

The Cast



Russian River Fly Fishers

Sonoma County California
Volume 44, Number 4
April 2017

2017 Yuba River Outing

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

President's Message

Back in Action...

After months of cabin-fever-inducing rains, we are finally beginning to see a break in the deluge now known at the "Wickedly Wet Winter of 2016/17". I don't know about you, but I've had enough of sorting gear, tying flies and reading fishing magazines. It's time to get in the truck, drive a couple of hundred miles and actually get some lines wet. It's time for action.

The question is "Where to go?" The best bets are waters that have not been too flooded or muddy, or have the ability to return to normal quickly. Our club's April outing to Pyramid Lake could fall in that category. While the roads around the lake were damaged during the storms, recent reports indicate

that most of the well-known beaches and points are now accessible. The Pyramid outing is typically one of our club's best attended events, thanks to the reasonable possibility of encountering some larger than average Lahontan Cutthroat trout. Another reason for the popularity of this outing are the meals hosted by John Frenzel and friends – fine dining that matches the fine fishing. At this writing, Ken Magoon has a few lodging spots open - so don't miss out on this favorite trip.

As we get into the warmer days of spring, lakes may be the best option for fly fishing. The record snow pack in the Sierra is likely to cause high stream flows all the way into summer. If you are planning your fishing calendar for this year, you might want to consider testing some of the waters that were so greatly stricken by the last four years of drought in California. Rivers and streams that were only a

trickle in the last few years might be very productive this summer and into the fall.

Speaking of action, the RRF club is in need of volunteer help from its members. Most immediately we are in need of an editor for our newsletter to replace Lorrin Ngum, who did an excellent job of producing the CAST for many years. If you are member who has some familiarity with MSWord, your help would be welcomed in continuing to get the word out to the club each month. We are also looking for a member who would be willing to promote our club's name and mission to the general public. There are times when we are amazed how few people are aware that there is a fly fishing club in Sonoma County and that we give free casting lessons. If you would like to help make our club more well-known in the community, let the board know of your interest.

So now that spring is here, let's shake off those winter doldrums and get into action!

~ Ed Barich

Newsletter Editor

WANTED

Must be familiar with MS Word and Desktop Publishing. Will help!

Please contact Steve Tubbs - steve@kresky.com

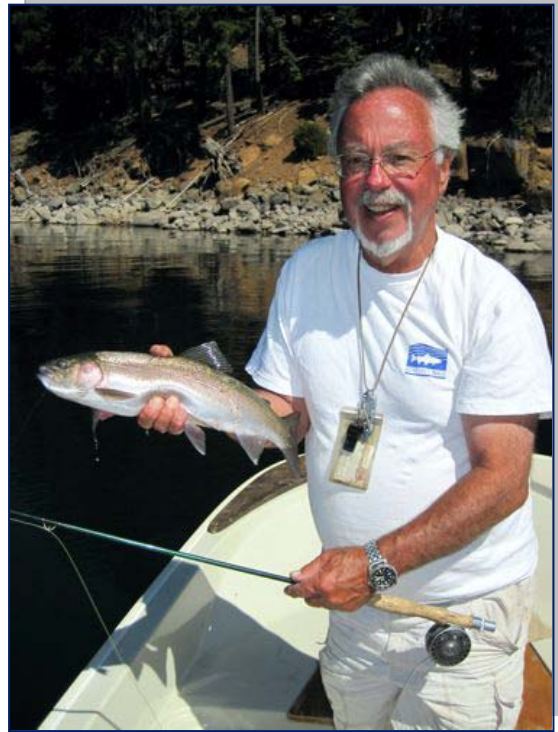
Welcome New Members

The RRF would like to welcome our newest member **Brian Dufour** and returning members **Chris Dobson**, **Cecile Focha**, **Tim Grogan**, **David Katz** and **Terry Price**. Please contact any board member if you have questions. Welcome Aboard!

Join the RRF on Facebook

We currently have **804 members** on our RRF Facebook page. You can keep up with the RRF and our fly fishing and conservation community by joining us at:

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



RRFF General Meeting

Wednesday, April 12th - 7:00 PM

The Lodge Room at the Santa Rosa
Veteran's Memorial Building

Questions & Answers

with

Hal Janssen

Join us for an evening with the author of *Stillwater Fly-Fishing Secrets* (and one of the RRF's favorite speakers) Hal Janssen.

