



Sonoma County, California
Volume 50, Number 1
January 2023

Steelhead Eggs & Developing Alevin
"Steelhead in the Classroom" by Karl Joost, pg. 3

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President's Message By Penelope Gadd-Coster

Happy New Year to everyone! I hope you all had an amazing holiday with family and friends. As you know, we have had rain and that is good news for streams, rivers, and all the fisheries throughout northern California. Check out the article in this month's Cast by Charlie Schneider, titled Is the Drought Over? I am doing a little rain dance in hope that we at least receive an average amount of rain for this coming new year. One Club outing to the Lower Yuba River was cancelled because of considerable wind and rainy weather. I'm hoping all of us can sneak a fly-fishing trip or two in this month and the months to come.

The RRFF Board met in December as we do every month and one of the agenda items for discussion was the topic of donating some of our Club funds to other organizations. We have donated in the past to organizations that include fly fishing as a rehabilitation tool to help soothe those individuals that deal with daily health issues like cancer and other health related issues. In the past our Club has donated to organizations that use fly fishing to help such individuals, for example, Reel Recovery [click](#); Casting for Recovery (Northern CA chapter); and Project Healing Waters [click](#). We also have consistently donated to Steelhead in the Classroom coordinated by Karl Joost, a RRFF Board Member (see his article on page 3 in this issue titled, "Steelhead in the Classroom, 2023....")

We may continue to donate to those organizations; however, your elected Board of Directors are interested in hearing from you. You might have an organization in mind, whereby you would like to see some of our funds donated to an organization of your choice. Please email me if there is an organization you would like us to consider. [Click](#) to let me know of your preference and please put in the subject line—RRFF Donation.

I appreciate all of you that have been attending our General Meetings which fall on the second Wednesday of each month. It has been great seeing more of you attending in person and online. Ed Barich has added new equipment to improve the sound of our microphone system. That new system will help make it easier for everyone to hear the questions and answers during the General Meetings. Also, we are fine tuning the zoom meetings as well. I appreciate your patience as we fine-tune our systems.

There are some great speakers visiting us this year to present their fly-fishing information to our Club. **Greg Vinci** will be presenting this month. He is not to be missed, so mark your calendars.

Mike Spurlock has been updating our Club's website. So please check it out regularly, [click](#). There are fly tying tips and videos, trip signups, river information, historical back issues of The Cast, and RRFF logo hats. New to our fly-fishing attire collection, we now have RRFF logo shirts made by Columbia's PFG brand that are both practical and stylish. There are many colors so check them out. And a big thank you to Jeff Cratty and Mike Spurlock for making this happen! [Click](#) for shirts and [click](#) for hats.

Speaking of the website, please check out the outing signup sheet and calendar on the website, [click](#). Ed Barich continues to add fly-fishing trips, so please check for new and upcoming outings. There are trips scheduled for most of 2023 so sign up early as these trips tend to fill up quickly.

Casting Pond—Don't forget, join us on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month to participate in the free

casting clinics from 12- 2:30p. Come out and learn as well as meet and talk with other members. Also Casting Instructor refreshers led by Steve Tubbs will add to the activities on those days weather permitting.

Happy New Year and THANK YOU for your membership. I look forward to seeing you on the water! Penelope



RRFF General Meeting Wednesday, January 11, 2023, 7:00 PM By Mike Borba

For this month's General Meeting, we will have guest speaker, Greg Vinci for a live presentation. His topic will be Northern California Trophy Tailwater Fisheries covering the Mokelumne, Lower American, Lower Yuba, and Feather Rivers, and including Putah Creek.

In the thirty years that Greg has been employed in the fly tackle industry, his career has taken him down many diverse paths. In 1989, he started Sierra Pacific



Greg Vinci

Products which eventually became one of the major wholesale distributors in the fly tackle industry. Greg developed several best-selling product lines that are still being sold today.

Greg sold the business in 2010.

