

# The Cast



## Russian River Fly Fishers

Sonoma County, California  
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February 2024

Joerg Olson on the Napa River with his Striper. Photo  
by Patrick Mackenzie. Story by Joerg Olson, page 2.

Since June 1977  
Visit our website at  
[www.rrflyfisher.org](http://www.rrflyfisher.org)

### President's Message By Penelope Gadd-Coster

This is a jam-packed month! And the first to focus on is the **Winter Dinner Fundraiser on Feb 17th in Santa Rosa at the Vet's Building.** *This celebration will take the place of February's General Meeting.* The event will be a sit-down dinner served by Sonoma Catering. For me, the exciting part of our Winter Dinner is the exceptional raffle and auction items that our team has come up with to make this fundraising dinner special. Dave Stone and I will be advertising those items by highlighting them in our weekly emails to you. We want you prepared, so when you arrive, you'll be ready to bid on those auction items and drop tickets in the cans for your desired raffle gifts.

You may wonder why we organize a yearly fundraiser. When you spend money at the silent auction and raffle tables, your funds help your club pay for hiring professional fly-fishing presenters for our General Meetings. Those funds also help purchase supplies and upkeep for our casting pond, insurance, meeting hall rental.... well, you get it! Please join us for the camaraderie, amazing food, wine, beer, and a very lively time for all. You DO NOT want to miss this event!

I would also like to mention that we can still use volunteers for the dinner event. I will be sending out a note on what help we still need. Thank you in advance.

## For February

The Lake Sonoma Steelhead Festival is set for February 10, 2024, 10 am to 4 pm. There will be beer, wine, food trucks, with many family-oriented activities, and fantastic fun. [Click](#) to check out their new event website. Russian River Fly Fishers will have a table there. Please stop by. It will be fun for the whole family.

Pleasanton Fly Fishing Show | February 23-25, 2024,  
**Time Friday: 10am – 6pm. Saturday: 9am – 5:30pm. Sunday: 9am – 4:30 pm; Location: Alameda County Fairgrounds, Pleasanton, CA, [click](#)** to view their website.

Please check out our calendar on our website for RRFF events and outings, [click](#). Not only are there trips posted on the calendar, but you can also find the volunteer events like **Steelhead in the Classroom, Casting for Recovery, and Russian River Cleanup**. Please check those opportunities out.

Speaking of trips, we are seeing more of you signing up for outings. It is great to see we are offering trips you want to go on. PLEASE keep sending Ed or me your ideas. And if you would like to help with hosting a trip, Ed and I would like to hear from you.

I would like to take a moment to introduce you to Northern California Council of Fly Fishers International (NCCFFI). Our Northern California region has about twenty-eight fly-fishing clubs, of which, twenty-three are currently affiliated with the NCCFFI. We are one of those clubs.

At the pond, we will be working on the NCCFFI Fly-Fishing Skills program. You can not only learn skills but show that you have mastered them. This is a great program. You can see where you are, where you have been and where you are going with your fly-fishing skills. It is managed by Steve Tubbs who is doing a phenomenal job to bring this program to our club.

Another important NCCFFI focus is conservation, led by Mark Rockwell. The Council has been active in getting dams removed from the Klamath River and participating in improving the health of the Eel River and the Delta Water projects. I will be sharing their

Quarterly newsletter, so keep your eyes open for that.

I will wrap up by saying I look forward to seeing you at the Winter Dinner, February 17<sup>th</sup>.

Cheers and tight lines,  
Penelope

## Napa River Striper Fishing By Joerg Olson

As an eight-year-old kid, sitting on a rip-rap levy in the delta, a spinning rod in hand, soaking a lead sinker and 2 hooks with chunks of anchovy, I caught my first striper. It was an eighteen incher that pulled the line off the reel, and I was sure I would lose it.

It was one of several warm-fuzzy memories that came to mind while I was watching Captain Patrick Mackenzie's presentation at last September's RRFF General Meeting. If you haven't seen his presentation on striper fishing in the local tidal estuaries of the SF Bay, and you are interested in striper fishing, be sure to catch it. Or go fishing with him, as Rick Baker and I did on December 4th.

