

The Cast



Russian River Fly Fishers

Sonoma County California
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Rick Kapaun with his Lahontan Cutthroat at Pyramid Lake, Nevada
(See "Pyramid Lake" story by Chris Castellucci, pg. 2 below)

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Visit our website at
www.rrflyfisher.org

President's Message 2012 – What did we learn?

When I look back at the past year, I like to think about what we learned as a club, what worked for us, and how we could do things better in the future. Here are my notes:

- **Monthly Club Meetings** – Since the beginning of the COVID pandemic, we continued to host remote meetings using the ZOOM online application, but since September we added in-person attendance at the Santa Rosa Veteran's Memorial Hall. This was in response to members who wanted to see their friends again, even if they were behind

masks. The attendance has been modest so far, but we will continue in this "hybrid" format in hopes that eventually our meetings will return to normal. Finding quality speakers has been a challenge, so if you have any recommendations, please let us know.

- **Social Gatherings** – Our club cioppino dinner, which was scheduled for February 2022, will probably be cancelled due to the pandemic. However, we had an evening picnic at the casting pond last July that was well-attended and enjoyed. Based on that experience, the board will be working toward planning an outdoor event at the pond for next year during the summer. The hope would be to

resurrect our annual club dinner in a safe and pleasant environment.

- **Club Outings** – Our first club fly fishing outing since the start of the pandemic was held at Baum Lake in May and was a success. Since then, we have had four more outings, and are planning more for next year. We learned that campground reservations can be difficult or impossible to obtain, but often drop-in sites are available. With drought and wildfires impacting our outings, we learned to plan, but stay flexible when conditions beyond our control arise.

Perhaps the most significant learning of 2021 is that the sport of fly fishing continues to be popular. While we lost some members over the year, we ended with over 180 on our club roster. As your RRFF board, we will continue to work to enhance your outdoor experience in 2022.

Tight lines,

~ 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!**

Note:

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

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

- We now have monthly outings planned through April (with signup sheets and trip leaders) and later months still in planning.
- December and February - Yuba River (both have wait-lists—Talk with Ed Barich for possible openings).

- December - Spey Clinic on the Russian River
- March - Pyramid Lake
- April - Clearlake.
- Talk to the trip leaders if anyone needs any suggestions on equipment or mentoring on the water.

We have also added links to several local public events that may be of interest. See you on the water.

RRFF General Meeting Wednesday, December 8th

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

For our December’s General Meeting, Andrew Harris of Confluence Outfitters will talk about fishing the Redding area and that area’s plethora of outstanding fisheries where you can wet your line. Andrew is a USCG-licensed Captain, is a regular on the fly-club speaker circuit, has written countless articles for California Fly Fisher and other magazines, and is the author of the Plumas National Forest Fishing Guide, a fly fishing guidebook to the Feather River Country. Andrew is currently President of the Shasta-Trinity-Cascades chapter of Trout Unlimited. Come join us for this informative talk and discussion.

Penelope Gadd-Coster, Vice President & Program Chair

Pyramid Lake Outing By Chris Castellucci

Eight anglers participated in our RRFF fall outing at Pyramid Lake, Nevada. Ed Barich, Malcolm Zolinger, Rick Kapaun, David Steiner, Mike Tibett, Joe Hiney, Bill (guest), and Chris Castellucci.

Pyramid Lake is always a special still water outing, especially to fly fish for the world-renowned Lahontan cutthroat trout with an opportunity to catch a fish over 20lbs. You never know what’s in store at Pyramid Lake until you arrive and get your line wet, but the beauty and challenge for that trophy is always there.

Upon arrival that early afternoon Thursday, it was very blustery with 35-45 mph wind gusts that challenged our fly setup and casting skills. Every year the beaches take a new form moving drop-offs further out or closer in with some beaches getting wider.



Malcom Zollinger & guide with one of his many trout

The popular North Nets and Pelican Point beaches were deserted, maybe a sign that the fish migrated elsewhere. The guides and local regulars seemed to know where to find the fish, so we followed. It appeared most of the bank fisherman, as well as boat



Joe Hiney's brother, Bill, at Blockhouse Beach

trollers, were concentrated at the southern half of the lake. It turned out, the most active areas were the shoreline below Pyramid Lake Marina, Sand Hole, and Block House.

Most everyone caught a fish, but the hot rods of the trip were team Malcolm and Rick who hired a guide who outfitted them with switch rods and balanced leaches with a jig rig under an indicator. Over the

three days, they caught over 15 fish from 18 inches and some in the 7 and 8 lb. range. The guides who work the lake regularly know the fish migration patterns and will get you catching fish.

