



Sonoma County
California
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2016 Russian River Fly Fishers Cioppino Dinner

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

Headwaters...

Another RRF Cioppino Dinner is in the books...and by all accounts this one was bigger, better and more delectable than any of our previous. It was inspirational to see the many volunteers setting up the dining room and raffle tables beforehand, and the kitchen and barbecue crew had no shortage of helpers stopping in to stir the Cioppino pots and snack on Jackie's (and Teddy Bear's) delicious spring rolls throughout the afternoon. This event is truly a group effort, an evening hosted and staged by RRF members for RRF members, many of whom stayed straight on through the afternoon preparations and transitioned directly into merriment. It was a celebration of the camaraderie that has been characteristic of our club, especially evident in recent years, and a meeting of friends and family...a gift to each other and a sharing between trusted companions.

I am pleased with the direction that our club has taken. We have a tremendous Board of Directors

consisting of 15 members who are dedicated to preserving the Russian River Fly Fishers as the top fly fishing club in Northern California. Their behind-the-scenes efforts were the catalyst for the success of our dinner and their work through the past year has resulted in a new enthusiasm and interest in our club outings and events. It is truly a pleasure to be a part of such a dynamic group. Thank you all for your diligence.

And a special call-out to Art and Carrie Carney, who oversaw the preparations for this year's Cioppino Dinner for one final time. They have indicated that this year was their Swan Song, that next year the event will be organized and directed by someone else, that they are now ready to pass-on the responsibilities they had voluntarily assumed for the past few years. During their tenure, each dinner has been more successful than the last. I would like to join, with the 150 attendees of this year's celebration (a new record!), in this heartfelt exclamation, "Great Job Art and Carrie!" Our thanks and appreciation to you both.

~ Steve Tubbs

Central Valley Shad

A presentation by Al Smatsky



Encouraged by a lifelong friend and fishing buddy more than 45 years ago, Al purchased his first fly rod for a trip to the Yuba River to fish for shad. From that point forward, Al was hooked for life and since then, he has been fishing from Alaska to South America in pursuit of most fresh and saltwater species.

In 1977, Al joined the Delta Fly Fishers and quickly made friends with anglers who shared the same interest. As an active board member and past-president (twice) the club grew to over 100 members, which it still maintains today. Serving as Program Chairman for over twenty years, he also had the opportunity to meet many wonderful and talented fly fishermen which helped to expand his

knowledge of our sport. In 2003 Al was awarded the honor of “Life Member” for his faithful membership and service to the Delta Fly Fishers.

Al has always been an avid traveler and planned trips to Alaska for himself and his friends starting back in the early “80’s”. In 1989 he made his first bone fishing trip to Christmas Island and has since been hooked on saltwater fly fishing. His belief is, a fishing trip should be more than just “fishing”; it should also be an experience.

In 1994 Al started his own business, *Excellent Adventures*, which specializes in hosted and un-hosted fly fishing trips to affordable destinations from Alaska to South America. Guided trips include

his first love, American Shad in Central California and steelhead in Northern California.

[Ken Hanley](#), who presented [Surf Zone](#) as our September 2015 guest speaker says, “it seems like every time you go shad fishing, there is always one angler in the line that has the hot rod! Maybe it’s the color of his flies, maybe his leader length, tippet size or the type of fly line he is using”.

Please join me in welcoming Al Smatsky as the guest speaker at our **Wednesday, March 9 General Meeting**. Al’s Central Valley Shad presentation will explore these topics along with optimum water flows for our valley rivers and timing the shad runs.

~ Joe Banovich
RRFF Program and Speaker Chairman

Conservation Corner 6: *The last of the 4 “H’s”: Harvest*

The 4th and final of the 4 “H’s” of fisheries conservation deals with Harvest. Unfortunately today, this is the least important of our local conservation issues. Due to combinations of past damage to Habitat, and by Hydro and Hatcheries, stocks of anadromous fish are currently so low that we argue over a few hundred fish that sea lions take after the sand bars are breached in Fall. The epitome of the proverbial “fighting over scraps”. That is not to say that Harvest is an unimportant current issue as we’ll discuss below, but it has been argued that a healthy Russian River can certainly handle more than regulation allows for today.

There are two aspects of over-harvest; commercial catch (and by-catch) and recreational fishing. Commercial harvest of salmon and steelhead is a thing of the past for the Russian River and other local coastal rivers. Chinook runs were dwarfed by runs to the Sacramento and further North. Coho weren’t as desirable. Steelhead aren’t schoolers at sea and so made poor targets for the seiners and gill netters. Even the original native tribes didn’t have the same salmon culture that was found in the Eel, Klamath and Smith basins.

