



Sonoma County
California
Volume 43 Number 1
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Russian River Fly Fishers Steelhead Clinic

Since June 1977
Visit our website at
www.rrflyfisher.org

Headwaters...

Happy New Year! Well...the first storms of our El Niño are upon us and, depending on the accuracy of our weather forecasts, the Russian River will most likely be blown-out for the foreseeable future. Ultimately this will be good for our fisheries and piling on the snowpack in the Sierra will bode well for our summer and fall pursuits. Let it snow...let it rain...let the wild rumpus begin!

Make plans now to attend our annual **RRFF Cioppino Dinner** fundraiser on **Saturday, February 27th**. Tickets can be purchased online at www.rrflyfisher.org and watch for the flyer in our February newsletter. It looks as if crab may be an issue this year, in which case we will opt for a traditional Seafood Cioppino with an assortment of delicacies. Traditionally, our dinner raffle is

extensive and does raise funds for our various RRFF outings and programs. Please contribute by donating items for this event (see article later in this newsletter). Our Cioppino Dinner is the result of efforts from a large group of RRFF volunteers and is always a memorable and fun event. We'd like to see you there! Let us know if you would like to help out.

November and December marked the passing of two RRFF members - Dave Fichman in November and RRFF Life Member Ed Phelan in December. Our deepest condolences to all of their families and friends. May our memories provide their continued presence as we return to those waters that they shared with us.

My continued thanks to our esteemed board of directors for their dedication and vision. This past year has noted many inspired changes and a dynamism that is contagious.

~ Steve Tubbs

DO IT YOURSELF FLOAT TRIP BRISTOL BAY, ALASKA



~ John Squires ~

John is a registered Alaskan guide, long-time fly fisher, frequent presenter to fly fishing associations, and co-owner of Against The Flow Adventures.



In this presentation John will discuss how to plan and carry out a do-it-yourself float trip in the Bristol Bay area of Alaska. This is an in-depth presentation that will cover such topics as composition of your group, choosing your destination, logistics, safety, food preparation and storage, community and personal gear, clothing, fish and fishing gear, and expenses.

Please join me in welcoming John at the Wednesday, January 13 General Meeting.

*~ Joe Banovich
RRFF Program and Speaker Chairman*

Conservation Corner 4:

The 4 "H's" interrupted: An interlude for Steelhead Conservation

It's winter now and maybe this shouldn't be a surprise but I've got steelhead on my mind. This might be because I was able to take part in several exciting steelhead-focused conservation initiatives this past fall. It may be that it's just that time of year when steelhead fishing is at its best and on every North Coast fly fishers mind. Or maybe because I finally caught my first adult steelhead on a fly this Fall.



For whatever reason, it's worth focusing on the hope and the challenges that this last year has brought. As our club is well-aware, the Russian River used to be the premier steelhead fishery on the North Coast. It combined strong runs with predictable winter conditions and good access. Good real-time stream data was available from institutions like Kings Tackle and the fishing community was vibrant enough to spawn well-known characters like Bill Schaadt and Russell Chatham. The high-water mark was in the 1940's and 1950's and by the 60's, the steelhead were well on their way to the shadow of a fishery they provide now. That history is part of the reason why the Russian River Fly Fishers organized in the early 70's and maintain wild fisheries conservation as one of its 3 founding Primary Objectives.

The why of that change and what is being done about it are what I want to talk about in this article, because for all of the crimes against nature committed, I believe that there is hope.

First, the challenges. While it is discouraging to see fishermen hauling wild steelhead out of dried-up pools on the Russian and Garcia, harvest issues (the first of the 4 “H’s” of fisheries conservation) are a small part of the problem. In the October 2015 issue of California Fly Fisher, Russell Chatham writes eloquently and forcefully that “catch-and-release is a pointless mantra in the conservation of (a healthy population of) migratory steelhead and salmon”. With no real commercial fishery for steelhead the gill netters and purse seiners and long liners certainly can’t be blamed. That is anathema for someone of my generation who grew up with nothing but a C&R narrative in books and magazines; but Chatham backs it up with data and his experience on our waters during and after the good times. I’ve certainly experienced it myself on the remaining healthy stocks of pink and chum salmon in the Puget Sound.

