

The Cast



Russian River Fly Fishers

Sonoma County California
Volume 49, Number 1
January 2022

Charlie Schneider with his Yuba River Rainbow
(See "Yuba River Outing" story by Ed Barich, pg. 3 below)

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www.rrflyfisher.org

President's Message Happily Hunkered Down....

Frost on the backyard lawn before sunup. Ice on the water bowl in the dog's outdoor kennel. These are signs that indicate we are in the depths of Northern California winter, and they do not give me much incentive to get up early and hit the river. Besides, the flows on the Russian are too high for effective steelhead fishing, thanks to the early and plentiful precipitation we have received so far this winter. Eventually a perfect-flow window of opportunity will open, but in the meantime, what's a fly fisher with cabin fever to do?

Tie flies, of course. Put those idle hands to work. The real fly-tying pros are actively tying all year long, polishing their skills and creating art for the sake of art. I hope to get to that state of purity someday, but in the meantime, I'll be tying mostly out of anxiety (What if they are hitting only on the olive bug and all I have is black? What if I find the bug they want, and I am down to the last one in my box?) Sadly, FFF (Fear of Fishing Failure) can be a great motivator. So, my criteria are: it should be a fly that requires a large selection of colors/patterns, it should be a fly that fish love to tear up and destroy, and it should be simple enough that even my clumsy fingers can manage to tie. All of that perfectly describes the Jay Fair Wiggle Tail fly.

So, I get online and find a recipe and a useful video on tying the Wiggle Tail. I could find all the necessary materials on the internet, but I'm motivated now and want instant gratification. I hop in the truck to visit a local sporting goods store and head for the flytiers isle. They have practically everything I need (an event that seldom happens). I rush back home and carefully follow the tying instructions shown on the video. I look at my first creation and compare it to one I purchased last season – it's a perfect match! I'm in business now, tying every possible combination of color, tails, and hook sizes. Hours go by and at the end of this tying frenzy I've got a new fly box full of fresh Wiggle Tails just waiting to see their fate.

Then a new fear hits me. Should I have used a straight-eye hook instead of a down-eye? What if these new flies sink too fast? What if the trout totally reject my new creation? But that's one of the things I love about fly tying: you never know if your latest great idea will work until you try it on the water.

See you in the New Year,

~ Ed Barich

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

www.rrflyfisher.org

**for outings information, RRFF events,
member news, photos and more!**

Notes—*from Mike Spurlock:*

We encourage members to check the **website calendar** and get out there and go fishing.

- On the website's home page <https://www.rrflyfisher.org/>, we have introduced "Fly of the Month" which will feature flies appropriate to the season and focus on specific flies for specific club outings. *Check out this new and helpful addition.*

- **February's customary Cioppino Dinner has been CANCELLED due to Covid-19.** RRFF will possibly replace it with an outdoor summer event.
- There are new photo slide shows: December's Yuba River outing and November's Reel Recovery by Gregg Wrisley.

<https://www.rrflyfisher.org/club-calendar-and-trip-signups.html>

We now have monthly outings planned through May 2022 (with signup sheets and trip leaders) and future months are in the planning stages.

- January - Flash outing for steelhead, river conditions permitting. Stay tuned for a specific river and location.
- February - Yuba River (Contact Ed Barich for possible openings).
- March - Pyramid Lake (Chris Castellucci, trip leader)
- April – Clearlake (Mike Borba, trip leader)
- May - Baum Lake (Ed Barich, trip leader)

Talk to the trip leaders (pg. 9 for their phone #s and email addresses) if anyone needs any suggestions on equipment or mentoring on the water. Also, we have added links to several local public events that may be of interest. See you on the water.

RRFF General Meeting Wednesday, January 12th

**7:00 pm – The Lodge Room,
Santa Rosa Veteran's Memorial Building**

For our January's General Meeting, Skip Morris will talk about, "Making Dry Fly and Emerger Fishing Work."

Skip is the author of 18 books on fly fishing and fly tying. Among them: *Fly Tying Made Clear and Simple*; *Fly Fishing Trout Lakes with Morris & Chan*; *The Art of Tying the Dry Fly*; and *Western River Hatches*. Skip Morris is the host on six instructional videos, including, *Tying Foam Flies*; and *Fly Fishing For Bass*

And Panfish. He has spoken for sportsmen's shows across the US, Canada, and overseas. A few years ago, Skip and Lefty Kreh were co-headliners at the Great Waters shows in Chicago and Minneapolis.