Since then, he has been able to re-establish a relationship with his first loves, writing and photography, that can be now seen in many fly fishing and outdoor magazines such as Fly Fisherman, American Angler, Flyfishing & Tying Journal, Salmon & Steelhead Journal, American Fly

Fishing, Northwest and Southwest Fly-Fishing magazines, California Fly Fisher, Sierra Heritage, Runner's World, Gray's Sporting Journal, and others. His photography has appeared on the covers of: California Fly Fisher, Fly Fishing & Tying Journal, Northwest Fly Fishing and Southwest Fly Fishing, Salmon, Trout & Steelhead, Fly Fishing & Tying Journal & and Sierra Heritage.

He also has kept his foot in the door of the fly business, by continuing to develop fly tackle product lines on a consultancy basis for clients in the fly tackle industry. In 2011 his product **Insta-Set Indicators** was selected by Field & Stream magazine as the **best fly tackle accessory of the year!** As a signature fly tyer for Umpqua Feather Merchants, the fly tackle industry's most prominent fly manufacturer, he has developed fly patterns that can be found in most fly shops around the country. In December of 2015 Greg's book "Fly Fisher's Guide to California" was published by Wilderness Adventures Press and is available in most fly shops and Amazon. Greg's day job is as the social media director for Kiene's Fly Shop in Sacramento CA.

I'm looking forward to seeing you at this month's General Meeting.

Steelhead in the Classroom, 2023 Let's Go Fish! By Karl Joost

This year we move forward with the adventurous and energetic program—Steelhead in the Classroom (SIC). Together Russian River Fly Fishers (RRFF) and Redwood Empire Trout Unlimited (RETU) will sponsor 17 **new** teachers that have signed up for SIC training.

RRFF and five additional sponsors: RETU, United Anglers of Casa Grande High School, Golden West Women's Fly Fishers, Russian River Wild Steelhead Society, and Sonoma Water will continue to support the established 67 teachers and their classrooms from last year throughout Sonoma County for a grand

total of 84 sponsored classrooms. A total of 31 classrooms will be supported by RRFF this year.



Carefully handling a bucket full of steelhead fry

What will be the plan for SIC this year?

The plan for 2023 has 3 components. But first, I'm looking for volunteers to help me make this program successful again this year. If this program sounds interesting to you and would like to volunteer, then please email me by [clicking](#) here. Let me know how you would like to help Steelhead in the Classroom.

Program Components:

1). Start by getting your "PhD" in tank set up! Learn how to set up and maintain a good steelhead egg temperature in the tank. This is very valuable information. This will allow you to directly assist in the classroom helping the new teachers set up and trouble-shoot their tanks.

During a time in January or early February, we'll work with David Berman, Sonoma Water's Senior Programs Specialist, to prepare tanks and supplementary equipment for the new teachers. Past RRFF volunteers will help assist in a workshop at the Sonoma Water Education Center, 9703 Wohler Rd, Healdsburg, CA 95448. This year RRFF is purchasing the tanks, gravel, and filters for 25 new tank setups.

Sonoma Water, CDFW, and RETU will be on hand at this workshop. RRFV volunteers have participated in the workshop twice in the past. Lots of fun work is involved.

2). Then I'll need multiple volunteers to pick-up and transport steelhead eggs to the 84 Sonoma County classrooms. Also, we will need someone to administer the steelhead egg delivery station at Sonoma Water in Santa Rosa for a smooth delivery to each participating school.

The 2023 egg pick-up and delivery dates are: Wednesday, February 22nd and Wednesday, April 5th. Mark your calendar, and read about the time, location, and the egg pick-up and delivery, [click](#) here. This is an easy and fun task and highly appreciated by Sonoma Water and the classroom teachers.

3). I'm looking for volunteers to visit a classroom to talk about your favorite experience during fly fishing or what it's like to release steelhead fry into a tributary of the Russian River. Kids like to hear about the first-hand experiences you've had as a fly fisher or as a past volunteer for the SIC program. You may be inspiring a future fly fisher, conservationist, and/or possibly an ecologist. Signup and join the fun.

Column right is a chart identifying the new Sonoma County schools that will be participating in the SIC program this year.



Anyone what to release fry today?