Recreational fishing is a more complex issue locally. Before continuing, I’m going to separate out recreational harvest issues of salmon and steelhead from other trout. Catch-and-Release versus Put-and-Take for non-migratory trout is such an interesting, complex and evolving issue that I’ll tackle that in a subsequent article in The Cast. I’ll stick here with tackling recreational harvest of local anadromous fish.



Firing Line on the Russian River

In the October 2015 edition of California Fly Fisher, Russell Chatham wrote about the effects on population by one of the most lethal steelhead killers we’ve seen, Bill Schaadt. By personal acquaintance with his success rate, Chatham estimates that Schaadt “killed more steelhead in one (average) season than all the fly fishers in California now catch in five years”. This is hard to read about when you’re one of those fly fishers. But he goes on to argue that migratory fish in our rivers are not like rare trout confined to a headwater basin. In a good year such as 1956-57, Fish & Game counted 60,000 steelhead caught and killed on the Russian River. But that was from an estimated run of three to five hundred *thousand* fish. A 2011-12 report on the Skagit River in Washington targets a 16% escapement of wild steelhead to maintain a healthy run, far less than the 80-85% escapement Chatham’s numbers indicate. Fisheries managers on healthy rivers in Alaska suggest similar escapement goals for salmon.

So why does the targeting of hatchery steelhead [trapped in low water](#) pools on the Russian or catching a [poacher with 30 wild steelhead](#) from the Garcia in their freezer bother us so much today? Why do we contemplate [shooting a sea lion](#) for taking his share at the mouth of the Russian? Are we overreacting or just misinformed?

No. These are rational reactions to a situation where we feel little personal control. It is so much easier to regulate

ourselves than it is to regulate the industries that have harmed the river or to pay hundreds of millions of dollars and put in decades of work to try to bring them back. As Chatham writes, “[that outrage is] all we have to fight the monsters among us.” He urges us to focus not on harvest of steelhead on the Russian but on all the ills done to the watershed that have been far more damaging over time.

While Chatham’s argument gives one a lot to think about, I still think that it is not fully on the mark. What the last few decades of conservation work have shown is that restoring a fishery today is a complex interplay between Habitat, Hydro, Hatcheries and Harvest. When one faction decides that it doesn’t need to engage because they feel they can point to another that is seen as not pulling their weight, nothing happens. A great example of this is playing out on the Columbia River where dam operators, clearly having impacted the fishery, say they shouldn’t be required to mitigate their effects through passage, higher flow or removal because forestry practices and development have made the watersheds “unrecoverable”. Or all sides placing the blame on legal tribal fisheries as the central issue when a well-managed healthy fishery could sustain us all. Again, fighting over the scraps.

While I may wish we would all be able to follow Chatham’s advice and “joust with bulldozers, cranes,



chainsaws, cement trucks, and giant earthmovers...” that doesn’t fit with most of our lives. It seems like what we can do as a local fisher is all that we can do to protect as many wild fish as possible so that if we do manage as a society to reverse some of our damage, there are strong genetics left to let Nature take over. The dramatic recovery of the Elwha River in Washington after dam removal is a great example of the resilience built into the system by a couple billion years of evolution. And I’ll take some of Chatham’s advice with my own twist and “bop my one hatchery fish on the head and pop it onto the barbecue.” And it will taste delicious.

How to get involved –

- a. Support science-based low-flow river closures, and don’t target fish trapped by low flows
- b. Join and support the [Native Fish Society](#) or become their Russian River Steward – this organization focuses on harvest and hatchery issues and is a strong advocate for no-kill fishing for wild steelhead
- c. Support [Wild Steelheaders United](#) – This TU initiative is also a strong advocate for C&R of wild steelhead and a science-based approach to managing fisheries on a watershed-by-watershed basis.

~ Derek Campbell
Conservation Chairman

Eagle Canyon Lake Report

Despite predictions for rain in the Red Bluff area, eight intrepid RRF members went to try their luck at Eagle Canyon Lake on January 16, 2016. We had prepaid \$125 each and foul weather would not deter us. Actually, though it rained heavily Friday night and early Saturday, we just had clouds and very little precipitation while fishing.

Jack Vallerga, who is one of our longest tenured members, made the reservations to fish and to stay Friday night at the Best Western Antelope Inn. He also provided a nice BBQ lunch, while we fished.

