

Northern Lights Fly Fishers



Newsletter January 2026



To all: ‘Best Wishes for a happy, healthy and successful year both on and in the water, along the stream and lake banks, and elsewhere. You are most welcome to attend our meetings whether or not you’re a member of Freshwater Conservation Canada – we’d be pleased to see you (in person preferably or by Zoom). And check out our website and our forum for the latest club news and information.’

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Doors at Queen Mary Park Hall (10844-117 St) are open at 7:00pm and coffee is on. Presentations begin at 7:30pm. If you can’t be there in person our ZOOM meeting id is 668 142 7482, and the meeting password is 306090 (or just Click [this link](#))

Jan 14th - our Annual General Meeting – there are seven executive positions to fill and some of the current exec. will not be standing for re-election; we need to decide on use of the funds raised and donated this year; to discuss our future activities.

if you can't attend in person or virtually, please add your support by completing and returning the Proxy Form at the end of this newsletter

Jan 28th - Jason Blackburn, an ACA Research Biologist, will be presenting on the **Oldman and the Livingstone** and his findings from electrofishing those rivers. Hope you can be there in person.

"You can't buy happiness, but you can buy a fishing rod, and that's pretty close." *Unknown*



PROJECTS FOR 2026

For each of the past thirteen years NLFF has applied for and received CCE Grant funds (\$416,00 in total) from Alberta Conservation Association to implement projects related to Arctic grayling conservation, riparian protection along Dogpound Creek, the Raven River and the North Raven, pond rehabilitation, data gathering on the walleye, goldeye and mooneye populations in the North Saskatchewan River through

Edmonton, lake aeration and the development of fishing and conservation educational resources. The volunteer man and woman-power to carry out those projects could probably be valued (using CRA recommended rates) at a similar amount.

For 2026 we have not applied for any grants. However, we still expect to continue providing our voluntary services in many of those areas, for example:

Arctic Grayling Conservation - the populations have declined over the years, and there are



only a few known populations in the watershed. We have had discussions with biologists at AEPA about future Arctic Grayling work and they are still very interested, but their workloads and priorities have not yielded a workplan or approach that requires significant assistance at this time. We will still deploy temperature data loggers and assist with volunteer angling, but costs related to those activities can be covered by our club. There may be future work that will require funding

assistance.

Goldeye/Mooneye study on the North Saskatchewan River - we are expecting to complete the planned work well under budget. The biologists at AEPA are enthused about our findings and are eager for us to continue the work. As such, we will continue that work but will not require funding from the CCEG program.



Kids Can Catch - hopefully members will still volunteer to help the kids and provide some flies to hand out to those who will use them

Pond rehab - DO, alkalinity, and water clarity will still be gathered from the ponds that some of us fish and anything of concern reported to whichever organization stocks that waterbody



Education – we will still respond to as many requests to teach kids how to tie a fly and the basic elements of fly fishing as our volunteers are able to and we'll follow up on past work to develop educational materials such as 'What Fish Eat'.

. . . . Are there any new project ideas for which you would be willing to provide time and expertise and believe other members would volunteer?

WABAMUN WHITEWOOD CONSERVATION SITE

The Nov. 25th presentation by Ken Kranrod, VP of the Alberta Conservation Association (ACA), (check our website to hear a recording) promises some excellent conservation and fishing opportunities within an hour of Edmonton once all the necessary certificates and approvals are in place for to complete transfer of the TransAlta property to ACA.

Coal mining at the site was shut down 15 years ago and TransAlta wanted the site's 3200 acres to be used for conservational purposes. This will be the largest of the 900 conservation sites that ACA owns. Staff have already identified 86 wildlife species inhabiting the property, 18 of which are of 'special concern'. No fish there yet although there's four lakes at the site:

West Whitewood - spring fed, 19 metres deep, great water quality suitable for cold water fish. The plan is to stock trout and a new hybrid for this area – splake (more about them below)

Little Whitewood - much the same as West Whitewood but initial thoughts are to raise cutthroat trout in the ACA's new mobile hatchery trailer to stock there.

East Whitewood – this will need some work before it's suitable for stocking

Finger Lake – small and just 4m deep but ACA has some solar-powered aeration equipment that may enable a spring to fall put-and-take fishery.

Permits and preparation take time, however, so fish stocking won't start until the Fall of 2027 at the earliest.

Splake:



photo credit: www.naturalist.org

. . probably a new species to most of us unless you've spent time in eastern Canada where they've been stocked for over 70 years. In 1947 Banff National Park warden, J. E. Stenton, experimented with female lake trout from Lake Minnewanka and male brook trout (aka speckled trout) from Third Vermilion Lake to create a new species – 'sp+'lake'. Others picked up on the idea – the Québec Department of Fish and Game in 1948, the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests in 1951, and the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission in 1952.