Beginning at 6:00 pm, Hal will be available to answer your questions about fly fishing for trout in stillwater. We will break for our General Meeting at 7:00 pm, but after our RRF club business has been concluded, Hal will return and continue to answer your questions, sharing the knowledge and insight that he has acquired over a lifetime of fly fishing.

This is a question & answer session, so your participation will be requested.

Hal was inducted into the NCCFFF Hall of Fame in 2012. He is an artist, writer, speaker and a renowned fly fisherman and fly tier.

~ Joe Banovich, RRF Program Director

Conservation Corner

Return of the Native

Back in 1991, when I was younger and more impressionable, I read a book called *Native Trout of North America* by Robert H. Smith. I was instantly hooked. Smith described a whole new world of unique, beautiful, and often rare trout that blew the mind of a young man who until then had been plenty impressed with catching stocked rainbows, bass and bluegills in farm ponds. He introduced me to the godfather of native trout in the West, Robert Behnke, who awakened a whole new appreciation for the value of conserving unique species in the landscapes that they had evolved in. And it created a kind of a piscine angst in me, for I had only recently been introduced to the most beautiful, exotic-looking (and tastiest) trout I had ever seen; the brook trout. Now I was learning that those same gorgeous, vermiculated jewels were also one of the leading causes of the decline of native trout in the mountains of the West. This wasn't an issue of current stocking programs overwhelming the ability of native trout to thrive. These were undomesticated fish for many, many generations. Perfectly wild browns, brookies, and coastal rainbows eating, outcompeting or interbreeding with the local redbands, desert cutthroats and char. How was I to square that circle?



Now, 26 years on, the veteran of many field trips to catch those native trout throughout the country, I've gained a bit of perspective and a whole new appreciation for the effects and complications of non-native fish in my new home waters along coastal California. The science is catching up and adding a new dimension to the threats that salmon and steelhead are facing. In a [recent research paper](#), Beth Sanderson et. al. found that, "The

impact of non-indigenous species on salmon is equal to or *greater than* commonly addressed impacts (habitat, harvest, hatcheries and hydro)..." (in *Nonindigenous Species of the Pacific Northwest*, 2009). How big is the problem? A separate 2009 study by NOAA found that [more than 25%](#) of fish in western streams are non-native.



But what is the method of impact and how do non-natives do so much damage? First, there is the obvious issue with predation. A [2006 study](#) on predation of salmonids by non-native smallmouth bass found that they annually eat up to 270,000 juvenile salmonids in the Yakima River of Washington, a river of similar size to the Russian (Fritz and Pearsons). Much concern has been expressed over the salmonid predation of striped bass in the Delta. When CDF&W proposed loosening fishing restrictions on the non-native striped bass to limit predation of salmonids in 2011, fishermen howled and the proposal was retracted. One of those complexifying situations where convincing us to sometimes give up C&R (which occurs >80% of the time for Delta stripers) would be a good thing (at least for salmon and steelhead). A [2007 study](#) by Nobriga and Feyrer demonstrated that perhaps the non-native largemouth bass are actually the bigger issue in the Delta because of the timing of striped bass migration.

More subtly, non-native genetics within individual *species* may be a culprit of decline. A steelhead is a steelhead, right? But the selection of certain strains of anadromous fish that seem to adapt to the hatchery environment better has led to these strains being stocked into waters far outside of their natal watersheds. The science shows several problems with this. Local stocks have adapted to local conditions over thousands of years. A Washington

Chambers Creek steelhead is not going to fare as well in the Santa Maria River. They would interbreed with the native stocks and lower their survival and reproductive success. Hatchery fish have been found to produce 50-90% less returning adults than wild natives. Competition also occurs between returning hatchery steelhead adults and wild steelhead for food, rearing, and spawning habitat and mates. Juvenile hatchery steelhead tend to be larger at release and can prey on wild steelhead. The large numbers of hatchery fish released attract predators that feed on juvenile salmonids and diminish wild steelhead survival ([Wild Fish Conservancy](#)).