Practicing Covid protocols, we paired up sharing lodging to avoid the congested bunkhouse type lodging we would normally deal with prior to Covid.

I cannot wait till the next Pyramid Lake outing in the spring, which is the most productive time of year for catching those prized fish.

Steelhead Fishing on the Trinity and Avoiding Hypothermia By Mike Spurlock

In early November, Matt Cardle and I fished two days on the Trinity River with guide Brian Clemens of Nor Cal Fly Guides. We fished parts of the 30+ mile section below Lewiston: Steel Bridge to Indian Creek, Evans Bar to Junction City and Bagdad Flat. Water was clear with flows in a good range for fishing: 300 Cfs² at Lewiston and 600 Cfs² below Junction City.

Runoff from recent rains had caused the Lower Sac to be muddy and many of the guides who would have been fishing there came to the Trinity. This created quite a challenge for Brian figuring out the best section of the river to fish to minimize competition and trying to beat the other guides to the best runs.

Matt and I used 6 and 7 weight spey and switch rods with Scandi and Skagit lines with sink tips. We caught several 8-10" smolt and a few 12-14" rainbows, probably steelhead yet to go to the ocean. One day, Matt had a strong grab from a big fish that immediately broke off a fly tied on with 12 lb. tippet. Upon inspection, the tippet had a rub where it broke off, probably an earlier scrape from a rock. I hooked a nice silver adult fish (I only caught a glimpse) which I had on for about a minute until it unbuttoned possibly caused by the reel's drag chattering (slip, stop, slip, stop, slip, stop, etc.) as the fish was racing around in the current and I was trying to keep the line

tight. (I called Bill Archuleta who told me that some Able reels are famous for that when they get wet because they use neatsfoot oil on the cork drag, not good. I will send him the reel and he will clean it up and fix this problem for me with his "special sauce." He also promises I will catch more fish. Bill is a RRF life member who now lives in Grants Pass. See his ad on our website <https://www.rrflyfisher.org/support-local-fly-fishing-businesses.html>).



Fall color on the Trinity River

On our final guided day, it started raining and got cold in the afternoon and we had an incident worth recounting. Matt was walking around the boat in thigh deep water over a very rocky bottom and accidentally took a "swim". He quickly jumped up, but the damage was done, and his torso was soaked. His wading belt limited him getting wet below the waist. We went on to the next run and by then Matt was getting very cold and uncomfortable. We were still at least an hour's drift to the take-out. He became convinced he needed to strip off some wet clothing and use some of my dry change of clothes from the bag I always carry along just for this situation. It saved the day and Matt was able to fish the next couple of hours until the end of the day. Matt has decided to carry his own insurance dry clothes in the future. This is a practice I have followed for years after I once did my own swim on the Klamath.

On our last day, we fished unguided for a few hours at Steel Bridge and just below the Douglas City Bridge before leaving to drive home. On the run below the

bridge, Matt caught two half-pounders and declared the trip a very successful outing.

We did not get the adult fish we were after, but what a beautiful time to be on the river swinging flies, surrounded with fall colors, and enjoying good water flows with a knowledgeable and fun guide.

Davis Lake Trout **By Daniel Powers**

It was a beautiful November afternoon in Plumas County with a high of 55 degrees. I decided to venture across the valley from Sierra Brooks to Davis Lake for a couple hours of fishing. I went to one of my favorite fall spots on the northeast side of the lake. When I arrived at 2:30 PM the water was like glass, and I had a feeling it would be a "good day."

I rigged up a few buggers I tied the previous day and started my excursion on the float tube just outside the weed beds. To my surprise I hooked into a small rainbow within 5 minutes. Then after getting my line



Dan with his Davis Lake Rainbow

back in the water after the release, I hooked into this beauty a couple minutes later. I ended up with 5 fish in about an hour. I'm happy to say, "It did turn out to be a *good day!*"



Unbagging a Stripper

By David Stone

Jeff Cratty pointed out his favorite spot along one of the canals to fish for striped bass. He called it *The Money Hole*. As he did, he began telling his story of *unbagging* a striper along the straight section of the dike some distance past *The Money Hole*.

My head jerked back in a double take. I had heard the term *bagging a fish*, but what? *Unbagging*? *What was he trying to say*? And then, Jeff paused and pointed to an area of the water about a foot from the dike's shoreline. "That's where I *unbagged* a fish." He continued, "I saw a bag—a plastic bag, farther out in the water." Jeff described the bag as the kind of plastic bag a newspaper would be stuffed into before being thrown on your driveway when it's raining. Then he continued with his story, "It was moving forward on the water's surface, like it was being blown by the wind, but there was no wind to speak of. It was a strange sight because it moved forward, but then it would stop and then it would move forward again. It was bizarre!" Jeff emphasized.