It was very much a Vallerga “family and friends” group. His sons Mark and Matt were joined by Don

Shaw and I, who fish with Jack at Fall River. Fishing buddies and neighbors Mike Kangrga (MK), Mike Tibbet (MT), and Jim Doherty, who joined the group that week and came to his first club outing, rounded out our group.



Kneeling left to right: *Mike Kangrga, Don Shaw*
Standing left to right: *Mark Vallerga, Jim Doherty, Mike Tibbet, Jack Vallerga, Matt Vallerga, Ken Magoon*

Confluence Outfitters, who handled the reservations, provided Sam, a knowledgeable “guide”, who netted fish, advised on fly selections, and assisted with tangles to help us keep fishing. There are two small lakes, so he was rather busy.

Our club’s fishing success was apparently better than what others had experienced the two previous weekends. We all hooked, played and mostly landed big genetically “tweaked” rainbow trout. The fish had beautiful markings and were the best fighting trout of the three different “Pay to Fish” operations I’ve tried. They looked to be mostly 3 to 6 pounds and a couple were pushing ten. Their tails were smaller than on wild trout, probably due to spending their early lives in hatchery raceways.

Mike Tibbet hooked eleven fish, and according to Sam, also set an Eagle Canyon Lake precedence by wading out to a small island, where he accessed the deepest water. His buddy “MK”, who I think landed six trout, declared on the way home that “MT” was hence forth not to be allowed to take that advantage.

I netted a fish close to ten pounds for Don and a big fish for MK.



Don’s “close to” ten pounder

Jack hadn’t planned to fish, but finally couldn’t resist making a few casts and immediately hooked a nice fish.



Our host Jack, with his nice fish

That seemed to be a most appropriate result after all the thought and efforts he made to create this outing.

~ Ken Magoon
VP and Outings Co-Chairman



Pyramid Lake Bite is Hot!

That's what I've been hearing over the last two weeks and as recently as during this year's terrific Cioppino Dinner. A reliable source told me that a Nevada local had a 100 plus hook-up day in February.

The club outing to Pyramid is Thursday, March 17 to Sunday the 20th and a few beds are available in our reserved lodging at Crosby's. Getting on the "wait list" is a good possibility because sometimes folks need to cancel. Sign-up for this "members only" outing on our web page.



Chris Castellucci and 14lb Lahontan 02/24/16



Walt Kruse and 16lb Lahontan 02/22/16

Contact me at magoon5294@aol.com, if you have questions about fishing Pyramid Lake. I'll send you an information sheet.

~ Ken Magoon
VP and Outings Co-Chairman

RRFF Opener Outing

Plans are in the final stages for our annual "RRFF Trout Opener", once again to be held after the actual California Trout Season Opening Day so that we may take better advantage of the nicer weather, and better fishing, that is often prevalent in Northern California after the end of April.

Once the dates and reservation information have been established, we will provide sign-up sheets online at www.rrflyfisher.org and at our General Meeting. It looks as though this year's event will conclude on Mother's Day weekend, so make plans now for Mom to join you on the water...

More information next month!

RRFF Thursday Evening Fly Casting Clinics

Our final Winter Fly Casting Clinic will be held on Saturday, March 5th, beginning at noon at the Casting Pond in Dan Galvin Park.

Daylight Savings Time begins on Sunday, March 13th, and our **first Thursday Evening Casting Clinic** will commence on **March 17th, St. Patrick's Day**. What better opportunity to work up an appetite for Corned Beef and Cabbage, ceremoniously chased with Green Beer (or just a wee dram O' the Irish?)

Our evening clinics are held every Thursday from 4:30 until 7:00 pm (weather permitting) and provide a perfect opportunity for you to fine-tune your casting stroke before the onset of trout season. Our volunteer instructors - Ken Magoon, Paul Matzen, Binky Castleberry and Steve Tubbs - can help you identify bad habits and teach you new casting techniques. Have you wanted to learn to shoot line for more distance? Are you intrigued by the double-haul? We can help you add versatility to your casting game and new skills to your casting arsenal.

Our Sonoma County evenings are often quite spectacular. Won't you join us at the Casting Pond?

~ Steve Tubbs
RRFF Casting Instruction Director

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.

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

Our RRFF Trout Season Opener is coming up in May! Final preparations are underway, and once confirmed, will be announced in our next issue of The CAST.

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)

Join the RRFF on Facebook

We currently have **685 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>

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

www.rrflyfisher.org

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

RRFF Board of Directors

President: **Steve Tubbs**

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Casting Pond Monitor: **Binky Castleberry**

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Newsletter: **Lorrin Ngum**

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Russian River Fly Fishers

P.O. Box 2673
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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**