



Northern Lights Fly Fishers (NLFF) December 2025 Newsletter



UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

(at Queen Mary Park Hall, 10844-117 St., Edmonton)

Dec 10th Pizza Night - Holiday celebration evening. Pizza, pop, (and anchovies for the one or two who like them). If you'd like to join in the annual fly swap, bring a dozen flies that you'd be willing to trade for some of the tying creations of other members. We won't be Zooming this one! However, you will be able **Zoom** in on our upcoming meetings in January although we'd much prefer to see you in person if possible: **Pizza scheduled for delivery to QMP at 7:00pm so come early – doors open 6:30pm**

Jan 14th - our Annual General Meeting 7:30pm - this is an important one as we need members to serve on the executive without which we cannot continue (See 'The Future of NLFF' below) and we also need to make some decisions on use of the funds raised this year for project work – we can't hold onto it by virtue of Corporation rules and CRA requirements for charitable organizations.

Jan 28th - Jason Blackburn, an ACA Researcher, will be presenting on the Oldman and the Livingstone and his findings from electrofishing those rivers

TRANSFER OF AUTHORITY

from Government of Canada to Alberta related to Canada Fisheries Act

Meetings between the provincial Hunting and Fishing Branch and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) are happening related to new sportfishing regulations and the management of cold water fisheries (trout, Arctic grayling, mountain whitefish). Concerned recreational anglers fishing for native and naturalized trout have been advocating for changes to regulations that would reduce incidental mortality from catch and release, increase habitat protection, and provide greater focus on education.

Before transfer occurs, there will also be consultations with indigenous communities. Following that there will hopefully be engagement with the sportfishing community on the issues. NLFF may well have some opinions to offer based on fifteen years of work on the Arctic grayling

populations in the upper Pembina river and the extensive knowledge and experience of its members.

Just a thought, but I wonder if there's the possibility of Ralph Kline's 'hooks shall be **barbless**' law returning to Alberta's Fishing Regs. For those who don't remember, Premier Klein placed a province-wide ban in 2004 on the use of barbed hooks for angling. In September 2011, Fisheries and Oceans Canada made an amendment to the federal regulations that removed the ban. Any thoughts on the issue that we can include (without names) in the next edition? . . . [Northern Lights Fly Fishers](#)

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 indicated that they will not be standing for re-election at the 2026 AGM. All positions are open for the 2026 year. Our charter with the Corporation requires a president, secretary and treasurer (without which we cannot remain as a chapter). We also have need for a vice-president, and members to look after programs, membership, community events, communications (including the newsletter) and the library.



Anyone willing to volunteer or interested in finding out more about any of these roles can reach out to Ken Monk (nlft.tu@gmail.com) or any member of the current executive.

We also need member input on meeting topics, specific presenters, and activities that would be of appeal to you and others . . . please!

FROM 'MY WILD ALBERTA'

Starting in 2026, Class A and Class B Special Harvest Licences (SHL) for walleye will no longer be part of the draw process— they'll be sold over the counter.

And a concerning report on Resident Sportfishing Licences – there's been a 22% decrease in license sales from 2020 to 2024, from 322,492 to 250,818.

FLY FISHING THROUGH THE ICE

You may need to clean and pack away your waders, fly rods, floating and intermediate fly lines but it's still not only possible but, according to some on-line reports, more effective to 'fly fish' through the ice than to use the traditional ice rod, lure or bait. You can't cast of course but you can, maybe should, use flies and a fly reel. Those who want to keep 'fly-fishing' through the winter tell us that your heaviest sinking line with a fluorocarbon leader will get the fly down quickly and a fly reel can be attached to most ice rods.

Fred Noddin, local guide and author, suggests the following for what flies to use: 'The most consistent performer is using smaller bead head nymphs, like the bead head prince nymph, the bead head pheasant tail, the bead head shrimp, and the bead head zug (where you can find them). Slowly, very slowly jigged, and sometimes just allowed to sit still, trout will happily come over and slurp them up. For presentation though, I pull the knot tied to the hook over towards the point of the hook and this little adjustment allows the fly to hang horizontally, and that, I believe, catches me more fish.'