17 New Teachers & Their Schools Joining Steelhead in the Classroom, 2023

Santa Rosa Region

Belview Union District	2
Sonoma County Day	1
Proctor Terrace	1
Village Charter	<u>1</u>
Total	5

Sebastopol Region

Park Side Elementary	1
Apple Blossom Elementary	<u>1</u>
Total	2

Rohnert Park Region

Monte Vista Elementary District	<u>3</u>
Total	3

Petaluma Region

Old Adobe Elementary Charter	1
Harvest Christian	1
Cherry Valley Elementary	1
Petaluma Junior High	<u>1</u>
Total	4

Cloverdale Region

Coverdale Unified District	<u>2</u>
Total	2

Annapolis Region

Horicon Elementary	<u>1</u>
Total	1

Total (new teachers & classrooms)	17
Total (est. teachers & classrooms)	<u>67</u>
Grand total—Participating classrooms	84

Fishing Tales of the East Sierra By Greg Jacobs

And the mountain range is called the East Sierra (not Sierras). I love it for many reasons. I have backpacked

there, birded there, and fished there regularly for 20 years. I never would have gone over the crest of the Sierra except for friend Gene who first invited me to Silver Lake Resort on Silver Lake. We had four guys at first, but now just the two of us. We started out just fishing Rush Creek and Silver Lake, but over time explored all the lakes and streams within an hour's driving time. We also found out what a great fishery Crowley Lake was, and it was one way to fish despite the drought. This August I fished a couple of days



Greg with fish-on, Crowley Lake

before Gene showed up at the cabin, we rent at Silver Lake Resort (SLR). I was guided two days by Harry Blackburn from Mammoth, one of the very best guides I have ever gone fishing with.

Based on past success, I told him I would like to try the Upper Owens, and the Lower Owens. He asked me if I was sure about that, and I should have taken the hint. The Lower Owens coming out of Pleasant Valley Reservoir was like an oven. I forgot that the elevation drops several thousand feet from Silver Lake to Bishop, where I fished the Lower Owens. I caught a few but considered myself lucky that I was able to stand the heat long enough to satisfy my curiosity.

The next day, I fished the Upper Owens. "Are you sure, Greg?". Another gigantic hint. I still wanted to fish the Owens above the Benton Crossing bridge—that was a short effort. The water was extremely low. We went down the river to where it flows into the north end of Crowley. I caught some decent fish, while drifting Gold Ribbed Hare's Ears, and those small rubbery worms. Too darn hot. It was just too

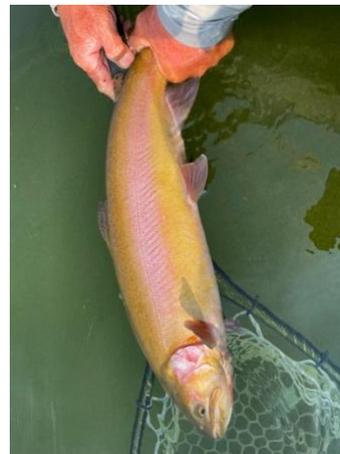
hot, and after talking to some fly shops and researching online, it was apparent that the E. Sierra, except for a few streams with an ample source of water, was a tough go in August. An example, the effect of the drought is evident at Rush Creek coming out of Silver Lake. Over the years this stream has been



Brown Trout, Rush Creek

under the control of LA Water and Power (LAWP). By August it was a trickle. Nonetheless, Gene and I checked it out just above Grant Lake, another LAWP reservoir.

Grant Lake was extremely low like everything else. As soon as I stepped out on the creek and cast several times, I saw there was not the typical response—lots of small trout hitting the fly. I walked a short distance upstream and saw a nice sized Brown Trout holding in a small depression in the stream bottom. I touched it to see if it was alive, but it barely moved. I dug out some rocks to give it more water to rest in. Maybe get some oxygen. I called to Gene nearby and showed him the trout—and as we moved closer, the trout spurted away downstream to deeper water. I was



Cutthroat, Lake Crowley

relieved. Gene and I fished Crowley Lake for the next two days with guide Harry and his boat. The first day Gene caught and released some very nice trout in the morning, while I watched. It turned off early PM. The next day, I caught all the

fish in the morning, and he watched. Again, the fishing dropped off after lunch. Harry and some of his guiding friends invented a rig 30 years ago that fishes very well in Crowley. We used a 6-weight rod and three midge nymph patterns spaced out on the leader, from 6 feet to 18 feet deep, and sometimes deeper, all under a strike indicator. Not too hard to cast the rig. However, hooking fish holding that deep and that strike in a thousand different ways is harder than you would think.