Beginners and seasoned fly fishers alike will find plenty of interest in his knowledge about fly tying and he will address other topics like: When to and not to fish an attractor, along with a look at some excellent attractor dry flies; casts for achieving a drag free fly drift; how to sink tippet to turn it almost invisible; dry flies on creeks versus dry flies on rivers; when to twitch a dry fly, a close look at various dry-fly designs and how they affect the way each pattern is fished; and considerations for choosing the right fly to imitate various insects.

Come join us for this informative talk and discussion.

Penelope Gadd-Coster, Vice President & Program Chair

Encountering the Umpqua River By Mike Acker

For the last four years I have been trying to fish the Umpqua River. Year after year: Too high. Blown out. No fish. Unable to get away.

Finally, this year during the early spring, I hired a guide and fished a section of the south Umpqua. I nymphed on the drift, down to a tail out. Then I tried my hand at Spey casting. No others fishing and no fish to be had. Chalk it up to *fishing*. Not catching. It happens.

Then I made another attempt, but this time on the upper section of the Umpqua. On a beautiful cold morning, that river's section had a picturesque landscape of trees and rolling hills in the distance.

During the first portion of the drift, I was nymphing and I finally landed about an 8-pounder, not so bright. But feisty. Spey fishing looked promising, but to no avail.

Third drift picked up another—about 11-pounder. Again, not so bright, but typical tail walks and run

after run. I spey fished another tail out, covering all fish holds, but nothing. Midday drift produced my personal best. And what a real joy that was.



Mike Acker with his Umpqua steelhead

Yuba River Outing By Ed Barich

On the weekend of December 4-5, the RRF had an outing at UC-Davis Sierra Foothills Extension property on the Lower Yuba River. It was a large group, including Ed Barich, Mike Borba, Greg Jacobs, Tim Reuling, Dave Stone, Jeff Cratty, Matt Cardle, Joe Hiney, Mike Aja, Rod Jameson, Smiley Curtis, Mike Spurlock, Charlie Schneider, Mike Tibbet, Karl Joost and Mark Petersen.

The section of the river we visited is the tailwater below Englebright Dam and above the Hwy 20 bridge that is exclusively reserved for barbless hook/catch and release angling for wild rainbow trout. The UC property allowed us to have access to 1.5 miles of prime water, with numerous runs and pools. Even though this section was closed to fishing from Sept.1 to Dec.1 to protect the spawning chinook salmon, catching these wild rainbow trout was quite a challenge.

Techniques that were successful included drifting flies under an indicator and swinging flies on sinking or sink-tip lines. The members who used spey rods had an advantage in being able to reach further out on

this wide river. With winter approaching, the trout were drawn to flies that imitated salmon eggs, salmon fry (alevins), and BWO mayfly nymphs. Not all our members were able to catch fish, but several anglers were able to land multiples of these hard-fighting trout each day. And as a bonus, we all had a chance to hike the scenic trails of the property and see what nature does when man is seldom around.



Matt Cardle with his Yuba Rainbow caught with his spey rig

On Saturday evening, many of the participants gathered at Sutter Buttes Brewery in Yuba City to enjoy their hand-crafted beers and tasty pub food. It was a welcome chance to hang out with fellow anglers and talk about our experiences on the river. Our club will be repeating this outing in February, and I am looking forward to wading the Yuba with the RRFF during the spring Skwala fly hatch.



Jeff Cratty getting in his last cast of the day

Steelhead in the Classroom

By Karl Joost

As we splash forward into the adventure and energy of Steelhead in the Classroom, RRFF is sponsoring schools and teachers again this year- Wow, 8 schools and 15 classrooms!

