Elm Creek, a nine-mile-long stream, flowing through western Cattaraugus County provides a high-quality fishery for wild brown trout. The best water quality for supporting brown trout is located from a cold tributary (The Ram) downstream two miles to the mouth. Water quality for trout is compromised in the upper seven miles of the stream by flood control impoundments. This stream has public fishing rights easements totaling 0.4 miles and another 0.5 miles of access in a village park. The stream is managed with a year-round open season, including catch and release – artificial lures only from 10/16-3/31. In 2018, as part of region-wide trout population monitoring, the stream was sampled by electrofishing at one 580-foot site in the Randolph village park. This site had been sampled previously in 1991, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2008, 2013, 2016 and 2017. In 2013-2018 surveys, trout population abundance was estimated from two electrofishing passes; while in previous years we used one-pass CROTS methodology.

In 2018, we captured 82 yearling and older (adult) wild brown trout, ranging in length from 5.2-17.4 inches and averaging 8.7 inches (Figure 1). The abundance of adult wild brown trout in 2018 was as 764 fish/mile (±36) (Figure 2). The number of young-of-year (YOY) brown trout captured in the first electrofishing pass was 136/mile. Adult trout habitat was of very good quality consisting of deep pools, and overhanging shrubs.

The abundance of adult wild brown trout in 2018 at our sampling site was significantly lower (P<0.005) than we observed in 2013-2017 and lower than we have seen in all but one sampling year, 1991 (Figure 2). The abundance of YOY at our sampling site has been highly variable over our sampling years with 1991, 2000, 2008, 2017 and 2018 having low numbers captured (20-145...
fish/mile) and 2003 and 2016 very high numbers (1,036-1,161 fish/mile). Some of the decline in adult trout abundance in 2018 may have been due to poor reproduction in 2017, as a lower percentage of the catch was made up of yearlings in 2018 (58%) than past years. In spite of this year's decline in adult brown trout abundance, Elm Creek should continue to provide quality angling for those wishing to pursue wild brown trout. No changes in regulations are recommended for Elm Creek and it should continue to be managed as a wild trout fishery.