

January Official Newsletter of St. Joe River Valley Fly Fishers

THE

LOOP



Tom Rondo, Editor

Our speaker's for January are [John Gouker](#) of Gouker Fly Fishing and [Matt Barthels](#) of Hawkins Outfitters. Their presentation will be "Big Bugs of June"

Wednesday, January 21st
Finnies Next Door
223 S. Main St.
South Bend, IN.

John Gouker:



Gouker Fly Fishing offers a wide range of fly fishing opportunities on the Big Manistee, Little Manistee, and Pine rivers. We are located in the middle of Michigan's Huron-Manistee National Forests, and just minutes away from the waters we guide. Gouker Fly Fishing is a four season, full time guide service, that offers both full and half day fishing opportunities. Trout, Smallmouth Bass, Northern Pike, Salmon, and Steelhead are all available, and make great targets for the fly angler.

We take great pride in teaching all aspects of fly fishing and helping to preserve the rivers through the practice of catch and release. Whether you are a new to the sport, or an experienced angler, nothing gives us more satisfaction than watching a client have a fly fishing experience of a lifetime.

Matt Barthels:



Owner and guide of 22 years, John Gouker is a lifetime angler, fly tyer, professional fly fishing guide, and fly fishing instructor. John lives in Irons, Michigan with his wife Chasity, his son Ajae, and Chesapeake Bay retriever, Baylor. John specializes in walk or float trips on the Little Manistee River, and enjoys chasing all types of cold and warm water species, from trout to smallmouth. John fished extensively in his native Nevada, as well as northern California, Oregon, and Vancouver Island (British Columbia.) He has also travelled to fish the Patagonia region in Chile; and the North Shore of Lake Superior in Ontario, Canada.

I was born and raised in Grand Rapids and was fortunate to have a family cabin on the banks of the Little Manistee River. I started fly fishing there at the age of 8 and later began exploring nearby rivers like the Manistee, Pine, and Pere Marquette. I moved to the Wellston area and began guiding in 2013, in my early 20s. Here, I guide for trout, steelhead, smallmouth, and salmon. In July and August, I also guide in the Roaring Fork Valley of Colorado at Frying Pan Anglers. I love sharing the diverse angling opportunities Michigan offers and strive to provide a fun and informative experience for anglers of all skill levels. In my free time, you'll find me tying flies, swinging streamers for steelhead, stripping streamers for browns, or chasing bugs and rising fish.

I'm full of enthusiasm, quick to laugh, and always excited to be on the water. I'm confident you'll enjoy your time spent with me! (Matt)



PRESIDENTS COLUMN

Happy New Year!

I hope all of you had a nice holiday season, enjoying time with family and friends.

With 2025 in the record books we, as an organization, look forward to 2026 with a great deal of optimism. The new board has met for the first time and believes we have a lot of positive momentum heading into the new year. We are here to serve our members so please let us know if you feel there is something you'd like to see us doing.

I want to thank all who have made the decision to renew their commitment to the club as officers, board members, and committee head. Also, those who've made the commitment to get more involved with the club, as new board members, Jake Rigdon, Ron Weaver and Kieth Trainier. Thank you to outgoing board members Mark Bardusk and Brandon Rasler.

One area of emphasis for the board is to encourage committees to get more involved in the management of the club and we still have several opportunities to volunteer. Please reach out to me if you are interested in serving on a committee.

I would like to congratulate the annual award winners; Fly Fisher of the Year, Zach Zakowski, Harry Hustle, Todd Ezzell, Roger McFall (2 years running) and the Eric Graham Oakie Dokey Award recipients, Jim Lothary and myself. The Joe Mitchell Award was given to Tim Scott, and the Marshall Jacobson Lifetime Membership Award went to Dustin New.

Don't forget, our annual auction is March 18th, and we are asking that you please bring any gently used items for the silent auction to the January and February meetings or contact Billy to make arrangements to get the item to us.