- **Gravenstein Elementary, Sebastopol** (All 3rd Grade): Teachers: Beth Hass, Alicia Berrera, Suzi Mattish, Vanessa Nordstrom, Megan Gorman, Ani Hansen, and Alexis Grimm
- **Brook Hill Elementary, Santa Rosa, 3-6th RISE**, Teacher: Nan Taylor
- **Roseland Elementary: Santa Rosa, 4th Grade**, Teacher: Patricia Antognini
- **West Side Elementary, Healdsburg, 3rd Grade**, Teacher: Sara Kee
- **Brooks Elementary, Windsor, 3rd Grade**, Teachers: Stephanie Browning, Sheila Allen
- **Willowside Summerfield Waldorf Farm and School, Santa Rosa, 11 Grade**, Teachers: Angela Morgan, Roni Sands, and Ry Ulmer-Strack
- **Cross and Crown Elementary School, Rohnert Park, 4th Grade**, Teacher Amy Der
- **West Side Elementary, Healdsburg, 3rd Grade**, Teacher: Sara Kee.

And yes, RRFF coaches are needed for tank set up assistance, egg delivery to the schools, technical advice to the teachers, and field trip assistance. If you have helped before and would like to help again, or if are new at this, let Karl know via email at joosts@pacbell.net, txt or call 707 483 6172



Students releasing steelhead fry at Mark West Creek, Larkfield

Everglades and North to Orlando by Lee Soares



Susan and Lee with Susan holding her tarpon

Susan and I were fortunate to fly fish and visit friends in Florida in mid-November. We had a hoot pestering baby tarpon and snook for a day in the Everglades. We also spent several hours stalking the Tamiami Trail (Hwy 41) checking on and trying our favorite fishing spots. Then we traveled north up Hwy 27 to Orlando, but fishing proved fruitless on that trip. NOT to be interpreted as disappointing, but instead as challenging and educational, and we enjoyed the interludes between fishing and visiting.



Susan claims, "This is Lee, after he lost his large tarpon."

RRFF Winter Fly Casting Clinics Galvin Community Park



New and seasoned club members at the pond

December's *third Saturday* Winter Fly Casting Clinic started out chilly and overcast, but that day quickly cleared up and transitioned into a sunny, warmer day. We had a good mix of enthusiastic newcomers and seasoned club members. Steve Tubbs and Jeff Cratty, both excellent RRFF fly casting instructors, were busy helping those asking for casting advice and instruction. Good times were had by all.

The winter clinics are held on the first and third Saturdays of each month from noon until 2:30 PM (weather permitting). These events are **FREE** and are **OPEN TO THE PUBLIC!** Beginners are always welcome. We do have some equipment available for your use at the Casting Pond if you do not have your own. See you at the pond!

Reel Recovery Interview

Interviewer—Dave Stone, Editor (brown text)

Interviewee—Gregg Wrisley, Board Member (black text)

What is Reel Recovery? It's an organization that was started in Colorado ([click Reel Recovery's website below](#)) and spread across our country and it has expanded outside of the US.

Their goal is to allow men to talk about their experience of having cancer. And we, that is men, tend not to talk about tough emotional stuff. Through this program, men with cancer learn skills of listening, talking, and supporting each other. And from learning

and using these new skills, they discover that other men have similar cancer experiences. They learn they don't have to keep that tough emotional stuff hidden within themselves. This program encourages men to talk about their cancer and how it has affected them. Men participating in Reel Recovery realize they are not alone. They do this over a 2- or 3-day workshop at locations across the country that are near creeks, rivers, and lakes. Reel Recovery uses fly fishing as a break from the intensity of the work. It is a way to get the men into beautiful natural places focusing on something other than their battle with cancer.

"...goal is to allow men to talk about their experience of having cancer."

That is where I came in to assist as a *buddy*. I was paired with one of the *participants*, with the dual goal of listening to whatever my participant wanted to talk about, and to help him to learn a few basics of this wonderful pastime that we call fly fishing. Reel Recovery supplies the *participants* with everything that they need to fish.

What was it about Reel Recovery that interested you? The attraction for me was the ability to help. I enjoy being of service. And being of service with something I know, fly fishing, was very appealing. Some of the *buddies* had almost no fly-fishing experience but wanted to be there to help. A few of the *buddies* turned out to be past *participants* that wanted to come back and help the program. You don't need be a fly-fishing expert, which I certainly am not; I just wanted to help, and I had experience as a helper, being a teacher for 27 years. Many of the *participants* didn't have any fly-fishing experience.



Eastern Sierra jutting above the entrance to Hunewill Ranch

The *participant* that I worked with was named John. He had fly-fishing experience and was learning new

aspects of it too. I was able to show him a few things and he also taught me a few things. It was a special exchange of fly-fishing knowledge. **That must have felt good.** Yeah, and we will probably fish together in the future.