The 2nd “H”, hatcheries, are the current conservation boogeyman right now, and with good reason. As I’ll highlight in a future Cast article, there is much wrong with our current hatchery management system. But with only one hatchery in our watersheds that was installed well after the major declines began, this doesn’t seem like the primary causal issue.

Dams aren’t helping (the “H” comes from Hydropower). According to the Russian River Wild Steelhead Society, there are currently 509 licensed dams and many other unlicensed obstructions to the flow of water in the Russian River basin. Most dams in the basin are on tributaries where they degrade critical spawning and rearing habitat. Dams and water diversions tend to decrease habitat and increase water temperatures downstream. They also block movement of sediment limiting downstream spawning gravel. But the biggest impediment to upstream spawning grounds in our watershed, the Warm Springs Dam at Lake Sonoma, was installed in 1982, long after the fishery was already in free-fall.

So, what is the problem for steelhead in the Russian River watershed? As I’ve written about before, the

Big “H” for anadromous fish in our local watersheds is Habitat. I break that down to what I’ll call my “4 D’s of Russian River Habitat Destruction”: Diversions, Dredging, Deforestation, and Development. Note I don’t include an obvious 5th “D”: Drought. Because the reality is local salmon and steelhead stocks evolved to handle the periodic droughts that our environment goes through. It’s the first 4 “D’s” that make drought conditions a killer these days. Dennis P. Lee defines conservation as “wise use of natural resources”. In that light, the history of Sonoma County natural resource management could be described as “squandering”, the opposite of conservation. Devastating floods in the mid-50s were magnified by decades of old growth logging in the watershed. Unrestricted gravel mining in the main river combined with the loss of habitat above the Lake Mendocino dam in 1958 and water diversions from high population and agricultural growth have made it a challenge to ever return to the previous abundance.



Now for the Hope. It’s not too late for the Russian River watershed and there are a lot of people who care passionately about our steelhead.

In November, The Redwood Empire chapter of Trout Unlimited hosted Rob Masonis, one of the founders of the [Wild Steelheaders United](#) initiative. He described fisheries conservation as the “art of the possible”. That pragmatic viewpoint has led WSU to focus on getting stakeholder feedback, using science to guide controlled experiments, and taking on controversial topics like reformation and wise use of the hatchery system. This has obviously resonated with more than 3,000 new members in the initiatives first year and notable wins like the successful promotion of more rational regulations in Washington’s Olympic Peninsula. Successes like this

have been built from listening to the fishermen. A recent study of all steelhead fishers (not just fly fishers) showed that almost two-thirds favored more restrictions on fishing gear, C&R for wild fish when populations are low, and balanced hatchery operations that keep healthy rivers free from hatchery stocks. Those who fish for steelhead are obviously no dummies, no matter their politics or preferred fishing style.

To add to this, TU sponsored a Steelhead Science for Anglers Workshop series with presentations in Long Beach and Davis. The Davis Workshop hosted serious heavyweights in fisheries conservation from UC Davis, Cal Trout and TU. In particular, Peter Moyle, the dean of West Coast fisheries conservation, gave the introductory overview of steelhead biology and the state of steelhead in California. Dr. Moyle of UC Davis is perhaps second only to Robert Behnke in Western trout and salmon science and conservation. He was followed up by a serious run into steelhead genetics by another UC Davis professor, Dr. Mike Miller, and then presentations on statewide conservation activities by Cal Trout (Dr. Sandi Jacobson) and TU (Dr. Rene Henery). John McMillan, Science Director for TU's WSU initiative summed up why steelhead science should matter to us this way: "Any given steelhead population may support upwards of 30-36 life histories, the most of any salmon, trout, or char. In short, diversity is their calling card. More life histories = more population resilience = more consistent annual run size = more fishing opportunity".

Further local signs of hope: In 2015, North Bay TU built on over 30 years of restoration work in the Lagunitas Creek watershed by completing a significant habitat enhancement project in Devil's Gulch, a key tributary. NBTU, together with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Marin Municipal Water District, California State Parks, Doug Gore, Patagonia, and Dragonfly Consulting, restored woody structure in eight locations along this creek, reversing some of the impacts of past logging activity in the area by providing pools and cover, keeping the creek cool and allowing fish to hide from predators. The Russian River Wild Steelhead Society recently completed the first phase of a large woody debris introduction project on the lower river. The Redwood Empire chapter of TU is

trying to re-invigorate its members and organize around a unifying local conservation theme in the Russian River watershed. And Cal Trout's Jacob Katz and others are proposing to restore the lower river floodplains by using vineyards as fish nurseries and groundwater recharge ponds during the winter (Made Local Magazine, Sept/Oct. 2015).