This tension is playing out on large-scale river restorations like the Elwha River in Washington where advocates such as TU's Wild Steelheaders United, The Native Fish Society, and the Wild Fish Conservancy are fighting for native strains to be used to recover the river against [native tribal hatcheries](#) on the river that use the Southern Puget Sound Chambers Creek strain of steelhead. Since the early 1970s, the Chambers Creek stock has been the predominant hatchery winter steelhead stock planted by WDFW in Puget Sound, the Olympic Peninsula, and Columbia River basins. And lest we think that this is just a Northwest problem, the dynamic is also playing out here in California on the American River where scientists are beginning to question the impact of [3 strains of steelhead](#) that all return and pile up under the Folsom Dam.

Notice something interesting about that fight in the Elwha Basin? Native fish versus Native Americans. Hmm. Just to make the matter more complex to wade through, if you start down this path of favoring the natives, where do you draw the line? Native steelhead vs. native sea lions. Native Sacramento chinook versus native Sacramento pikeminnow. Commentators such as David Gessner have begun to question if we are intelligent enough to be the ones to pick the winners.

I think the answer may have to evolve. In the short term, maybe we should be favoring critically endangered native species like steelhead, coho and chinook salmon. And if we're successful in bringing strong runs of wild fish back, predation by other native species (including ourselves) may be sustainable.

~ Derek Campbell, RRF Conservation Director

RRFF Trout Season Opener

Cassel, California – May 4th - May 7th.

After what has been touted as the wettest winter on record for Northern California, and a snow pack well above normal in the Sierra, we suspect that fishing conditions for much of this Spring will be compromised by high water. With that in mind, your hosts for the RRF Trout Season Opener have opted to return to our old stomping grounds - the **PG&E Campground in Cassel, CA**. We will hold this year's **RRFF Trout Opener on May 4th to May 7th**, the weekend following the actual opening of trout season. Whereas we suspect that water levels will still be high, we hope that Baum Lake, Hat Creek and the many other rivers and creeks in this area will at least provide a possibility for fishable alternatives. Additionally, we feel that holding the Opener on the weekend following the actual Opening Day will also provide better opportunities for fishing more productive (and less crowded) waters.

Once again, John Frenzel, Steve Tubbs, Heather Hamm, Kelly Ames and Tim Grogan will be your hosts for this event. Traditionally, the RRF reserves the entire last loop of the PG&E Campground for the use of our club members and their guests. The RRF will provide dinner on Friday and Saturday nights as well as breakfast on Sunday morning before we break camp. Otherwise, you will be responsible for your own meals. We will also require volunteers to help with food prep, dishes and meal clean-up, and to set-up and tear-down camp at our group site.

Please Sign up! We need to know how many people will join us so that we can purchase the necessities for feeding everyone. Please sign-up online at www.rrflyfisher.org or at our April General Meeting. Let us know how many will be in your party and whether you will be tent camping or staying in a RV or trailer. Tent campers often share sites.

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

www.rrflyfisher.org

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

Weather: We will be camping. Weather at this time of year can include snow or it may be in the 70's or 80's. Night time temperatures often dip below freezing. Some years we wear shorts and short sleeves, other year's layers and/or raincoats and rarely take off our waders. We have had a few Openers where it rained the entire week non-stop, others with no rain and warm conditions throughout. Suffice it to say that you need to be prepared for anything!

Area Rivers and Creeks: As this event will be held the weekend following the actual Opening weekend, all of the area rivers and creeks will be open for fishing when you arrive at Cassel. There are a number of possibilities fairly close to the PG&E Campground - Hat Creek, Rising River, Pit River, Fall River, Burney Creek, Lost Creek - all of which have (somewhat) controlled flows. Expect the water to be higher than normal.

Baum Lake: Baum Lake is a dammed portion of Hat Creek and is just down the hill from the campground. The best way to fish Baum Lake is with some type of watercraft. Pontoon boats, kayaks, canoes, prams and small boats are fine and electric motors are allowed on the lake. NO GAS MOTORS! Float tubes can also be used, but please be aware that Baum Lake does have a current and you may find yourself hiking back to the launch area carrying your float tube if you get too far downstream. Whatever your transportation, you will want to bring an anchor(s) to help hold your position in the current. Baum Lake is stocked periodically with trout and does have some large fish that top 24". If the weather is warm, hatches can be quite good and dry fly fishing productive. Otherwise wet flies, including various small nymph patterns, will be the key to success.