The Palisades

For 30 years I have backpacked with four other fellow district attorneys from the Sonoma County DA's Office. We have packed up most of the canyons in the East Sierra, but age finally caught up to us. At least to me. We decided that it was time to compromise, and we started hiring pack trains to get our gear to the higher elevations, and to get away from recent California fires and smoke. Our first two pack trips were to Oregon and Utah. Our third trip was to the Palisades this past September. We had discussed the Palisades years before but passed on trying to backpack straight up from 7000' to 10000' on the first day on the trail. But we could now pack in and walk to the campsite with just a daypack. Still a good effort required. The mules and horses would do the work. We had seen other groups pack in earlier trips and envied their coolers with beer and fancy food.

As geologic features of the Sierra, the Palisades are beautiful and truly awe inspiring. Several 14,000-foot peaks form a glacial valley, carved out by the largest glacier in the Sierra. Big Pine Creek connects many turquoise-colored lakes as it flows down to Highway 395 and the town of Big Pine. The stream has a good flow coming from the melting glacier (and it is melting quickly). I took a "backpacking float tube" to fish the lakes and I used it on "3rd Lake" where we camped (real original names—there are 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th Lakes too), and I caught a few small Brook and Rainbow Trout. Nothing like what the fishing shop told me I was going to experience with the flies they sold me—Am I surprised? I asked a kid across the counter in one of the shops for some good flies and

he showed me ones he tied. I asked, "Would you sell those flies to me?" The kid replied, "Are you kidding? These are my best."

My best fishing was in a lake near our camp, which was not cloudy with glacial silt. I could see fish swimming in and out of weeds and cruising the shoreline. I threw some Royal Coachmen out on the water, and the Brookies went nuts. That went on for some time, while I watched clouds cover the high surrounding peaks. We spent 5 days in the Palisades. What was great about that trip was hiking out downhill without a big backpack. We spent the last night in a campground at the trail head, a few yards from Glacier Lodge, a very old building with some aging accommodations. (Oh yes, I forgot that while heading up the canyon the **first** day, we passed by a stone hut built by the actor Lon Chaney, who was a silent movie star known for his role in Phantom of the Opera, made in 1925. His son, Lon junior, played the Wolfman role in the 30's and 40's. Chaney Sr. did not want to live in Hollywood any more than he had to and built the hut as a getaway before it became a park.)

A Quick Review of Fly Shops and Eateries

For flies and info, stop at Ken's Sporting Goods in Bridgeport and the Troutfitter in Mammoth Lakes. They are better than shops in Bishop. For some good eats, try the Basin Café in Lee Vining, Tom's Place in Tom's Place [town just south of Lake Crowley on 395], and Jack's in Bishop. There is also a legendary breakfast served at the Silver Lake Resort, on the June Lakes Loop.

Conservation Corner: Is the Drought Over? For California's Native Fish, It Never Really Ends By Charlie Schneider

By the time you read this, an impressive series of storms will have rolled across the North Coast. With each storm there will be a predictable stream of headlines asking, "Was this Storm a Drought Buster?"

or “Is the Drought Over?” While the latest series of storms have certainly put a dent in our dry conditions, one storm or even multiple storms are rarely enough to ease the burden of multiple dry years in a row.

It goes without saying that dry years are hard on our salmon and trout populations, but many anglers may not realize how human water use and management can compound those impacts even during average rainfall years. Fish need water, but in California it’s often a lot more complicated than that. Here are three basic concepts all anglers should know about water management in California and how it relates to recovering our once abundant native salmon and trout.

