.

TAKING KIDS FISHING

The teachers' strike got many of us thinking more about what it is that kids most need to learn. There's an old saying, made popular by Disney, that 'mothers know best' so we found it interesting that a moms' website, ['Food Storage Moms'](#) puts 'take kids fishing' at the top of its list. Here's an annotated and slightly amended list of the reasons it gives – because it teaches:



Patience - that not everything in life can have immediate rewards. Taking your kids fishing will require them to slow down, plan and wait for positive results to come;

Preparedness - to be a successful fisherman, you need to be prepared - having the proper gear, knowing where to fish, being aware of the conditions ahead of time. They will learn that if they want to achieve something, they need to put in the effort to plan ahead, do their research, and be prepared for something as simple as fixing a lunch;

Observation - reading the water and looking for signs of fish, where and how other anglers might be catching and birds are feeding. . . a great opportunity to teach kids that it's important to check out your surroundings and learn by watching;

Problem Solving - figuring out why you're not catching anything and what you might do differently, how to manoeuvre the boat, how, where and where not to wade, how to untangle a line and tie on a different lure;

Resourcefulness - finding the right bait, the right lure, and the right spot requires creativity; use of what they have to achieve their goals; how to take advantage of times of the year, times of the day that work best, and more;

Self-Reliance - taking care of themselves, their fishing gear – there's an old saying: "Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man (or kid) to fish and you feed him for a lifetime";

Confidence - when kids catch a fish, they will feel a sense of accomplishment . . . a great opportunity to teach kids about setting goals, learning what's necessary, working hard, and then achieving them. If kids are fishing because they enjoy it and are proud of their accomplishments, they will have more confidence in other areas of their life.

Respect - for the environment, the animals, the people around them and for the rules and regulations that are in place to protect the natural resources we often take for granted valuable lessons;

Sportsmanship - learn how to be gracious in success or otherwise, whether they catch more or less than others; how to follow regs and compete fairly, share tips, avoid crowding the casting space of others, etc. applies to more than fishing. It carries over to how we treat others in many environments and situations;

Imagination - fishing with kids is a great way to exercise your imagination and inspire theirs. Imagine what the fish are doing and where they're hiding, catching a big one - it will stay in their dreams and build their imagination, and

A Love For the Outdoors - learning to appreciate nature and all that it has to offer will help create a more sustainable future, and hopefully future conservationists.

There are thousands of kids, many living in urban areas, who never get the chance to hike, camp, bike, fish. That, and for what fishing can teach, is why support for ACA's 'KidsCanCatch' program is so important to NLFF. Please consider [donating to the program](#) and/or volunteering to help. The next KCC event is ice-fishing on Saturday, February 14, 2026 at Wabamun Lake.



or

CONGRATULATIONS AND THANKS TO:



It's been 50 years since the first of its stores opened in north Edmonton. With a dream of trying the retail waters, Russell Thornberry, a fishing guide, fly tyer, and author, opened the first single-store location. With difficult economic times and a busy schedule, Russell eventually sold the store and went on to found the forerunner of Northern Lights Fly Fishers, the Edmonton chapter of Trout Unlimited Canada, the first TUC chapter in western Canada.

Meanwhile, the new owners, Dave & Darrell Johnston, Alberta-raised brothers, focused on providing expert fishing knowledge and fostering the customer service reputation for which it is known. They grew the business to five retail locations, two in Edmonton and one each in Calgary, Saskatoon and Winnipeg. Over the years, the owners, managers, and staff of the Fishin' Hole have provided numerous donations of goods and expertise to our project work, seminars, meetings, and to individual members – we certainly appreciate their support. We are pleased to acknowledge and thank them for their 50 years of service to us and other anglers in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. The advice of its experienced staff, their support of our events and those of other fishing and conservation-related organizations, donations to auctions, and purchase discounts for our members have been greatly appreciated. Their staff have also joined us and others in meetings with provincial officials in efforts to improve and protect the long-term health of our fisheries. Its website provides a wealth of information, not only on fishing gear but on angling strategies and destinations – 260 articles and 250 fishing tips and facts – written by experienced, knowledgeable, and local authors.”

**Thank
you!**

for all you've done for Northern Lights Fly Fishers, the angling community, and our fisheries!