Lastly, I want to give a special thank you to outgoing President, Todd Ezzell, your commitment to the club is very much appreciated. I can't imagine where the club would be without hard work and dedication over the many years of service.

Thanks

Don



BOARD MEMBERS

Position	Name	Committee	Chairperson
President	Don Reber	Activities Committee	Keith Trainier
Vice president	Eric Graham	Conservation	Tim Scott
Secretary	David VanAntwerp	Financial Review	John Mertes
Treasurer	Roger McFall	Membership	Don Reber
Assistant Treasurer	Jim Oresko	Nominating committee	
1 Year Director	vacant	Ghillie	
1 Year Director	John Mertes	Raffle Committee	Greg Sauter
2 Year Director	Jake Rigdon	Webmaster	
2 Year Director	Greg Sautter	Audio/Visual/IT	Brandon Rasler
3 Year Director	Keith Trainier	Newsletter/ Loop	Thomas Rondo
3 Year Director	Ron Weaver	Awards Committee	
		Grant committee	
		Auction Committee	Billy Vale
		Education Committee	
		Social Media Communication	

MEETING AND MEMBERSHIP

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Membership renewal dues can be paid at the club meetings or by mail to:

SJRVFF
P.O. Box 933
South Bend, IN 46624

You can pay your dues by credit

card through the web site. Click on the "Join SJRVFF" tab and down toward the bottom you will see where you can pay via PayPal.

The dues are still just
\$30.00

Just click
the link to
quickly
send an
email to

We need you to RSVP for dinner or we cannot provide a meal for you. Get your name in or you will go hungry!

RSVP by emailing at donreber@gmail.com or call and leave a message at 574-286-0157.

MUST RSVP by ASAP. I am late getting this out. Sorry.

MEETING DETAILS:

Doors open at 6:30
Meal at 7:00
Meeting about 7:30

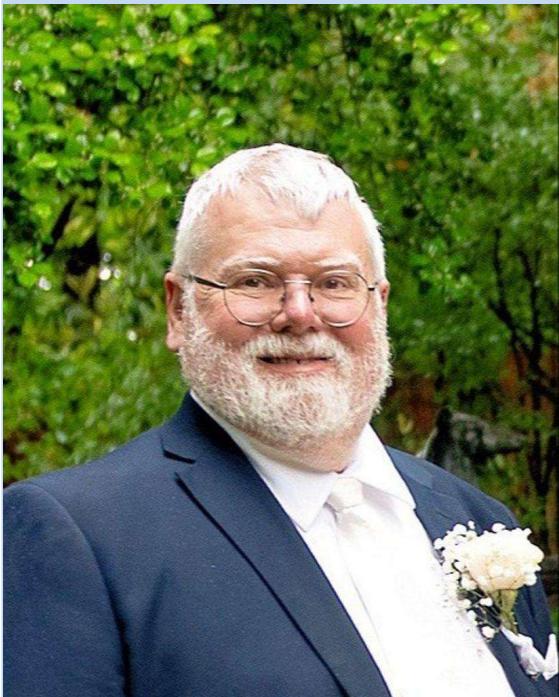
Location:
Finnies Next Door
223 S. Main St.
South Bend, IN.

Parking is free.

Meal cost \$25.00/person

MENU
TBD

Glen Blackwood Memorial



Glen Robert Blackwood **March 2, 1963 — December 29, 2025**

Glen Blackwood, 62, passed away on Monday, December 29th, 2025 in Rockford, Michigan. Glen was born on March 2nd, 1963 to Nancy (Acton) Blackwood and Harold Blackwood in Springfield, Ohio, where he was raised. Growing up, he enjoyed many summers in Unionville, Pennsylvania, fly fishing in the spring creeks of Pine Creek Valley. He graduated from The Ohio State University, class of 1986, with a B.S. in Agriculture. He was also a graduate of the Missouri School of Auctioneering and would, in his life, donate his time and skills as an auctioneer to the many conservation organizations he supported. Moving to Michigan in search of trout and grouse, Glen began working at the Thornapple Orvis Shop, and would meet his wife Kathleen in 1989.