#1: California used to be the Pacific Northwest

California is home to more salmon and trout species than any other state in the lower 48. This is largely due to our diverse geology and climate across the state which has led to speciation, or the splitting of populations into their own unique forms adapted to local conditions. Many anglers are aware of this thanks to the Heritage Trout Challenge [Editor: [Click](#) to learn more about that challenge] but may not realize the incredible size of salmon populations that used to return to California’s rivers. Historic reconstructions of populations suggest that salmon runs rivaled those of Oregon and Washington. As an example, a study of historic records on the Eel River by renown fisheries scientists Peter Moyle and Ronald Yoshiyama suggests that, in good years, the Eel River could have had up to 1 million salmon and steelhead and half that in “bad” years—simply staggering numbers by today’s standards.

As a result of speciation [Editor: [speciation definition, click](#)], California’s salmon and trout are resilient and adapted to our warmer, drier climate. Historic run sizes should give us all hope that there remains the potential for meaningful recovery in many watersheds.

#2 Not all water is created equal

Fish need water, but quality and timing are critically important. Salmon and trout need cold, oxygenated

water. Our Mediterranean climate means main stem rivers are often too warm for cold water fish in the summer months. Throughout the state, dams have blocked access to cold headwater streams and have regulated water releases, oversimplified river systems and muted or eliminated seasonal floods that are important in forming habitat and providing food resources. More water isn’t always better and, in some cases, may be harmful to cold water species if it is in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Dams and water diversions are now part of California’s landscape, but that doesn’t mean their management can’t be improved to support native fish, albeit in lesser numbers. Often this includes storing more water specifically for fisheries, ensuring that water is cold, and adjusting dam operations to better mimic natural conditions. That said, many dams and water diversions in California are obsolete and should be removed or reconfigured to provide similar benefits to society while allowing fish to access headwater habitats. In short, there are a lot of nuances in how regulated rivers are managed and there is room for improvement.

#3 Drought is annual

The Glossary of Meteorology defines drought as “a period of abnormally dry weather sufficiently prolonged for the lack of water to cause serious hydrologic imbalance in the affected area.” Across much of the North Coast, where streamflow comes almost entirely from rainfall, fish endure a drought each dry season because, in many areas, human uses further reduce streamflow as to cause a “serious hydrologic imbalance.”

Our climate, with a pronounced wet and dry season, calls for managing water with that seasonality in mind. This means doing all we can to reduce use, conserve, and recycle water and even implement small scale water storage to reduce our dependence on streams and groundwater in the summer (yes, it’s all connected, even groundwater). Water availability is ultimately zero sum: what falls from the sky is what is available for human use and ecosystems, but we can better manage our use to ensure there is enough

water in streams at the right times to support our fish populations. The fish can't do it for themselves.

When will the drought be over? We can either wait and hope for rain or get to work updating how we manage water, especially along the North Coast, to better prepare for the inevitable dry times that are simply part of California's landscape.

RRFF Women's Voice By Penelope Gadd-Coster

Welcome new and established women members! I am looking forward to meeting a few more of you and would like to formally invite all of you to the casting pond on **Saturday January 21st for a meet and greet 12-2:30pm**. Please let me know if you can attend. [Click](#) to reach my email address and include in the subject box, "Meet and Greet." That way I can let you know if there is a change due to the weather. I have also reached out and met with a few of you to see what kind of programs we can put together for 2023. We have some great women fly-fishing talent on board for 2023. I'm looking forward to working with Lisa, Leafa, Cat, and Susan. I'd like to focus on what we can do together to create some exciting fly-fishing adventures during the New Year!

Have you checked out the December 2022 issue of The Cast with the front-page cover photograph of Cat Kaiser and her beautiful Trinity River steelhead and her great article? Thank you, Cat!

NorCal Women on the Fly, [click](#) for their website and information. I have contacted the local chapter and I'm looking at some meetups with them. Please check out their site for some trips they are planning.

More events: United Women of the Fly, [click](#) for their website and information.

Check out their event page as well as this video on Spey Casting: I would like to create a local trip together! [Click](#) here.

I am working with Lost Coast Outfitters, San Francisco for possible March surf casting outing - I am still waiting on their schedule.

Also Fly Fishers International - Women Connect either on their web or Facebook. [Click](#) here for their website. They have weekly fly-tying clinics. I can send you the link if you are interested. That's all for now. See you on the waters, Pen.