If you'd like to learn more about splake – their diet, feeding behaviour, growth rate, reproduction, fishing tips, whether they're good to eat, etc - there's an Aug '25 article by Martin McAdam that provides plenty of information: [Splake Fish: Complete Guide to the Brook & Lake Trout Hybrid](#)

And maybe in a few years this will be you with your catch (the world record, set in Ontario, is 20lbs 11oz):



“The fish can be elusive, but the journey is always worthwhile.” – Justin Wells

ARTIFICIAL FLIES AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

We tie and use ‘**artificial** flies’ so we wondered what advice ‘**artificial** intelligence’ had for the most effective flies for catching Alberta’s brown trout. Here’s what ChatGPT had to say:

‘It depends a bit on what type of water (river, lake, fast stream, deep hole) and what time of year — but if you’re fishing for brown trout in Alberta (or similar western-Canada trout waters), there are a handful of fly patterns that are reliably among the best. Here are the top picks — and when to use them:

- ✓ Most reliable all-around choices

Woolly Bugger — Perhaps the most versatile streamer/nymph fly for brown trout. It imitates leeches, small baitfish, or other underwater prey and is excellent when fished along deeper pools or near undercut banks. Great in low-light or overcast conditions, or when trout are feeling aggressive.



Hare's Ear Nymph — A classic nymph pattern that mimics mayfly larvae, caddis larvae, and various aquatic insect nymphs.

Highly effective for trout feeding below the surface, especially when hatches aren't visible or fish are holding deep.

- **Adams (dry fly)** — A time-tested dry fly that imitates adult mayflies or midges. When you see surface feeding or rising trout, or during insect hatches, this is one of the first flies to try.



- **Elk Hair Caddis** — Especially good during caddis hatches or when trout are feeding on the surface. Its buoyant, visible profile makes it effective even in faster currents.



🪁 Great for bigger fish — streamers & bait-fish imitations:



Muddler Minnow — Excellent streamer pattern for imitating sculpin or small baitfish — common prey for larger brown trout. Works well on rivers where browns are ambushing from structure or deep water.

gives a lifelike motion in water and is effective when trout are keyed in on baitfish or sculpins. Great for structure-hiding browns.

- **Zonker** — A rabbit-strip based streamer that



•



- **Clouser Minnow** — Especially good when you suspect trout are feeding on small fish or in slightly stained water. Flashy, baitfish-style streamer that can draw strikes from larger, aggressive brown trout.

For nymphs & subsurface flies — a steady producer is: is the **Pheasant Tail Nymph** — A staple nymph pattern often recommended for river fishing. It imitates mayfly nymphs and works well in deeper pools or slow runs where trout are feeding near the bottom.



When Which Fly Works Best:

- Hatches / Surface feeding → Go with dry flies like Adams or Elk Hair Caddis.

- Subsurface feeding (nymph stage insects, slow drift, deep water) → Use Hare's Ear, Pheasant Tail, or Woolly Bugger (on a dead-drift or indicator rig).
- Bigger trout, structure-hiding, deeper holes or banks, low light / early morning / evening → Use streamers / baitfish imitations like Muddler Minnow, Zonker, Clouser Minnow, or Woolly Bugger.
- Uncertain conditions / mixed feeding activity → Woolly Bugger and Hare's Ear are often the most reliable "go-to" flies.

What do you think? Is Chat GPT worth listening to? I hear it can create pictures too. . . of the fish we wish we had caught?

'There is no greater fan of fly fishing than the worm.' [Patrick F. McManus](#)

HEALTH BENEFITS OF GOING FISHING

Here's a summary from '[Tackle Village](#)' if you ever need to justify time on the water:

It's a chance to get some **exercise** - the more remote you go the better - and you get clean air in your lungs; getting away from the pollution of the city is a key health benefit, Feel **the Sun** on your face - it **provides vitamin D** which our bodies need for our bones, blood cells, and immune systems, helps regulate sleep cycles, create melatonin and boost serotonin.

Fishing improves **balance** - when wading, standing in the boat, climbing up and down riverbanks; it boosts the **Immune System** by reducing stress and increasing focus. When you're relaxed, your heart rate is lower; you're less likely to get sick and are more energetic.

The sense of calm and focus that fishing provides **improves cognitive function and concentration** - it requires the angler to be focused on the fly the whole time it's on or in the water. Following the motion of the fly is a form of meditation - it calms you at the moment, leaves your brain refreshed and combats stress and anxiety

It increases **self-esteem and resilience** - success boosts esteem - it's why we take photos, and the tough times teach resilience - we keep on trying! Why is he catching them, and not me? Is there a better spot nearby? Luck has little to do with it, and the self-reliant fishermen is the consistently successful one.

And finally it teaches **patience** – it requires long hours and lots of learning, but when we succeed, it sure feels good!.

"I've fished through fishless days that I remember happily without regret." **Roderick Haig-Brown**

PSL/

If you're unable to attend the AGM in person please consider identifying someone to vote on your behalf by completing and submitting the Proxy Form below to President Ken Monk ken.monk@gmail.com or to Vice-President Ray Smith rsmith6041@gmail.com

PROXY FORM - 2025 AGM

NORTHERN LIGHTS FLY FISHERS - Annual General Meeting to be held Wednesday, January 14th, 2026, at 7:30 PM at Queen Mary Park Community Hall

I hereby appoint Ken Monk, President, or failing him, Ray Smith, Vice-President, or instead of either of the foregoing, _____ as my proxy to attend and act at the 2026 Annual General Meeting of the members of the NLFF to be held on the 14th day of January, 2026 (or at any adjournment or adjournments of that meeting), in the same manner, to the same extent and with the same power as if I were present, subject to the following directions/imitations:

_____ To vote at this meeting or to appoint a proxy you must have been a member of NLFF in good standing during 2025 or have become a member of ETFC prior to signing this proxy form. Dated the _____ day of _____ 20____

Name(please print)

Signature