So, what can you do? Get involved:

1. Join TU [Wild Steelheaders United](#) and sign their credo.
2. Join the [Russian River Wild Steelhead Society](#). Attend the RRWSS 8th Gathering of Great Steelheaders (date TBA) to support their activities.
3. Re-join the [Redwood Empire chapter](#) of Trout Unlimited and make your voice heard about the need for major habitat improvement projects in our Russian River watershed and the desire to work together for steelhead conservation.
4. Attend [Lake Sonoma Steelhead Festival](#) on February 13, 2016. Come out and meet many of our local watershed managers and conservation organizations. Ask them to work harder to restore our steelhead and what we might do to help.



~ Derek Campbell
Conservation Chairman

Further Enhancements to **RRFlyfisher.org/Website**

New RRFF Message Board

If you are interested in getting club member to club member communications, you might want to try joining the club message board. Typically there are between 5 and 25 posts each month announcing Day Fisher plans, fly tying meetings, Women's Group outings, website updates, etc.

The message board is a Yahoo Groups system started in September 2015, replacing the old message board that had been around since 2001. We currently have over 40 members.

The link is "Yahoo Message Board (NEW)" on the website <http://www.rrflyfisher.org/>.

It works just like the old message board:

- If you want to subscribe to the new forum, you would send an email to rrff2015-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. The list owner (Mike Spurlock) will receive the request and approve it for any club member. You do not need a Yahoo email address. Any email address will do.
- Any approved subscriber can then post a message by sending it to rrff2015@yahoogroups.com. This will put the message on the board and send each subscriber an email link announcing the post.
- If you change your mind and want to unsubscribe, send an email to rrff2015-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com.
- If you have questions or technical problems, contact Mike at mikerrff@gmail.com

Additionally, you may also purchase tickets to our **Annual Cioppino Dinner** through our website.

- Go to the website: <http://www.rrflyfisher.org/>
- Then, click on the "MENU" at the upper right.
- Then click on "BUY 2016 DINNER TICKETS"

- You should now be on the BUY 2016 DINNER TICKETS page.

Two choices are offered: Either print out the flyer and mail in a check to Steve or buy on-line using PayPal similar to paying dues.

The date of the dinner is **February 27, 2016** and note this year we offer four (4) dinner choices: Cioppino, Steak, Chicken, and Jackie's Thai.

A few items below the meal selection buttons have been added to facilitate sending a note to Art Carney if they want to volunteer to help with the event or to Ken Magoon if they want to donate something for the raffle.

Wonderful enhancements by our website guru, Mike Spurlock.

Give it a try!

~ Editor

Join the RRFF on Facebook

We currently have **658 members** on our RRFF Facebook page. You can keep up with the RRFF and our fly fishing and conservation community by joining us at:

<http://www.facebook.com/russianriverflyfishers>

RRFF Annual Cioppino Dinner **Saturday, February 27, 2016**

Donation contributions are needed for the upcoming RRFF Cioppino Dinner Raffle. Please get your donations to one of us at least one week prior to the dinner. Include donor's name and description of the item donated. This will be a "can raffle" with participants putting tickets towards only those items they want to win.

Contact one of the following Board members to have your donation picked up.

Ken Magoon, 527-8376 or magoon5294@aol.com
(Santa Rosa)

Gregg Wrisley 823-5572 or ggwris@gmail.com
(Sebastopol)

Paul Matzen, 795-8885 or 480-1057
(Petaluma)

Greg Jacobs, 823-7341 or [gjacob48@gmail.com](mailto:gjacobs48@gmail.com)
(Sebastopol)

All of the following contributions are desirable:

- * Fly fishing rods, reels, lines, nets, vests, flies and all types of fishing accessories and clothing. (Other types of fishing gear also welcomed.)
- * Fly tying vises, tools and materials.
- * Prams, pontoons, float tubes and fins. (Preferably in very good and safe condition.)
- * All types of camping, outdoor and recreational equipment.
- * Fishing, conservation, and nature related art work and books.
- * Guided fishing trips or one day access to private fishing water.
- * Weekend stays on a lake or river location.
- * Products and services from your or a friend's business.
- * Spa sessions or cosmetology services.
- * Food items or wine.
- * Tickets to sporting events.
- * Dinners
- * Bed and Breakfast accommodations.
- * Any one day family or group outing in a fun and unique location.

