



Sonoma County, California
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A friend of Mike Spurlock Landing an
Alaskan Rainbow 20" +. Story page 3.

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President's Message By Penelope Gadd-Coster

Ahhh, the dog days of summer; those days when we can sit back and laze a bit, throw a line in the water, consume our favorite beverage, and dream! The kids are starting to go back to school, most vacations are over which marks the end of these days for many of us, and our busy lives begin again. For me those days never last long enough and I seem to forget about the lazing part. But when I do have a lazy moment, I do reflect on what is happening around us. Primarily the conservation efforts to keep our N. CA fisheries alive and well. Hopefully, the information below will help you understand what is happening in our back yard.

NCCFFI, which RRFF is associated with, has been one of several conservation organizations engaged in the removal of the four dams along the Klamath River. That process dates back as far as 2002. Most of you know the dams are coming out, and, in fact, Copco 2, the smallest of the four dams is essentially being disassembled as I write this President's Message. The complete dismantling of that dam is scheduled for the end of September 2023.

So where are we on the Klamath project? CalTrout presents a podcast about this very question. [Click](#) to listen to this interesting podcast by scrolling down to "Undamming the Klamath: A Deep Dive, with Amy Cordalis and Mark Bransom."

Even closer to home is the intended removal process of the Eel River's Scott and Cape Horn Dams.

Tom Hogye and Mark Rockwell of NCCFFI are participating in this effort along with American Rivers, Trout Unlimited, CalTrout, Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, and Friends of the Eel River. That coalition of organizations is working together to get two 100-year-old+ dams removed from the Eel River. Also, some coalition members are working to reconfigure the diversion of headwaters of the Russian River to improve and benefit fisheries downriver. Tom and Mark have shared that a Zoom meeting was scheduled for Monday, August 28, 2023. We will know more after that meeting. They are hoping to improve a coordination of efforts with the fishing community and push the dam removal process along quickly. PG&E has agreed to the removal, and the coalition will develop the process to remove the dams. That's the task. Here's a short video by CalTrout that helps explain why the removal of the dams are needed, [click here](#).

If any of you are interested in helping work with this coalition, please contact Mark Rockwell, VP Conservation, NCCFFI can be reached at his office, 530-559-5759. Also, Charlie Schneider wrote an article about the Eel River in the May 2023 issue of The Cast, page 4. [Click](#) to review it. Or you may prefer to reach out to Charlie by [clicking here](#) if you are interested in helping with the dam removal project.

[Click here](#) to view a CalTrout video explaining the goal for restoring the Eel and Russian Rivers for the benefit of people and wildlife.

I have mentioned NCCFFI and their fund raiser *Yuba Fest* that some of you may remember from last year. This year it is being held on September 30, 2023, at the Sycamore Ranch Park about 30 minutes from Marysville. Our club has an outing that weekend, but if you are not going on that outing and want a fun day learning more about fly fishing, conservation, and attending an auction, then [Click here](#).

I want to shout out to Steve Tubbs and his team of RRFF facilitators: Cat Kaiser, Leafa Fiore, Catherine Miller, Penelope Gadd-Coster, Mike Kast, Don Shaw, Doug Mackay, Jeff Cratty, Rick Baker, and Dave Stone, for the well run *Teach the Teachers* clinic last month. The purpose of that clinic was to instill consistent FFI and GGACC terminology and instruction techniques. We want all those visiting our RRFF casting pond to receive identical information (within reason) from the facilitators, no matter if you are part of the RRFF Women's Fly-Fishers' Program, or any other member of RRFF that want a fly-casting tune-up, or for those nonmembers visiting the pond to determine if they want to join our club. A lot of work went into this clinic, and we hope to do it on a regular basis.

And another shout out to Catherine Miller, the Women's Fly-Fishers' Program Coordinator. She has taken the ball and is running full speed ahead to put together RRFF women's clinics and trips. Check out our *calendar & trip signups* on our website and *text boxes* (pg. 6, this issue of The Cast) for more information.

And a friendly reminder; we will restart our monthly general meetings on Sept. 13th at the Veterans Hall, and it will be online too. Bring your fishing stories!

Mako Shark on the Fly

By Susan Boswick



Susan connected to her Mako shark w/guide Conway coaching.