Did he catch fish when you were with him? Yes. We went to the area where they had planted fish in the creek, and he was one of the few that caught a fish there. **What was the name of the creek?** We fished Robinson Creek, which flows out of Twin Lakes, located on the eastern slopes of the Sierras, and eventually runs into the Bridgeport Reservoir. The retreat took place at Hunewill Ranch located just southwest of that reservoir. **What time of the year was that?** Fall. The California Chapter of Reel Recovery runs two retreats per year. One in around May and the other in September. The retreat I participated in was their first since COVID hit.



What was it like to be a buddy? Well...it was great. It was exciting, it was fun, and it was fulfilling to be able to help. Like I said, John knew how to fly fish. We had two scheduled fishing sessions together, about 4 hours each. On the second day, I was able to take John to any water in the area. I opted to take him to East Walker River.

"I was in awe of his strength and perseverance."

We fished there, and he was able to catch some nice sized fish. The Retreat ended Sunday in the early afternoon with all of us sharing what the experience was like for each of us. It was a moving experience. After the Retreat ended, John and I decided to return to the East Walker. We caught a couple of fish. Since neither of us had to return home yet, we decided to fish some of the lakes in the Mammoth area where John had had some success fishing before the retreat. We ended up fishing together for a couple of days. It

was a lot of fun. Sounds like he was a nice guy to hang with and easy to fish with too. Yeah. He is an incredible person. John was willing to share the experience of his battle with stage four cancer. I was in awe of his strength and perseverance.

His chemotherapy gave him neuropathy in his hands and feet. So, he would go fishing in the San Francisco Bay from shore and he would tie knots with numb fingers. And he would manage his inability to walk well by using hiking poles.

How would you describe the Courageous Conversation? I was not involved in that aspect of the Retreat. The *buddies* interacted with the participants during the fishing, one lunch, and at the end of the Retreat.

“You get kind of choked up to be a part of this process....”

I believe that the Courageous Conversation is a circle of men learning to be open and talk about the process of surviving cancer. To be able to let it out...sometimes that’s one of the best ways to be able to let it go.

Do you think that's one of the components of Reel Recovery that brings men back, participating in the Courageous Conversation? That would be my guess. Being able to talk about the process of having cancer or recovering from cancer seemed to be very helpful.

How would you sum up this program? And how did it affect you? Summing it up, it’s one of several programs to help people that are in recovery that use fly fishing as a means of therapy. There are a lot of them that do that. RRF support Casting for Recovery for women that have had breast cancer. And there are several others where they have found fly fishing is a way for people to come together and take their mind off heavy health topics, such as cancer or military experiences. How did this program affect me? You get kind of choked up to be a part of this process, the process of helping men by contributing to their recovery and helping them move on in their lives, and to teach them a new outlet—fly fishing.

Is Reel Recovery looking for volunteers? Yes, volunteers and donations. **If there's anybody in our club that is interested in volunteering, how would they contact Real Recovery?** Check out, <https://reelrecovery.org/about-us/>. This is their national website, and potential volunteers are referred to the local branch. The person I contacted is Jim Norton, his email address is jim@warrenreed.com.

Anything else you want to say about Reel Recovery? It’s a moving experience that I felt fortunate to be a part of.

Thank you, Gregg, for taking the time for this interview and for volunteering for this supportive and wonderful organization—Reel Recovery.

Follow-up to Decembers Russian River Spey Clinic By Mike Spurlock

This message is to those who participated in the December 11th spey casting clinic at the Russian River’s Monte Rio beach. I thought the clinic went well. Thanks to all who came and especially those participants who brought extra rods, loaned them out, and helped others. Everyone who I saw casting seemed to improve over the course of several hours. I hope everyone enjoyed it and felt like they improved.

This morning as I write this, the flows on the Russian River were about 1500 cfs which makes it too risky for wading. If we were to get no more rain, it probably would be down around 500 in a week or so. However, there is more rain predicted for the rest of the month, so we may have to wait until 2022 to wade and fly fish for steelhead. You can watch the flows yourself on our RRF’s website. You can set up daily alerts to watch the flows on your phone if you want. Steelhead normally begin to arrive in numbers in December, so this could be the time.