We left Santa Rosa at 5:45 am to meet Capt. Mackenzie at Cuttings Wharf on the Napa River. The patchy fog soup closed in on us as we drove through Sonoma, but lifted once we started climbing out of Sonoma Valley on Hwy 121 and headed into Napa County. We pulled into the parking lot at the wharf in the gray morning light 10 minutes or so before our appointed 7:00 am meet time.

Captain Mackenzie stood in his 18 ft. Montauk Boston Whaler at the dock, engine idling, talking to another fisherman pulling out from the dock. This was an all-inclusive guided half-day trip ending at 11:30 am. We didn't bring flies, leaders, tippet, reels, rods, food, water, life vests, or any other gear. The instructions were to bring warm clothing you could layer off and on, sunglasses, and don't forget your valid California Fishing License.

Rick and I hurried over to the boat, introduced ourselves, sharing that we had seen his striper presentation at the recent RRFF meeting, jumped in

the boat and immediately left the dock. We headed out into the cold mist and lifting fog.

Five minutes into the boat ride, Patrick shut off the skiff's motor, put down the electric trolling motor and gave us each an 8-wt. rod with intermediate sinking lines. He told us where and how far to cast. He told us what speed to strip the line, and how to vary our stripping, and when in that presentation we could expect a grab—on the drop. As it had been a long time since I had cast for stripers. I was more than happy to receive his detailed instruction.

The Boston Whaler was stable and had a good platform to cast from. With 2 righty's, one caster in the front and the other in the back, depending upon which side of the boat we were casting from, one caster had to be careful not to hook the guide standing in the middle as the fly would be going over the interior of the boat. Rick was proficient at throwing his back cast and turning to fish the retrieve, keeping his fly on the outside of the boat. I couldn't consistently cast that nice of a cast, but fortunately, I avoided hitting the captain with the size 4, big, bushy, dumbbell-eyes laden fly. It would have been more than painful to get hit with that size fly hook. Capt. Mackenzie shared; he was well practiced at ducking.



Rick Baker with one of his many early morning stripers.

I asked Capt. Mackenzie if the fly we were using had a name. He said it was his version of the "Black Phantom," a fly created by the local legend and renaissance man, Russell Chatham. If there is a fly

with a cooler name than that, I can't think of it. Mackenzie's version has terrific movement in the water with an undulating flash and accents of deep purple and green that made it look enticing.

For me, the first 30 minutes of fishing are always the most anxious and intense. After about 20 minutes I can't help but start wondering. Why I haven't hooked a single fish? What am I doing wrong? Are the fish present today? Is it going to be one of those tough days? I must remind myself to relax.

On this morning none of those thoughts occurred to me, as within the first 10 minutes, Rick's rod was thumping downward, and a 22" striper came to the boat and was released. And several minutes later we had both hooked up. We both were all smiles and feeling so goooooood!

As the morning progressed, the fog slowly burned off and the sun came out. The fishing slowed. Captain Mackenzie switched out our gear accordingly. At 11:30 am, my last cast of our trip, I hooked a strong 5-6 lb. striper.

## Steelhead in the Classroom

By Karl Joost

Many thanks to Jeff Cratty, Mike Borba and Gregg Wrisley who organized tank assembly materials with David Berman and me at Sonoma Water Education Center recently!

This year about 25 new teachers will receive complete 10-gallon tanks with power filters, chillers and all the gear needed to hatch and raise steelhead in their classrooms in Sonoma County. Each complete assembly is valued at about \$350. This is a big deal.

A big, big thank you to RRFF and RETU, Sonoma Water and CDFW for their continuing support of this hands-on and educational science program!

David Berman (Sonoma Water senior program specialist) reports that this year 70 plus local classrooms are continuing. With 25 new teachers, making almost 100 participants, it is a record number!



## RRFF Family Day at the Pond

### By Gregg Wrisley



Family trying out their new fly-fishing skills.