Glen later worked at the Scott Fly Rod Company, before becoming owner of the Great Lakes Fly Fishing Company in Rockford, MI, where he and Kathleen began their family. Glen also had the opportunity to travel and film around the world for his television show, *Fly Fishing with Glen Blackwood*. As owner of the Great Lakes Fly Fishing Company, Glen taught many in West Michigan to fly fish and appreciate the sport. He was known to many as a great storyteller and was a member of the Watershed Club in northern Michigan on the Manistee River.

In 2020, he began working for the Ruffed Grouse Society, an organization he had long supported and that was close to his heart. Glen was most at home by a stream or in a field bird hunting or training with his field-bred English Springer and Cocker Spaniels. He especially looked forward to the start of fly fishing season in the spring and to the month of October, when he and his friends could devote themselves to their favorite outdoor pursuit of hunting grouse and woodcock.

All of his life, he loved the written word. When not in the field, he enjoyed reading classic and contemporary fly fishing and wing shooting literature as well as studying and appreciating sporting art. He was an avid writer, contributing articles and book reviews to *Sporting Classics*, *Upland Almanac*, *Ruffed Grouse Society Covers Magazine*, and other publications. Glen was a devoted conservationist and dedicated a significant portion of his time to volunteering with organizations he cared deeply about, including Trout Unlimited, the Ruffed Grouse Society, and the Pere Marquette Watershed Council, among others.

He is survived by his wife, Kathleen (Meehan) Blackwood; his daughter Megan (Reed) Westcott; his son, Ian Blackwood; and his sister, Ruth (Mike) Lee, lifelong boyhood friend and brother at heart, Chris Campbell, and several nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents, Nancy and Harold Blackwood. A private service will be scheduled for close friends and family.

If desired, private donations can be made to support the family by checks made to Kathleen Blackwood, sent to P.O. Box 723, Rockford, MI, 49341



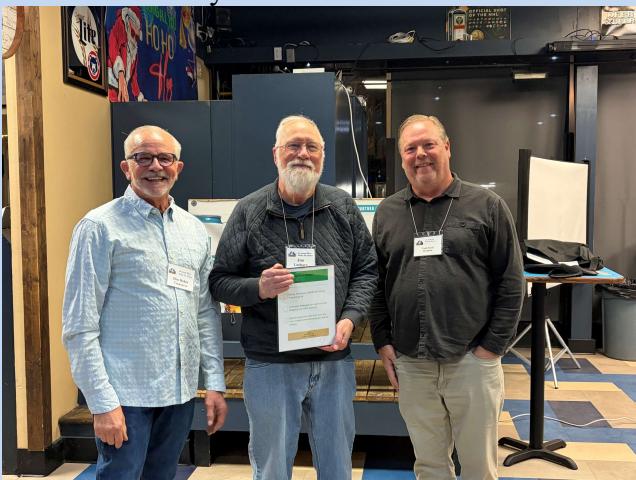
AWARD WINNERS



Fly Fisher of the Year



Lifetime Member



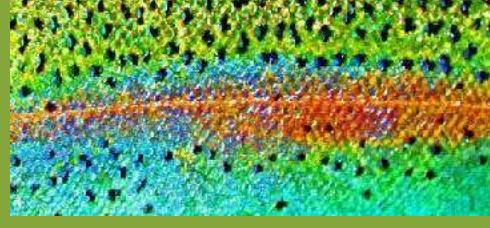
Oakie Drifter Award 1



Oakie Drifter Award 2



Joe Mitchell Award

UPCOMING EVENTS	Tie-a-thon	JAN 21	FEB 18
	More news coming soon.	Club Meeting Finnies Next Door 223 S. Main St. South Bend, IN.	Club Meeting Finnies Next Door 223 S. Main St. South Bend, IN.

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NEXT ISSUE: FEBRUARY 14, 2026