The *Island Flyfisherman* suggests the following for tying **the Zug Bug**:

Hook: Mustad 9671 or similar, size #12 or #14, debarbed and sharpened
Thread: Black Uni-Thread.
Bead-head: Small gold bead.
Tail: Peacock sword feather tips.
Body: Peacock herl
Rib: Gold wire, wound in open turns over herl
Wing case: Mallard flank feather, trimmed short
Legs: Natural red/brown hackle feather.
Head: Tying thread, lacquered



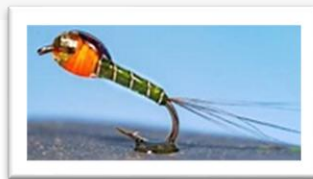
WINTER FLY FISHING THE TROUT STREAMS

As those who fish year-round know, trout behave differently in winter. They're cold-blooded creatures; their body temperature and metabolism are directly influenced by the surrounding environment so, as water temperatures drop, their metabolic rates slow down significantly. They need to conserve energy and are far less likely to chase a moving fly or other lure. Trout also search for deeper water where temperatures are slightly higher and there's less current to deal with. There are far fewer insect hatches and those that do occur tend to be on a sunny day when the sun is at its highest point – the trout's rise form to them tends to more of a slurp! A search of the internet provided a few tips that might be useful: fish deep and slow and near to the bank if possible; sleep in and fish the warmer and sunnier parts of the day; make sure to bring warm clothes and a spare pair in the vehicle – waders can leak; use small flies. Here's a few that were recommended with a link to tying instructions:

The Zebra Midge - in black, red, and olive imitates the tiny midges trout feed on during winter. Adding a small dubbing collar can enhance its versatility by mimicking other insects. Fish it under an indicator or as a dropper beneath a larger fly. For deeper pools, pair it with a split shot or a heavy fly to ensure it reaches the strike zone.



Perdigon (Sizes 16–20)





Squirmy Worm

Colors like tan and pink are the best bet for clear winter rivers.

Rainbow Warrior (Sizes 16–22)

A fairly new fly that originated in Utah and has proven successful.



Midge larva - in red... use ANY material for the body, a red floss with wire ribbing, flashabou ribbing etc with a tuft of deer hair frayed(not spun) at the head... tied on about a size 12-18.

RAINBOW TROUT (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*),

. . . . probably the trout species most familiar to members and other Albertans but (with one exception) they're not native to Alberta. Their native range is the eastern Pacific Ocean coast ranging from northwest Mexico to Alaska and fresh-water bodies west of the Rocky Mountains.



Apparently due to their popularity among sport anglers, their relatively fast growth rate and ease of raising in a hatchery, California started raising them in hatcheries back in 1870. U.S. agencies then introduced rainbows to the Great Lakes six years later. Other countries wanted them too and began to raise them for stocking in rivers and lakes in the late 1800s. They're now the most widely introduced salmonid species worldwide, having been transplanted to 99 countries and all continents (except Antarctica). In some regions, however, they're still looked upon in much the same way as we label Prussian carp – invasive!! They compete with native fish and hybridize with other trout species. I suspect, however, that we'd vote to keep them.

Rainbows usually spawn in spring (or later depending on water temperature and location). The female lays 200-9000 eggs which hatch in 3-4 weeks at 10-15 C. Fry emerge from

gravel 2-3 weeks after hatching. Many are sexually mature in 2-3 years. Normal life span is 5-6 years.

The 'exception' referred to above is Alberta's own **Athabasca Rainbow**.



According to *Transactions of the American Fisheries Society*, March 1994, the Athabasca rainbow trout appear to have been reproductively isolated for at least 64,000 years, possibly in an inland refuge in southwest Alberta. They're probably best left alone,

however, as they've shown severe declines from historical abundances and are ranked as 'threatened' under the provincial *Wildlife Act*, and as 'endangered' by the national Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada

CHRISTMAS SALE - at the Fishin' Hole stores

It's already started - there are 196 special deals! Shop in store or online

TAKING KIDS FISHING

Getting kids involved in outdoor activities and away from screens of various kinds for a while is important in developing a pro-conservation attitude. 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. More details to come.



NEW SPECIES POSSIBLY COMING TO A NEW LAKE NEAR YOU!

Channel Catfish didn't make it into Alberta's Lakes as planned for 2026 but there's word from ACA that we may see **splake** stocked in a couple of years at its new conservation site near Wabamun. They're common in Ontario but most of us are probably not familiar with them. Their name comes from their origin - "sp" from speckled trout (a nickname for brook trout) plus "lake" from lake trout. Voilà!

More about them and the possibility of four new lake fisheries nearby in the January Newsletter!



PSL/

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