Camping: Tents, trailers and motor homes are welcome. We will be sharing sites, so if you have a motor home or trailer, you may wish to arrive earlier to secure a spot as it can be difficult to find a space with the group if you arrive late on Friday. Tent campers can make use of many spaces in the loop and will often share sites with the "hardsides". Each camper is responsible for paying for their own campsite and for making sure that the camp fees are equally shared by all in the site. There are charges for extra vehicles, so these must be figured into the site fees.

Group Site: Club festivities will take place at one gathering site where all meals will be served and the evening campfire will be lit. ***Please bring your own chair if you wish to sit around the campfire!***

Food: You will be responsible for your own food items except for Friday dinner, Saturday dinner and Sunday brunch. The RRFF will provide these three meals. If we have a large number of attendees, it may be necessary to charge a small amount from each person (\$5.00 or so) to cover unanticipated food costs. You will need to bring all of your beverage needs for the entire time of your stay. There is potable water at the campground.

The Opener is one of our biggest fly fishing events of the year and is definitely a social occasion. As a social event, it is always well attended and a really great time! Like always, fishing productivity will depend on weather and water...and this year it is anybody's guess as to how that will play out.

For more information, please contact Steve Tubbs @ 765-1787.

See you at the RRFF Trout Season Opener!



Tom Greer changing flies on the Yuba River...

RRFF Fishes Record Flows on the Yuba

March 11, 2017 was the fourth annual RRFF outing on the Yuba River near Marysville, CA. By participating in a multi-club lottery, we were able to secure exclusive use of the University of California-Davis property that borders one of the best wild rainbow trout fisheries on the West Coast. Our party included Derek Campbell, Bill Laurie, Ken Magoon, Doug Mackay, Howard Nakagawa, Don Shaw, Ken

Young, Jeff Cratty, Tom Greer, Julian Garrett and Ed Barich.



This was the third year that we picked and won an early March date. In 2015, we had a sunny day with 1000 cfs of river flow and nearly everyone caught fish. Last year we had the wettest day of that winter, with 2000 cfs of flow and few fish caught. This year we had partly cloudy weather and moderate temperatures that should have been great for fishing. The only problem was that the flow was 4000 cfs and the visibility in the water was about a foot and a half. At this high flow, we were fishing a BIG river, compared to the normally middle-sized Yuba that we had experienced in other years. The signs of even higher waters that occurred in January and February were all around us: willow trees knocked sideways, rocks the size of your head up in the branches, and debris fields high up the canyon slopes. The power of nature to sculpture the land was impressive.

We avoided the fast-flowing center of the river and concentrated on the softer, slower waters near the

edge where fish could possibly hide without being swept away. The Yuba is normally a buggy terrain this time of the year, but we saw practically no insect life in the water or the air. It was pointless to pick up rocks to look for bugs underneath, since the shorelines had been high and dry only a few months before. Because it seemed that all insect life had been scrubbed away by the high flows, we tried offering terrestrials such as San Juan worms, but got no action. At the end of the day, only one fish was briefly hooked and another was seen jumping from the murky water.

You might think that such a lack of fish cooperation would have put us in a glum mood, but the power of the water and the signs of impending spring lifted our spirits. Most of us had not wet a line for months, and we were thankful to have the opportunity to step on fresh sands that had not been trod upon by humans since last fall. We were not far from civilization, but it felt like wilderness.

At noon we had our traditional hot dog and chili lunch under the UC pavilion, high above the river. As we ate and traded stories, we gazed at the beauty of the Yuba canyon. Despite the lack of fish, it was a pretty good day to be on the river.



~ Ed Barich



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Calendar of Events

RRFF Thursday Evening Fly Casting Clinics
from 4:30 until 7:00 pm
every Thursday (weather permitting) at the
RRFF Casting Pond in Dan Galvin Park, Santa Rosa.

April

- 6-9 **Pyramid Lake Outing** hosted by Ken Magoon
- 12 RRFF General Meeting
- 13 **Fly Fishing Film Tour** hosted by RETU
- 19 Board Meeting
- 21-23 **Spey-O-Rama** @ Golden Gate Angling & Casting Club, San Francisco
- 29 Opening of Trout Season

May

- 4-7 **RRFF Trout Season Opener** - Cassel, CA
- 10 RRFF General Meeting
- 17 Board Meeting
- 25-29 **Memorial Day Weekend Verona Outing** - hosted by Lee Soares

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