Thanks for your contributions

~ Ken Magoon



Lower Sacramento with Lance Gray

Lance Gray is offering a one-day "tour" of the Lower Sacramento on March 12, 2016. The tour will involve car travel to various spots on the Lower Sacramento River, some of which were described in his presentation at our December 8 General Meeting.

Lance will go over rigging and then will turn the participants loose to go wade-fish the spots.

He is proposing a \$30 per person fee for up to 10 participants. Sign up on [RRFlyfisher.org](http://www.rrflyfisher.org) by January 17 so we can determine if we have sufficient interest to run the tour. Click on the following link which will direct you to the sign up page: <http://www.rrflyfisher.org/31216-lance-gray-lower-sac-tour.html>

Tight lines,

~ Ed Barich



Ed Phelan - In Memory

It is with a sad heart and unforgettable memories that I share the passing of RRFF Life Member Ed Phelan (a.k.a. Big Pierre, "Fast Eddie").

Ed loved the Russian River Fly Fishers and, with his wife Julie, was a presenter and instructor at our RRFF Youth Programs, the Healdsburg Wild Steelhead Festival, our RRFF Steelhead Clinics and a member of our volunteer RRFF Fly Casting Instruction team. To those who knew him, Ed was a true gentleman, conservationist and talented angler. Regarding conservation he frequently advised, "If we really want to make a difference, we need to focus on our Youth!" He loved to work with the kids and to share his knowledge with all who were willing to learn. As our spey casting guru, Ed helped introduce many RRFF members to the two-handed rod.

From stories of the mighty Skeena River in British Columbia, where he and Julie made their home and pursued the majestic steelhead of that watershed, to jokes and tales for assembled friends, Ed was a storyteller. He loved to write and frequently contributed articles to the RRFF and Russian River Wild Steelhead Society (RRWSS) newsletters. After moving to B.C. a few years ago, Ed and Julie welcomed RRFF members to share the beauty of that renowned fly fishing mecca and often hosted them for their stay. He created unique opportunities for learning and wonder.

Our sincerest sympathy to Julie and all of Ed's family and friends. Ed will forever live in our hearts and in our personal recollections, his smile, laughter and love for fly fishing and our fisheries an inspiration and aspiration. May his legacy live on through all of us.

Steve Tubbs
RRFF President

Calendar of Events

Winter Fly Casting Clinics – From 12:00 noon until 2:30 pm (weather permitting). RRFF Fly Casting Clinics are held the first and third Saturday of each month.

January

- 13 General Meeting – Vets Building 6:30 PM
- 14 – 18 **Outing TBA**
- 16 **Eagle Canyon Trophy Trout Lakes** (J. Vallerga)
- 20 Board of Directors Meeting 7:00 PM
- 21 – 24 Sacramento International Sportsmen's Expo
- 21 – 24 Gualala River Steelhead fishing (B. Laurie)

February

- 4 - 7 **Outing TBA**
- 10 No General Meeting – Attend the Cioppino Dinner!
- 17 Board of Directors Meeting 7:00 PM
- 26 – 28 Pleasanton Flyfishing Show
- 27 **RRFF Cioppino Dinner**

March

- 9 General Meeting – Vets Building 6:30 PM
- 9 **Eagle Canyon Trophy Trout Lakes** (J. Vallerga)
- 11 – 12 **Red's Fishing Tackle, Duck Decoy and Sporting Collectibles Show** – Vets Building
- 12 **Lance Gray Lower Sacramento River Tour** (E. Barich)
- 13 Daylight Savings Time Begins.
- 16 Board of Directors Meeting 7:00 PM
- 17 – 20 **Pyramid Lake** (K. Magoon)
- 19 Summer Fly Casting Clinics every Thursday 4:30 – 7:00 PM