The Mako Shark is the *Cheeta* of Sport Shark fishing! I released a lot of “old lady” ideas and concepts when I lured my fly toward and then set the hook into the mouth of a 60-pound Mako Shark.

It seemed like my 500 feet of fly line backing was gone in a blink when that swift shark decided to take off. “Just stay connected to your fish,” is what Lee Soares always says to me when I’m thinking I might lose the fish or when, in this case, the shark’s head started violently thrashing back and forth to dislodge my fly’s hook.

I felt like a long-distance runner waiting for my second wind as I planted my feet firmly on the deck of the boat (MishFish) hoping and praying my legs and arms would hold out for the duration of the fight while trying to bring that shark to the boat.



Susan's Mako shark being released from her fly.

“Remember you said, ‘The drug is the tug,’” commented Conway Bowman, guide, and boat captain. He wanted to let me know that if I lost that shark, the fastest sport shark in the sea, that my day would still be complete! WELLLLL, the drug was good, but I wanted *more dopamine*! I hit my stride and was determined to bring that shark in. I relaxed into the fight as I felt that big boy stop tugging to rest after

taking me right then left. Conway decided to chase him down coaching me all the way. “No slack, reel slow and steady when he stops pulling,” Conway instructed.

My 9/0 orange tube fly and my endurance held on to my 14-wt. rod and 12-wt. float line. I never experienced such a thrill and sense of accomplishment as bringing to hand (Conway’s hand) such a beast and then releasing it back to the ocean.

I must give credit and gratitude for all the lessons Lee, my mentor and good fly-fishing buddy, has taught me. We both hooked these fast and marathon athletes between Dana Point and La Jolla, San Diego. Lee planned this adventure as his 78th Birthday gift to both of us! Yet his big thrill was watching me set the hook, ride out that shark and bring it in! Although Lee also hooked a Mako, he let me get the first one! Happy Birthday Lee, my fishing buddy!



Lee connected to his Mako.

PS—Hello ladies: If this 78-year-old woman can do it—you can too. Call me and ask me how. 707-815-5926.

[Editor—Read another RRFF 2019 story about fishing for Mako Sharks with Conway Bowman, [click here](#).]

Back to the Wild and Scenic Alagnak River, Alaska By Mike Spurlock

In 2003, I had recently retired and was working weekends for fun in a sport shop in Santa Rosa

(Western Sports Shop, that subsequently went out of business). One day, a guy I barely knew came into the shop looking for egg sucking leaches. When I asked where he was going to fish, he told me he had planned a trip to the Alagnak River. I told him I had read about it and always wanted to fish there. He explained he had planned a float trip with a buddy, and they were leaving in three weeks. And then asked, "Do you want to go?" After thinking for a moment and self-acknowledging I was now retired and could do whatever I wanted, I replied, "Yes!" *Luckily my wife concurred.*

After twenty years, I can clearly remember landing in a float plane in Lake Kukaklek near the mouth of the Alagnak at midday. The mouth was packed with thousands of sockeye salmon, many spawning. The pilot beached and we unloaded our gear, and he took off promising to pick us up a week later approximately fifty miles downstream.

We immediately assembled our fly rods and started fishing, targeting the huge rainbows lurking behind the salmon trying to pick off any salmon eggs being released. It was August and it stayed light well into the night. We fished until about 11 P.M. when we decided it was time to set up camp and eat.

The next morning, some guides showed up and kicked us out. The Alagnak River is managed under the National Park Service, but the area around the mouth of that river had been historically leased to a private party.

So, the adventure began. I did the cooking and helped with camp setup and takedown each day and learned to row the eighteen-foot cataraft pontoon boat. I was able to successfully navigate the raft over the Alagnak Falls without a problem. After that, my friend sold trips at sportsman shows and over the next five years, we made eight or ten 50-mile float trips down the Alagnak River. We each rowed a raft with three fishermen, and I continued as the cook and helped with camp setup and takedown for a modest fee (half the tips).

I insisted that I would guide the more experienced fishermen from the group on my raft so I could spend a little time fishing too. My friend countered by telling me, "A guide doesn't fish while guiding." But he caved when I told him that was the only way I would go on the trip.

It was an adventure I really enjoyed: camping on the river each night, seeing the wildlife, and catching a lot of fish.

