



Sonoma County California
Volume 49, Number 2
February 2022

Baum Lake Rainbow
(See "Winter—Baum Lake" story by Gregg Wrisley, pg. 3 below)

Since June 1977
Visit our website at
www.rrflyfisher.org

President's Message Conservation—Who's Job Is It?

The RRFF is primarily a fly-fishing club, but our club bylaws remind us that conservation is essential to our sport. As anglers, we individually support conservation on the waters by our actions, such as safe catch and release methods and avoiding littering of the landscape. Those actions are necessary for conservation but are not sufficient to stop misguided commercial or governmental entities from degrading the natural places we love. For that, your vote is needed. It's not the job of the RRFF board to tell you what to vote for, but we can point you toward learning more about the issues that impact the future of our sport. For instance, here are a couple of groups

that are fighting to protect rivers that our members often fish:

- **Friends of the Gualala River** have been working for years to prevent logging of the lower reaches of the Gualala River. If you have fished it, you know what a beautiful forest this is, and how its loss would be a tragedy. Check it out at: <https://gualalariver.org>
- **The South Yuba River Citizens League** is petitioning the Army Corps of Engineers to clean the fish ladders of the Daguerre Point Dam that are preventing migrating salmon from spawning. You can add your name to

the list at:

<https://yubariver.salsalabs.org/cleanthedamladdersaction>

To learn more about Northern California conservation issues, Redwood Empire Trout Unlimited (<https://www.redwoodempire-tu.org>) and Cal Trout (<https://caltrout.org>) are good resources.

Whether you donate money or add your name to petitions, you can help move the needle for conservation when you join with other concerned citizens. Do it now, before it's too late.

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 our **website calendar below** and get out there and go fishing.

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

We now have monthly outings planned through June (with signup sheets and trip leaders) and later months still in planning.

- February - Yuba River (It has wait list. Talk with Ed Barich for possible openings).
- February – Flash outing for steelhead (Possibly at the American, Russian, or Gualala Rivers (TBA, Ed Barich trip leader)
- March - Pyramid Lake (Chris Castellucci, trip leader)
- April – Clearlake (Mike Borba, trip leader)
- May - Baum Lake (Ed Barich, trip leader)
- June - Manzanita Lake (Ed Barich, trip leader)

Talk to the trip leaders if anyone needs any suggestions on equipment or mentoring on the water.

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

RRFF General Meeting

Penelope Gadd-Coster, VP & Program Chair
Wednesday, February 9th

7:00 pm – Zoom Meeting

For our February's General Meeting, we have Steve Shalla as our guest. Many of you might be familiar with his website, www.FlyFishingtheSierra.com. It is filled with maps and other tidbits, such as fly-tying tutorials. Basically, it is a repository for all the things he has been learning about fly fishing for the past 30 years. His goal has been to create regional maps covering all the waters of the Sierra. These maps show fish species, fishless areas, access trails, fishing regulations, and permit needs. Also, a hatch chart with a suggested fly selection is included. Recently, he finished all the regional maps, and commented, "Like most things in life, it will always need some tweaking." He graduated in forestry from Cal Berkley.

His program for Russian River Fly Fishers will cover a natural and cultural history of the Golden Trout Wilderness. We will look at how the Sierra Nevada mountains formed, impacts from glaciation and volcanos, fish migration, introduction of fish species, and how fish populations adapt to their watershed. From the cultural side, we will look at how timber, mining, fishery management, and water interests have impacted our Golden Trout.

Conservation Corner

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By Charlie Schneider

Winter is where the rubber meets the road for fisheries biologists. Every fall we wait patiently to hear the numbers. Anecdotal, estimated, whatever, we'll take them. The number of returning adults is almost always the end goal of the work we do and so,

we wait (not so) patiently for the first emails to roll in from the extended network of biologists up and down the coast.

I'm delighted to say that so far this year those emails have been good. Ample rains in October kicked things off early with reports of Chinook and Coho holding in pools in the lower reaches of local rivers in impressive numbers. The additional rains in December allowed fish access to their preferred tributaries and spawning salmon could be easily spotted in places like Lagunitas Creek for much of December.



12/21 - Pod of Chinook salmon spawning, Russian River tributary

While the steelhead run is just starting, early totals for Coho in Lagunitas Creek and the Russian River are some of the highest returns in the last 20 years. Why? While that is an important question, it's difficult to untangle the web of factors that allow an individual salmon to survive its journey. But we can hypothesize that the strong returns of Coho at least, are due in part to the good water year we had in 2018-19, helping juveniles survive through the hot summer months. How does this bode for steelhead populations? We'll just have to wait patiently.

