



Dave Sweet
EASTERN YELLOWSTONE CHAPTER



Favorite Fly:
Bead-head gold-ribbed hare's ear nymph.

Favorite Place to Fish:
North Fork of the Shoshone River, Cody, WY

Most Memorable Fish:
Yellowstone cutthroat trout out of the Yellowstone River below LeHardy Rapids, in Yellowstone National Park

Like many, Dave Sweet joined TU with self-ish motives – to learn about the best places to find trout. Similarly, it wasn't long before he was dividing time between angling and taking action on behalf of the coldwater species occupying his hobby.

Most recently, Sweet has been rallying support and funding for scientific research on movement and spawning patterns of non-native lake trout decimating populations of local cutthroat—a keystone species for the entire Yellowstone ecosystem.

"I was devastated when lake trout were found in the area, but didn't think it would have the impact that it since has," says Sweet, who began fishing at Yellowstone Lake 40 years ago, moving there permanently in 1988. "Cutthroat serve as an irreplaceable food source for grizzlies, river otters, numerous birds and other species like osprey, which currently have five active nests as opposed to 60 during the 1970's."

Since learning about this issue at a TU chapter meeting in 2007, Sweet pledged to do whatever he could to help. He has delivered, convening partners from the Greater Yellowstone Coalition and the National Parks Conservation Association to raise money and support for a deep water telemetry study to

explore alternatives to costly netting efforts which decrease, but never eliminate, lake trout populations.

"Unless you get the last of them, they will rebound and come back," says Sweet of the study, where National Park Service and United States Geological Survey (USGS) scientists implant radio tags into lake trout to monitor their movements around the system. This knowledge not only benefits netting efforts, but identifies areas where hundreds and thousands of lake trout congregate to spawn each fall.

Currently in year three, the study has led to the successful elimination of lake trout eggs and fry in identified spawning areas and Cutthroats are slowly recovering. However, there is a long way to go for these fish which once topped four million before dropping to less than 10 percent of their population during Sweet's lifetime.

"Dave has been integral to efforts to save the Yellowstone cutthroat trout," says Dr.



Robert Gresswell, a USGS research biologist who evaluates the lake trout suppression program in Yellowstone, studies alternative suppression techniques, and oversees the telemetry study and other

small-scale pilot alternatives to netting non-native species. "Dave has, almost by himself, put in thousands of hours towards developing a coalition of organizations and funding sources to support this work. We couldn't do this without him."

Sweet can't think of a better use of his time. "At one time, Yellowstone Lake and the surrounding river system—with its high elevation and pristine, cold waters—was thought to be a stronghold immune to many negative influences," says Sweet. "But that isn't the case. This is not just a fisheries issue—it is an ecosystem issue that could happen almost anywhere and it deserves our undivided attention."