

Stream Clean-up Contest

Sue Lympany: Little Chartiers Creek

I have fished before with a spinning rod from a boat on the Ohio River, from the shores of various lakes in Southwestern Pa. and from the beaches of Nags Head.

I was never actually good at catching fish but loved being outdoors! Fish have eaten many of my worms without my even suspecting they were nibbling.

One time at the shore, I shrieked as my line went screaming out into the ocean and watched in horror as a manta ray leaped in the air moments before the line broke (to my relief). My experienced fishing mentor was yelling something like: "Reel it in!! And we will cut it up for bait!" I did not want to reel that thing in! That memory was my most exciting fishing moment....it sure beat catching a humongous conch shell about 8" round from a charter fishing boat in the ocean.

When my brother and I were clueless teenagers in Florida, we caught a strange looking fish that a passerby warned it had poisonous spikes.....that ended the joy for fishing for us in Florida.

I have caught some small bluegill and sunfish. Such is my very beginner level of fishing experience.

The sight of fly fishermen standing in their waders in the middle of creeks waving their line back and forth has fascinated me for many years. I even painted a watercolor of a fishing scene years ago.

This year, I attended a PWWTU meeting in January followed by a fly tying session with the Women's group, and have been "hooked" ever since. Reading books about trout fishing has exposed me to the awesome, colorful beauty of the various types of trout! I suspect I will enjoy fly tying as it appeals to the artsy side of my nature and I have seen pictures of some beautiful flies



So, when I learned about the stream clean-up contest in the middle of the pandemic, I imagined walking along a beautiful creek and thought:

“This was a great way to get out of the house and do something useful.”

I chose to clean up the stretch of Little Chartiers Creek between the Canonsburg Dam and West McMurray Road. I have passed the spot every week for years! I have really enjoyed the sight of a fly fisherman standing below the spillway with the light sparkling on the water as it cascades down like a waterfall. When I arrived to collect trash, I found many short paths down the bank from a large parking lot to well-used spots, and families with folding chairs, kids, and coolers fishing the stream. There were even a couple fly fishermen on the days of my visits.

To tell the truth, I was disappointed by all the trash I found at stream side. Maybe I had an unrealistic expectation that fishermen will leave a stream cleaner than they found it.

However, the collection of trash was a BONANZA for my entry into the Stream Clean-up Contest. It took me two days to make a dent in the stream-side trash. (PHOTOS below). I found bait jars, bags that once held fishing line or gear, yards of balled up fishing line complete with lures and hooks, as well as beer bottles (both

intact and broken), beer cans (both intact and smashed), fast food wrappers, water bottles, orange peels, discarded masks, gloves, etc. It saddens and concerns me that people leave behind their garbage, items that won't ever disintegrate. I am especially concerned about dangerous items like line, hooks, smashed beer cans, and broken glass.

In the future I will look for fly fishing spots farther off the beaten path and hope other fishermen will clean up after themselves as I would do. I sincerely hope that's what I will find.

ED note: Some of this trash likely came from non-fishers because the adjacent lot is usually full of work trucks and parked cars during the day.