RRFF would like to extend a special invitation to families to spend a few fun hours at our casting pond learning about fly fishing. There would be casting instruction, knot tying, fun with aquatic insects, a free lunch, and more. The intent of this RRFF program is to make it a fun time for the whole family. Mom, dad, kids, and grandparents with grandkids are welcome.

If we have enough interest, I, along with other club members, will make it happen. This event would likely take place in late April or late June. If this sounds enjoyable to you, please contact me by [clicking here](#). I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

Gregg Wrisley, RRFF Board Member.

## RRFF Women's Program

### Monthly Update

### By Catherine Miller

We are beginning the new year with many exciting activities and outings. On Saturday February 3 there will be a casting instruction clinic at our casting pond (weather permitting). No casting clinic on Saturday, February 17, because of RRFF Winter Dinner preparations. You will have an opportunity to begin the Casting Skills Development Program on February 3, if you wish.

February 17 will be our important and fun annual RRFF dinner/fundraiser. It promises to be a delightful event, with a delicious meal, and including an auction and raffle. The Auction and Raffle Work Group would

appreciate any goods or services you may want to donate for this event. The donations do not strictly need to be for fly fishing. Aside from fishing gear, donations could include household items, beauty salon and massage services, indoor and outdoor plants, food/gift baskets, wine, etc. Contact Dave Stone, [click here](#), or Gregg Wrisley, [click here](#), if you have items to donate or if you have a question about donating your item.

### KNOT-TYING/FLY-TYING CLINIC

Due to popular demand, there will be a combined knot-tying/fly-tying clinic presented by Jeff Cratty, Don Shaw, and Mike Spurlock on six consecutive Tuesdays, from 5 pm - 7pm at Sportsman's Warehouse, Rohnert Park. Clinic dates are February 20, 27, March 5, 12, 19, 26. Knot tying will be presented on the first two Tuesdays, February 20, 27, and will be reviewed if time permits during the following four fly-tying sessions, March 5, 12, 19, 26. Go to RRFF website for clinic description and signup sheet.

I encourage you go to the RRFF website where you will find a listing of outings and activities for each month. This month includes RRFF outings open to all members: Steelhead Day Trips (Ed Barich) December through April, Steelhead in the Classroom activities (Karl Joost), and a variety of activities which may be of interest to you. You will not want to miss your chance to sign up for these activities.

Catherine Miller, Coordinator  
Maria de la Fuente, Angela Zahra  
Assistant Coordinators  
RRFF Women's Program

## RRFF Casting Pond History

### By Mike Spurlock

### 2024 Casting Pond Plans

The Casting Pond is a very important part of the Russian River Fly Fishers club. It took a few years for the idea to be solidify and the pond to be built. Without it, what would we be?

Back in 1976, the club had an idea formed in discussion around Norm Sutcliff's sporting goods

store in downtown Santa Rosa. By July 1977 was the first edition of The Cast newsletter was born. Then on March 23, 1982, the Santa Rosa City Council had a meeting whereby the casting pond concept was approved.

The minutes of the SRC Council Meeting read in the following way: "Recreation and Parks Director Hoefer reviewed receipt of the proposal from the Russian River Fly Fishers, Inc. to construct and operate fly cast pools for the Santa Rosa area. Following meetings and staff research, it appeared membership would undertake to raise funds for the project which would include landscaping, and a club house; the first phase would be one pool. During Council comment, Mr. Hoefer indicated ownership of the facilities would remain with the City; it would be built and dedicated to the City; and the organization would have first use of the facility when it was not being used for City recreation purposes.

Liz Wray, president of the Russian River Fly Fishers, reported that most of the 140-150 members were residents of Santa Rosa. Mrs. Wray also explained how the facility would be used for educational purposes.

At the conclusion of discussion, Councilman Healy moved to authorize staff to prepare an agreement per the proposal. The motion was seconded by Council Jeffries and carried. AYES (5).

In the ensuing 4 years, the club raised \$70,000 and built a pond which was dedicated May 18, 1986. The city owns the property, and the club maintains the pond. See the memorial on the southwest corner of the pond.