Since our last trip in 2008, I had been longing to return and experience the mouth of the Alagnak once again. A few years ago, a lodge was built on the bluff overlooking the Alagnak River mouth, and this was the year for me to check it out. I booked an August trip with six friends. We flew into Lake Kukaklek on two float planes, arriving just outside the Alagnak mouth where the guides on skiffs transferred us to the lodge. There were fish in the mouth, but it was not choked with sockeye the way I remembered it in years past.

Here is what I did with my fishing buddy and the Alagnak guides during the week:

Little Ku Creek



Grizzly.

One day we took a skiff up the Little Ku Creek, a mile or two from Alagnak's mouth. We took the skiff another mile up the creek and then walked bear trails along the creek's shoreline and up on the bluff for

another several miles until we saw larger numbers of sockeye spawning.



Large group of sockeyes.

We also saw a lot of grizzly bears, here and there, catching salmon in the creek. When we reached a promising area of the stream without bears, we dropped down into the creek to wade and fish the stream back down to the boat. We fished with 6 weight rods and used beads below a small split shot below an indicator. The idea is to drift the rig down the stream covering sections of river and if the indicator submerged, set the hook. My partner and I each landed half a dozen rainbows from 12" up to 20" + that day. We had about the same number of strikes as well. We also hooked about the same number of salmon, but mostly foul hooked. It is difficult to release the salmon without breaking the leader since we were using 6 lb. test. We encountered a dozen or more bears that day. Most of the time, we just kept an eye on them or stood aside and let them go by. The guides all carried bear spray but no guns. Since bear hunting is forbidden in the area managed by the National Park Service, bears are not afraid of fisherman. They are somewhat wary and usually walk on by without entering the stream if fishermen are present—But not always. They only want to get the salmon and they usually did not get closer than about 30 or 40 feet. [Click](#) for a 37 second fishing video with a Grizzly hiking the bear trails and wading the stream. That is my line in the water.

On a second trip that week, we had a float plane pick us up at the lodge and flew up to Upper Little Ku Creek to a nearby pond where we were able to land. We

walked another mile through the mushy tundra until we got to the creek and followed bear trails from there up along the creek for another several miles. Fishing was similar and so were the bears. This was our most strenuous day.

Lower Moraine and Battle Creek

For the next two days we took a skiff across the 14-mile length of Kukaklek Lake to fish lower Moraine Creek and lower Battle Creek. There were some sockeyes in those creeks but not very many and no bears around. During those two days, there were crowds of other fishermen there, mostly having flown in on float planes and using inflatable rafts to access fishing. Few fish were being caught. On one of those trips, the wind came up and the boat ride took over two hours into the wind fighting 2-3 ft waves vs the normal 45- minute ride. Those days were not productive with only a few hookups.

Kvichak

One day we flew out to Kvichak River which is on lake Iliamna (of Pebble Mine fame and the largest lake in Alaska, and second largest US freshwater lake after Lake Superior). We were able to use skiffs to fish from the river mouth down perhaps 5-10 miles looking for sockeye which should be followed by huge Iliamna rainbows. We had high hopes for this river but there were very few sockeyes in the river, and, of course there were no rainbows and no bears as a result. We did find one area where there were some silver salmon (coho) and we caught a few of those swinging pink streamers.

Alagnak

On our last day fishing, my fishing partner and I opted to stay at the lodge and fish the first half mile of the Alagnak River starting at the lake. As the day materialized, we wondered why we had not done this every day. There were sockeyes in the river, but not so many as to attract the bears. We used two techniques, and both seemed very effective. First, we fished from the boat swinging streamers using 6 wt. spey rods while slowly letting out the anchor line to cover the water. Second, we drifted with the current

using a 6 wt. one hand rod using a floating fly (Chubby) with a few feet of tippet attached to a small nymph.

Usually, the nymph got the hit but occasionally the floating fly would get an explosive splash, always a thrill. We probably caught 50% more fish that day than all the other day trips. We caught rainbows up to 20" or more, a few large graylings and a lake trout.



Grayling (salmonoid).

Almost all of us enjoyed our week. One person in our party developed Covid symptoms on day three and had to quarantine from the rest of us on site. His roommate masked up and isolated with him (but the roommate did go out to fish each day with a guide) and the staff delivered meals to both.