His story intrigued me, made me stop thinking about the tail-slapping striper that we had been unable to catch at the last spot. Jeff had my full attention. "What happened next?" I asked. He said, "I thought, *What the hell is going on with that bag*?" Jeff looked at me nonchalantly and continued. "Well... I realized there was something in that plastic bag moving it forward. And as I looked closer, I realized there was a fish stuck inside the bag! I could make out the tail end of the fish. Its caudal fin was exposed, but the rest of the fish's body was inside the bag making it impossible to identify."

Now I was speechless. Jeff didn't detect an eye roll, but he must have noticed my peeled back eyelids. So, he continued. "When I realized the fish was alive and struggling, I decided to cast at it to retrieve the fish. My presentation was such that I was able to cast my fly beyond the bag on my first attempt. I started to carefully strip in line. When my fly reached the bag, it hooked into the plastic. When I got the fish and bag

close to shore, I could tell it was a striped bass." Jeff anticipated my next question and said, "How long it was in the bag? I have no idea." He continued, "I reached down and carefully *unbagged* that striper and set it free." Jeff described the striper darting away like it was shot from a cannon and then said, "I didn't think much about what I had just done, until that striper swam back toward me in the shallow water and stopped right in front of me... no more than a few feet away."

At that point in his story, Jeff stopped walking and told me that Malcolm Zollinger, another Russian River Fly Fisher club member, had been fishing with him that day. Jeff asked him, "What is the striper doing? And Malcolm said, 'He came back to *thank you!*'" Malcolm thought that striped bass was grateful for being liberated and wanted Jeff to see his appreciation. That interpretation sounded picture-perfect to me. For those of you that have seen the documentary film *My Octopus Teacher* (Netflix), or if you own a dog, you know animals have nearly incredible ways of communicating with humans.

"Wow!" I shouted. It was an amazing *feel-good* story and I promised myself I would write about it someday.

When you have been fly fishing as long as Jeff, you experience some unusual events of nature. Like, when a river otter shows up licking its lips as a fly fisher is striping in a fish, or when a white pelican zeros in on the lake section you're fishing. Those



animals aren't cute or fluffy. They are hungry contenders causing fly fishers to shout out, the sound resonating across the water when the

predator gets even minimally close to a prized fish hooked on a fly line. It's never dull fly fishing in nature's beautiful wildness.

I've heard that, *The tug's my drug*. I have felt the physiological thrill of having a fish tug at the end of my fly line. But for me, it is just as exciting to wade

out into a river and just take pause to appreciate the sublime ecosystems that support rivers. Standing knee to waist deep in brisk moving river water with a fly rod in hand is a breath-taking experience. The fly-fishing experience brings me back to the water—over and over.



Note: The author and Jeff Cratty landed a couple of stripers apiece at his favorite spot to fly fish for Striped Bass.

I know—holding that striper, I look like a surge of electricity is pulsing through my body. Well.... That's what it felt like fighting that fish. Photo by Jeff Cratty.

RRFF Winter Fly Casting Clinics

Our *first* Winter Fly Casting Clinic was held on Saturday, November 20th. It was a warm beautiful day, and we had a good showing of enthusiastic newcomers and established club members too. Steve Tubbs, Jeff Cratty, Binky Castleberry (all excellent teachers and fly fishers) were on hand to help anyone wanting advice to improve their fly-casting technique.



The clinics are held on the first and third Saturday 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.



Don Shaw continues to sell our RRFF hats and decals at the pond during these fly-casting clinics. If you didn't make it to the opener, then we'll see you at the next RRFF winter fly casting clinic, December 4th, and 18th. Consider buying a hat and/or a decal. Cash only.

Join the RRFF on Facebook

We currently have **1,110 members** on our RRFF Facebook page. You can keep up with the RRFF and our fly fishing and conservation community by joining us at:

<http://www.facebook.com/russianriverflyfishers>

Spey Casting Clinic on the Russian River December 11, 2021 10 am – 1 pm

For those of you signed-up for the on-the-water spey clinic, we will meet at the Monte Rio bridge parking lot (river right). Remember: Bring your fishing license and steelhead card.

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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...

December

- 4-5 Yuba River Outing (Ed Barich, Trip Leader)
- 8 RRFF General Meeting – 7:00 @ SR Vet's Hall or Zoom
- 11 Spey Casting Clinic – 10 AM-1 PM Russian River
- 15 RRFF Board Meeting – 7:00 PM, Zoom
- 4 & 18 Fly Casting Clinics – Noon – 2:30

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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Steelhead in the Classroom: **Karl Joost**

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Russian River Fly Fishers

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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