This is the only casting pond north of San Francisco and one of only 4 in the state. From the start, the club has been dedicated to teaching fly casting to the public for free. On the new member application, the most common reason for joining is "to improve my cast".

By 2008, after 22 years, the first liner was replaced at a cost of \$12,000.

Now, with another 20 years approaching in 2028, we are wondering how long it might be to replace the liner. We think that the liner may still be in fairly good shape, but we do need to inspect it, make an estimate of remaining life, and then make sure we have adequate funds when it does need replacement."

Our short-term plan right now:

- Take care of some relatively minor concrete repairs.
- In May when we drain and clean the pond, assess the life of the liner from which we hope to have a target date for the next liner replacement.

For a little more detailed club history [click](#) and scroll down.

## Blast from the Past

### By Dave Stone

Here is a peek into the past through the lens of The Cast newsletter. What did The Cast look like and what was its' focus 6-years ago? [Click](#) to view that newsletter on our website.

Well, February is one of the winter months focused of landing a steelhead. Will someone in our club send me a photo of their 2024 steelhead landed from the Trinity, Gualala, or perhaps even the Russian River? Six years ago, we did have a least one RRFF member that did land a Gualala River steelhead....

**Editor:** Quick reminder, for an easy way to order your Winter Dinner and raffle tickets is to [click here](#). Currently raffle tickets are discounted for purchasing 40 ticket bundles for a limited time.

If you want to help at the Winter Dinner as a volunteer or if you have fly-fishing gear or non-fly fishing items that you'd like to donate to our auction/raffle fundraiser tables, then [click here](#). You can see examples of contributions that are desirable on the same page.



*Russian River Fly Fishers*

# Winter Dinner

**Saturday, Feb 17th**

**5:00 - 9:00 PM**

S.R. Vet's Building  
Dining Room  
1351 Maple Street  
Santa Rosa, CA 95404

Dinner catered by



**SILENT  
AUCTION**

*Fundraising  
Raffle*

**\$60.00 Adults**

**\$15.00 Children under 12**

Tickets available at: **rrflyfisher.org**

Last day for ticket sales is February 10th.

**Appetizers. Dinner, Dessert & Beverages Included**

Coconut Prawns, Cheese Table, Classic Caesar Salad, Braised Beef Short Ribs, Lemon Herbed Chicken, Creamy Polenta, Creamy Risotto, Fresh Roasted Vegetables, Focaccia Bread, Chocolate Mousse and Cheesecake



**Volunteers and Donations Welcome - Bring your Friends & Family**

## Support Our Local Fly Fishing Businesses!

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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 Winter Fly Casting Clinics began on Saturday, November 18, from noon until 2:30 p.m. Our casting clinics will now be held on the first and third Saturday of each month (weather permitting).

**We are OPEN TO THE PUBLIC!**

**Beginners are welcome...**

We are planning RRFF outings for our 2024 seasons. 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 2024

## 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**

Member at Large: **Daniel Powers**

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

## **Coordinators**

Fly Tying: **Lee Soares**

Casting Instruction: **Binky Castleberry**

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

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

Fly Rod Building: **Rick Baker**

The Cast Newsletter Editor: **Dave Stone**

## 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. This agreement is valid for all RRFF sanctioned events, (fishing outings, picnics, dinner fund raisers, meetings, pond casting clinics, etc.) some of which are open to the public and all of which are covered by RRFF insurance. As a club member you are approved to participate in certain covered events which are not available to non-members: fishing outings and training for fly-casting certification.

**Note:** Private activities arranged by club members (not sponsored or approved by the club) are not sanctioned and will not be covered by RRFF insurance.

I have read this statement and agree to its terms as a condition of my membership in the Russian River Fly Fishers.

**\*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 \_\_\_\_\_

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

\*Check the boxes below that is applicable:

☐ Single membership - \$50 annual dues

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

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

☐ Membership includes a woman who would like to be contacted by our RRFF Women's Group:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Check any areas you want help with:

☐ I would like help learning or improving my fly-fishing 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>.

IF YOU PREFER, YOU MAY JOIN OR RENEW ONLINE at [www.rrflyfisher.org](http://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**