August

21 – Sep 3

Idaho, Montana Camping, Fishing, Float Trip.
Maximum 12 RRFF members. Sign up now. This will be a two week trip through the great rivers, streams and lakes of Idaho and Montana. It will include an optional one to three day fishing float trip. Details to follow (B. Laurie)

RRFF Newsletter Submissions

Newsletter materials are due the fourth Monday of each month. Please email submissions as an MSWord doc to our newsletter editor:

Lorrin Ngum - lorrinn@aol.com

**Check out the Russian River Fly Fishers
on the Internet at**

www.rrflyfisher.org

RRFF Board of Directors

President: **Steve Tubbs**

765-1787 steve@kresky.com

Vice President & Outings Co-Chairman: **Ken Magoon**

527- 8376 magoon5294@aol.com

Secretary: **Greg Jacobs**

823-7341 [gjacob48@gmail.com](mailto:gjacobs48@gmail.com)

Treasurer & Webmaster: **Mike Spurlock**

(415)-599-6138 mikerrff@gmail.com

Casting Instruction Chairman: **Steve Tubbs**

765-1787 steve@kresky.com

Program Chairman: **Joe Banovich**

526-6015 joebanovich@sonic.net

Outings Co-Chairman: **Bill Laurie**

538-0399 blaurie120@att.net

Library Master: **Don Shaw**

664-8573 donjanshaw@comcast.net

Membership Dues Billing & Raffle Coordinator: **Ed Barich**

539-4608 ebarich@sonic.net

Special Events & City Liaison: **Art Carney**

539-2545 ccarney@sonic.net

Member at Large: **Mike Kast**

538-9762 michaelrkast@gmail.com

Membership Chairman: **Doug Mackay**

575-5709 demackay@sonic.net

Member at Large: **Paul Matzen**

795-8885 ggbridgeman@att.net

Member at Large: **Ken Young**

539-9649 wlk4fun@sbcglobal.net

Conservation Chairman: **Derek Campbell**

591-5667 dcampbell00@hotmail.com

Member at Large: **Gregg Wrisley**

823-5572 ggwris@gmail.com

Coordinators

Day Fishers & Fly Tying: **Lee Soares**

974-2651 frommewee@comcast.net

Women's Activities: **Susan Bostwick**

815-5926 shbgold@gmail.com

Casting Pond Stewards: **Doug & Sage Mackay**

575-5709 demackay@sonic.net

Casting Pond Monitor: **Binky Castleberry**

527-9607 fsh2xsbc@earthlink.net

Newsletter: **Lorrin Ngum**

762-4652 lorrinn@aol.com

Russian River Fly Fishers
P.O. Box 2673
Santa Rosa, CA 95405



Russian River Fly Fishers Membership Application

I acknowledge in this agreement, and fully understand, that it is a release of liability. I further acknowledge that I am waiving any right that I may have to bring legal action or to assert a claim against Russian River Fly Fishers (RRFF) for its negligence. Any member who invites a non-member (including member's spouse and family) agrees that such guest is bound by the same conditions and agrees to so advise the guest. I have read this statement and agree to its terms as a condition of my membership in the Russian River Fly Fishers. This agreement is valid for all RRFF sanctioned events, (fishing outings, picnics, meetings).

Name _____ Date _____ Referred by _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Home Phone _ _____ Work Phone _ _____ E-mail Address* _____

How Can You Help the RRFF? _____

Occupation _____ Signature _ _____

* Required for e-mail newsletter

Please mark one of the following categories:

I apply as a new member: **Single membership** – \$50 annual dues **Gold membership** - \$1,000.00 (one-time)

Family membership – \$55 annual dues **JOIN ONLINE @ www.rrflyfisher.org**

Junior membership – \$25 annual dues

Existing membership renewal: **Single membership** – \$50 annual dues **Gold membership** - \$1,000.00 (one-time)

Family membership – \$55 annual dues **RENEW ONLINE @ www.rrflyfisher.org**

Junior membership – \$25 annual dues

Dues paid by a new member joining the RRFF after March 30th of any year will cover the balance of that year and also the membership dues for the following fiscal year. The RRFF fiscal year runs from July 1st to June 30th

Please mail this application and your check payable to: **Russian River Fly Fishers, P.O. Box 2673, Santa Rosa, CA 95405**