In other news on the salmon recovery front, the two aging dams on the Eel River are moving closer to decommissioning. The Two-Basin Partnership, a group of stakeholders that developed to take over and reconfigure the dams and hydroelectric facility in

response to PG&E's decision to abandon it, has stated that they are unlikely to move forward with relicensing. This means that in April, PG&E's license to operate the project will expire and the federal agency tasked with regulating hydropower dams will ask them to submit a plan to abandon their license for the project and propose its decommissioning.



Charlie gearing up near Yuba River's edge, December 2021

With dam removal on the Klamath set to begin next year, there is no better place to look next in the efforts to recover salmon and steelhead in California than the Eel. Lessons learned on the Klamath will apply here too. Fisheries conservation groups like Trout Unlimited and California Trout will need to develop strong partnerships with tribes, water users, environmental groups, and of course, anglers to ensure PG&E does the right thing by removing the dams and restoring the damage to the ecosystem they have caused. Dam removal on the Eel is the single biggest action we take to help recover salmon and steelhead on the North Coast and the Eel River is one of the highest priorities for restoration in the state.

In less exciting news, last month CDFW announced an emergency extension of low flow closures for many North Coast steelhead rivers. While the rule change has not been finalized, it will extend the number of months low flow closures are in effect. For the Russian, the low flow closure will be extended by one month on either end, now starting in October and ending April 30. These changes are being implemented to help protect salmon and steelhead during the ongoing drought from angling pressure

during low flow conditions that trap fish in pools. The emergency regulations will remain in effect at least through the coming summer at which time they will be reassessed. Overall, the changes seem unlikely to reduce opportunity for anglers much locally, though folks should keep an eye on the latest regulation book and, as always, call the low flow hotline when in doubt.

Winter—Baum Lake

By Gregg Wrisley

When you start jonesing to wet a line during the winter, Baum Lake is a fun fishery during that time of year. Just pick days when the high is in the 50's and there is little to no wind.

Midge hatches are common in the winter although there were a few other bugs coming off the lake. The fish were taking the midges just under the surface (no bubble), at the surface (bubble), and jumping out of the water. Midges just under an indicator, as well as striping small soft hackles were effective tactics too. Some sort of float device is helpful—a float tube works well.



Baum Lake on a clear winter day

If this sounds interesting, RRFF club has a trip to Baum Lake scheduled in May. Sign up on our website calendar and if you want, somebody from the club will be happy to help you get to know this fishery. I also fished the Lower Yuba on the way back home but got skunked there.



Lower Sac and Trinity Rivers

By Spencer Bader

Last weekend three friends and I hired guides from the Fly Shop to fish the Trinity and Lower Sacramento. Saturday on the Trinity was epic. Low, clear water. Temp varied through the day from 32 degrees in the morning to 64 by 3:00 pm. Our boat had 9 steelhead (3 of which were half pounders). We used smallish nymphs and an indicator. On Saturday we went down the hill to Redding to be a little closer to home after fishing. I caught a nice rainbow within 10 minutes near the Sundial bridge. Another warm sunny day on the river.



Spencer Bader on the Lower Sacramento River

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>

Steelhead

Poem By Bob Lombardi



Wading silently in the riffle vest deep
Biting cold with tingling feet.
My breath shows wet, my ears a pink sting
Each cast a hope of that familiar ring.
Waiting and wanting, for anticipated battle
I lure a strike of that bright orange hackle.
Suddenly, as hope begins to fade
He hits, he's on, and on his way.
With excited reflex I set the hook
Expecting that instant to catch a look.
Cutting capers with erratic bounds
He'll tip the scales at least ten pounds.
Yes, he's on, but for how long?
I grapple in fear, he could soon be gone.
A surfacing crash and valiant leap
He soars out of control, five or six feet.
Then, a few moments of ferrous pull
No, to me, this is NOT dull.
For any moment he'll commence to run
I pray to God 'til the battles won.
Again, with a sudden surge of power
He springs to his tail as the Eiffel Tower.
Toward that jagged snag he sprints
I sense what he's thinking despite his hints.
He stops, turns, rolls, and retreats
As I back slowly, from his pounding heart beats.
He begins to weaken, his spirit ending
The parabolic strain of my rod ceases bending.
I sense he's mine as he rolls to his side
I ease him toward shore, bursting with pride.
But with one final stand, and a lust to be free;

He rolls once more, spitting iron at me.
I watch in awe as he drifts away
Knowing full well he'll return one day.
The battle was his, the moment mine.
The majestic Steelhead—but one of a kind.