We awoke on the final morning to see a dense fog which grounded all the float planes leaving us to wonder if we were going to miss our flights back home. By noon, the fog had burned off enough to have the planes back in the air and those of us flying to SFO were able to make our connections in Anchorage to fly home all masked up.

The lodge food and guiding were great. There were no mosquitoes, but when there was no breeze, the no-see-ums were fierce as would be expected. Nature in Alaska is always interesting and beautiful. There were periods of very good fishing although it did not quite live up to my best Alaska experiences of the past. All in all, it was an enjoyable trip that brought back several great memories of the float trips I had in the past. By the way, I tested negative for Covid for that entire week after returning home.

RRFF Women's Reminder
Catherine Miller, Coordinator
Russian River Fishing & Wading
Clinic*

Bring your own equipment or, RRFF will provide loaners if needed.

October 7th, SATURDAY

Taught by Mike Spurlock & Jeff Cratty

***Sign up if you have these questions:**

- >Have you ever used waders and boots?**
- >What type of soles are best and why a wading belt is important and how to use two belts?**
- >Do you know how deep you should wade and how this might be affected by current?**
- >Do you know about 2-points of contact when using a wading staff?**

Time and River Location TBA

Fly of the Month
Cinnamon Toast Ant
By Mike Borba

I asked Daniel Powers what flies he would recommend for our September outing to Webber Lake. He highly recommended a fly I had never heard of before, the Cinnamon Toast Ant. It's a great looking fly that should also work well for stream fishing. Give it a try! [Click here](#) to view the fly's photo on our website and YouTube fly tying step-by-step video.

RRFF Women's Reminder
Catherine Miller, Coordinator

Fly Tying Clinic

October 10, 17, 24 & November 7

Taught by Jeff Cratty

There is a \$20 materials cost/person for this multi-session fly tying clinic.

Time and Location TBA

Support Our Local Fly Fishing Businesses!

Archuleta's Reel Works

Custom fishing reel repair, servicing, and manufacturing.
733 Detrick Drive, Grants Pass, OR 97527
(541) 956-1691
Bill Archuleta, owner
[Click here.](#)

King's Sport and Tackle

Clothing, flies, rods, supplies, gear, accessories, instruction, guide service, and canoe rental.
16258 Main Street, Guerneville, CA 95446.
(707) 869-2156.
[Click here.](#)

Outdoor Pro Shop, Inc.

Fishing gear, supplies, fly fishing, flies, rods and accessories.
412 Houser Street, Cotati, CA 94931.
(707) 588-8033,
Fax (707) 588-8035
[Click here.](#)

Sportsman's Warehouse

Top brands for hunting, fishing, and more at America's Premier Outfitter
5195 Redwood Drive, Rohnert Park, CA 94928
(707) 585-1500
[Click here.](#)

Calendar of Events

The RRFF Thursday Evening Fly Casting Clinics began on Thursday, March 16th, from 4:30 until 7:00 PM. Those days and hours will continue to be held every Thursday evening (weather permitting) until the end of Daylight Savings Time in November.

We are OPEN TO THE PUBLIC!

Beginners are welcome...

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

[Click](#) here for a complete list of upcoming RRFF 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

President: **Penelope Gadd-Coster**

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

Secretary: **Brendan Galten**

Treasurer, Membership: **Spencer Bader**

Webmaster: **Mike Spurlock**

Casting Instruction Chairman, Facebook: **Steve Tubbs**

Casting Instruction: **Don Shaw**

Membership Badges & Pond Steward: **Doug Mackay**

Raffle Coordinator: **Gregg Wisley**

New Member Mentoring, Casting Instruction: **Jeff Cratty**

Steelhead in the Classroom: **Karl Joost**

Member at Large: **Tim Reuling**

Program Chair: **Mike Borba**

The Cast Newsletter Editor: **Dave Stone**

Member at Large: **Daniel Powers**

Coordinators

Fly Tying: **Lee Soares**

Casting Instruction: **Binky Castleberry**

Conservation Advisors: **Charlie Schneider & Tom Greer**

Women's Fly-Fishers' Program: **Catherine Miller**

Women's North Sonoma County Outreach: **Leafa Fiore**

Fly Rod Building: **Rick Baker**

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