<https://www.rrflyfisher.org/river-flows.html>

Flows need to be below 1000 cfs to find any place to wade and down around 500 cfs or below is much better. The Department of Fish and Wildlife normally issues a low flow fishing closure at 300 or below.

I don't know how many of you saw the dead fish on the beach at Monte Rio that the seagulls were nibbling on. To me, the fish appeared to have black gums and white base of teeth which would indicate it was a Coho.

Below is a photograph of the Russian River posted sign and a link to this sign's history. The signs information will help you differentiate between hatchery steelhead and wild steelhead and salmon, and the restrictions applied to those fish. RRFB helped fund those posted signs last year:

<https://www.rrflyfisher.org/steelhead-signs.html>

ATTENTION ANGLERS
In order to conserve, protect, and restore the Russian River's coldwater fisheries

Keep Hatchery Steelhead*

Hatchery fish have adipose fin removed and healed adipose fin scar

* Harvesting hatchery steelhead helps preserve wild steelhead, but limits apply

Release Wild Steelhead and Salmon
To increase the chance of survival and successful spawning, handle and release fish with care

- It is unlawful to target Chinook or coho salmon
- Only barbless hooks may be used
- Land fish quickly
- Use a rubber net, do not beach fish
- Keep gills underwater at all times
- Wet hands before handling

Steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*)
Mouth is white
Wild fish have intact adipose fin
Uniform spots on both lobes of tail

Chinook Salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*)
Black gums and base of teeth
Large spots on back, spots on both lobes of tail

Coho Salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*)
Black gums and white base of teeth
Spots only on upper lobe of tail

Regulations subject to change
Check CDFW Title 14 CCR Russian River Fishing Regs before fishing
This steelhead fishery is subject to low flow closure Oct. 1- Mar 31
Call CDFW low flow hotline before fishing (707) 944-5533
To report poaching or polluting call 1(888) 334-CALTIP

Logos: Iri, US Army Corps of Engineers, Hayward Empire Trout, Sea Grant, Sonoma Water

I offered several people who were unable to attend the session that I would take you out when the river

gets back into fishable shape. I will try to let you know when it looks like that may happen. Stay tuned.

Fly of the Month By Mike Borba

Steelhead normally begin to enter the Russian River in December depending on the rain and peak in February, with the season ending by April 1st. A traditional fly used for steelhead in the Russian is the **Black Boss** and has been used for the RRFB logo for years. Click on the URL below and scroll down to the Fly of the Month on RRFB website to observe how to tie this fly, along with some interesting information on the history of the Black Boss.

<https://www.rrflyfisher.org/>

Note its capabilities to land not only steelheads, but other anadromous fish too.



Also, check out our website to discover why the Skwala Fly is recommended for the RRFB February's Yuba River trip. I've included a video that is informative, and I have included instructions and materials for tying a simple foam Skwala fly. To check it out click on our website below and then scroll down to Simple Foam Skwala.

<https://www.rrflyfisher.org/>

Important Notice

New CA fishing licenses and new steelhead cards can be purchased online. Also, 2021 steelhead cards need to be mailed in or updated online. Here is a link from our website.

<https://wildlife.ca.gov/licensing/online-sales>

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Calendar of Events

RRFF Thursday Evening Fly Casting Clinics - have ended for the year due to the lack of light. The winter casting clinics started on November 20th and are OPEN TO THE PUBLIC!
Beginners are welcome...

January

- 1 & 15 Fly Casting Clinics – Noon – 2:30
- 12 RRFF General Meeting – 7:00 @ SR Vet's Hall or Zoom
- 19 RRFF Board Meeting – 7:00 PM, Zoom

PLEASE FOLLOW ALL COVID-19 PROTOCOLS!

Visit www.rrflyfisher.org for a complete list of upcoming events!

RRFF Board of Directors

President: **Ed Barich**
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New Member Mentoring: **Jeff Cratty**
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Member at Large: **Mike Borba**
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Conservation Coordinator: **Tom Greer**
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The Cast Newsletter Editor: **Dave Stone**
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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 _____

*Mark the following: I'm applying as a new member or I'm renewing my existing membership

Single membership - \$50 annual dues Junior membership (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? _____

Choose 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