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## **Hatch and release: Hamburg High School students release trout they raised from eggs**

Classmates gave names to some of the fish

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**By Darrin Youker**  
*Reading Eagle*

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The waters of Wolf Run were cold and the stream bank was a mud slick, but Rachel Magrowski was thrilled to wade in.

She and fellow Hamburg High School classmates came to this tiny mountain stream in Upper Bern Township to release brook trout. The students had grown attached to the 13 trout, even giving names to a few of them.

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*Reading Eagle: Tim Leedy*

**Cheryl Bucheit, left, environmental science teacher at Hamburg High School, with students Brian Bailey, center, and Shawn Faust as they release trout in Wolf Run in Upper Bern Township.**

The students had raised the 4-inch-long fish from eggs.

The trout release was the culmination of a hands-on environmental science lesson that involved raising trout and monitoring habitat.

Teacher Cheryl Bucheit's class at Hamburg was one of 93 in the state, including a class at Oley Valley, to participate in the project.

Months of lesson plans on trout, their habitat, water quality and pollution were put to the test when students released the fish and then spent the day searching for bugs in the stream and exploring mountain springs.

"I came out of the water and I couldn't feel my feet," said Magrowski, a 15-year-old freshman.

Wearing wading boots, Arielle Derr, 14, also a freshman, came prepared to stock fish.

One by one, students took buckets, each containing a wriggling fish, and found a quiet pool to release the trout.

"It was really interesting," Derr said, moments after watching a fish swim away. "You are so used to seeing them in the classroom."

Last year, Bucheit received a grant from Trout Unlimited to buy a tank and other equipment to raise trout provided by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

She learned of the program through the Berks County Conservation District and felt it would be a good lesson for students.

Trout are sensitive to pollutants and need cold, clean water to live in, Bucheit said. Finding brook trout in a stream is a good indicator of healthy water quality.

After receiving 300 fertilized eggs in November, students had to care for them by cleaning the tank, feeding the fish and testing the water for nitrates and ammonia.

Brian Bailey, a 17-year-old Hamburg junior, was among the students who helped care for the fish in Bucheit's class. The experience has given him a greater understanding of trout habitat.

"Trout are really sensitive," he said. "I've had goldfish at home, but trout need to have better water quality."

Most of the trout did not survive in the classroom, an outcome that Bucheit wants to improve next school year. A high percentage of trout simply did not feed after they hatched, a behavior that also occurs in the wild, Bucheit said.

Also, ammonia levels spiked over Christmas break, a situation that will need to be remedied next year, she said.

Bucheit said the program was a valuable educational experience. Along with the biology and chemistry involved, students learned about natural stream habitats and how the waters of Wolf Run eventually flow into the Schuylkill River.

"I think it is a great tie-in with what I teach," Bucheit said. "Critters in the classroom also help draw students in."

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