Steelhead in the Classroom

RRFF Dollars at Work
By Karl Joost

RRFF donated \$181.30 to improve filtering for the 10-gallon classroom tanks that are used in the Steelhead in the Classroom Program.

Why? Well, in 2020 and 2021, a few of our 15 SIC classrooms had a large die-off of fry while raising and studying their steelhead. Normally, we expect to lose some eggs and fry, but one classroom started with 50 eggs and unfortunately had only 10 fry to bring from the classroom to the creek! The children and the teacher were very concerned (some in tears - *their babies were dying in the tank!*)

I proposed improving the filtering by using 2 under gravel filter plates instead of one to our partners at Sonoma Water (David Berman and Shelly Spriggs) and the CDFW program head, Ethan Rotman. Ethan asked me to consult with 2 of the long time regional SIC sponsors: Gerry Ng (Diablo Valley Fly Fishers) and Ed Huff (Mission Peak Fly Anglers), which I did.

The experts' answers: Yes, both Gerry and Ed confirmed that the 2 under gravel filter plate set up is what they have been using as standard. Ed thought one plate might also work as the time frame is relatively short (4-8 weeks).

Other thoughts: Consider that for just the last 3 or so years, we have been hatching 50 eggs/tank and before that it was 25 eggs/tank (therefore, 2x the fish poop in the tank). Also, during Covid, some schools have used improved classroom sanitation, including sprays. Could this be involved? Feeding/overfeeding the fry could also be a definite problem, equals more waste in the water.

So, to study the question, RRF and Sonoma Water are teaming up to conduct a test of increasing tank filtering, using 2 under gravel filters per tank instead of 1 on a limited number of tanks.

What did we buy with the \$181.30 donation? 20 additional under gravel filter plates and 100 pounds of new clean gravel to use as needed!

Our small donation may improve results going forward with more smiles of success and less despair from students and teachers.

Note that most of the tank set-ups this year will be done using the approved method (one filter plate per tank). **If this trial** (2 filter plates) significantly improves fry survivability, we can consider recommending it as a better method next year (2023).

Fly of the Month

Balanced Leech

By Mike Borba

I spoke to Chris Castellucci, our trip coordinator for our March trip to Pyramid Lake. He suggested a balanced leech fly pattern in a midnight cowboy color. The Reno Fly Shop directed me to their balanced leech tying video. They mentioned that they have fly tying kits with all the materials needed to tie this fly.

Video link: <https://youtu.be/xY4w6BzSyZY>

Materials list:

- Hook: #8 90-degree jig hook (Daiichi 4660 or Mustard 328)
- Thread: 6/0 or 8/0 black
- Bead: medium size tapered cone head in black or silver
- Pin: balanced leech tying pin
- Tail: black Marabou
- Body: Arizona Simi seal Midnight Cowboy color

Tying notes: If you can't find 90-degree hooks 60-degree hooks will work. If you don't have a dubbing

twister you can use hackle pliers or even half of a paper clip.

Cartoon Corner



The **Cartoon Corner** is a new addition to The Cast. I will continue to encourage our RRF members to submit a hand drawn fly fishing cartoon each month. I will print and frame each new cartoon without a caption. This will allow club members to submit a caption they think fits the cartoon. For example, I might submit a caption for the above cartoon that reads, "How many times do I have to tell you... *keep your tight casting loops **over your head!***"

Captions need to be submitted to me within two weeks after you receive the month's edition of The Cast. Then a small jury of club members will choose the *best* caption for that cartoon. All cartoons will stay anonymous unless the artist wants recognition. And the caption winner's name will be published with his/her caption attached to the cartoon in the next month's newsletter. Start sending in your caption for the above cartoon.

Dave Stone, Editor
davestone@sonic.net

Haiku Poem by Leafa Fiore

Filtered by the trees
Sunlight creates gold shadows
Where trout wait for me

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Calendar of Events

RRFF Thursday Evening Fly Casting Clinics have ended due to lack of light. But winter casting clinics have started and are OPEN TO THE PUBLIC on the first and third Saturdays of each month!

Beginners are welcome...

February

12-13 Yuba River Outing (Check with Ed Barich, Trip Leader)
9 RRFF General Meeting – 7:00 PM Zoom
16 RRFF Board Meeting – 7:00 PM, Zoom
5 & 19 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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Conservation Coordinator: **Charlie Schneider**

217-0409 bikecharlie@gmail.com Redwood Empire Trout Unlimited (RETU)

Conservation Coordinator: **Tom Greer**

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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