Fly of the Month Parachute Adams By Mike Borba

It's not too early to start tying for this summer's trout fishing. Here's a video that shows an easy way to tie this pattern. If you have tried tying this pattern and haven't been happy with your results, [click](#) and check out the tying instructions on this YouTube video. Similar information and a photo of this fly is available on our Club's website. [Click](#).

Tying notes:

Hook: any standard dry fly hook

Thread: grey 8/0

Tail: original pattern calls for grizzly hackle fibers. For a better floating fly use moose body hair

Body: grey muskrat or synthetic dubbing

Wing: white poly yarn

Hackle: grizzly or grizzly and brown

RRFF General Meetings By Gregg Wrisley

I want to personally thank Lee Soares and Mike Borba for their generous donations of hand tied flies every month for our pre-General Meeting raffle. Thank you.

And a reminder to all RRFF members that if you have fly-fishing gear that has outlived its use to you, but is still in good shape, the Dollar Table at our General Meetings would gladly accept your fly-fishing equipment donation. You may email me any time to discuss a donation by [clicking](#) here.

Fly Fishing International's (FFI) monthly report

[Click](#) here.

Correction

The Cast, page 5, November 2022, Ken Gelatt's last name was misspelled. Editor: My apologies Ken!

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Calendar of Events

Our next Saturday winter casting pond date will be January 7th, noon to 2:30 PM. During the winter, our casting pond is open on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month—weather permitting. We are OPEN TO THE PUBLIC!

Beginners are welcome...

We have many RRF fly outings coming up during 2023. To view the signup sheets for those RRF Fly-fishing outings click below.

PLEASE FOLLOW ALL COVID-19 PROTOCOLS!

[Click](#) here for a complete list of upcoming RRF fly-fishing outings for 2023

How to Contact Board of Directors & Coordinators

If you want to contact one or more of the Board of Directors and/or Coordinators below, then click on this link, which will bring you to our website.

[Click Here](#)

The names of our Board of Directors and Coordinators will appear. You may click on a name and leave a message for any person below and our website will send it to their personal email address, and they will respond to your message.



RRFF Board of Directors

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Vice President & Outings Coordinator: **Ed Barich**

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Casting Instruction: **Don Shaw**

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Steelhead in the Classroom: **Karl Joost**

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Program Chair: **Mike Borba**

The Cast Newsletter Editor: **Dave Stone**

Member at Large: **Daniel Powers**

Coordinators

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

Casting Pond Monitor: **Binky Castleberry**

Conservation Coordinator: **Charlie Schneider**

Conservation Coordinator: **Tom Greer**

Russian River Fly Fishers

c/o Spencer Bader
3310 Conifer Drive
Santa Rosa, CA 95404



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).

*Indicates required field.

*Name _____ *Date _____ *How did you hear about us? Referred by? _____

*Address _____ *City/State/Zip _____

*Preferred Phone: Home _____ or Cell _____ *E-mail _____

Occupation _____ *Signature _____

*Circle a (Yes or No): I'm applying as a new member Yes / No or I'm renewing my existing membership: Yes / No

Single membership - \$50 annual dues Junior membership (live >75 miles from Santa Rosa or age 16-18 - \$25 annual dues.)

Gold membership - \$1,000 (one-time) Family Membership - \$55 annual dues—List family members: _____

The club would like to help you meet your needs. How many years have you been fly fishing? _____

Circle any areas you want help with: I would like help learning or improving my cast. I would like advice on fishing equipment.

I would like a lesson in tying knots I would like a lesson in tying flies I would like to have an experienced member mentor me

on local waters or on a club outing. Any other areas not mentioned above? _____

*How are you planning to pay? _____

Note: Dues paid by a new member joining the RRFF after March 1st of any year will cover the balance of that year and the membership dues for the following fiscal year. The RRFF fiscal year runs from July 1st to June 30th. IF YOU PREFER, YOU MAY JOIN OR RENEW ONLINE at www.rrflyfisher.org
OR NEW MEMBERS, MAY MAIL THIS APPLICATION TO:

RUSSIAN RIVER FLY FISHERS, C/O SPENCER BADER, 3310 CONIFER DRIVE, SANTA ROSA, CA 95404