

# The Cast



**Jeff Cratty**  
**Wild Steelhead**  
**Trinity River**

Sonoma County  
California  
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## President's Message

### Closer to Normal

The COVID-19 pandemic is not over yet, but there have been recent signs that we are moving closer to what we remember as “normal”. Infection rates have begun to decrease locally. Many of our senior members have started or even completed their course of vaccination. By the end of this month, California residents 16 years and older will be eligible for shots, although supplies of the vaccine are still limited.

With all this positive news, the RRF board has decided to cautiously begin to put fishing outings on our club calendar. Our first outing will be at Baum Lake, April 29 to May 2 (see our website [rfflyfisher.org](http://rfflyfisher.org) for information and a sign-up list). In order to ensure the safety of participants, we will require everyone to follow all current CDC COVID-19 protocols. We cannot assume everyone we meet will

be immunized, so social distancing, wearing of masks and no sharing of equipment will still be necessary. At some of our past outings the club has organized group dinners, but at this time that will not be done.

These first club events will seem to be more like “rendezvous” than the traditional outings of the past. Hopefully we can someday return to the social norms we remember, but for now the number one priority is the safety of our members. Getting our club back on the waters is a first step.

Please keep safe this year and always,

~ Ed Barich

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## Flyfishing 101 – Beginning Fly Casting (Level 1 - Continued)

*In Part 7 of this Flyfishing 101 series, we continue with Beginning Fly Casting Level 1 as outlined in the Fly Fishers International (FFI) Fly Casting Instruction*

*Program. Understanding and practicing the skills presented in this level will provide you with the basic casts that are the foundation of fly casting, and will allow you to present your fly to fish in a number of fly fishing scenarios.*

In the first part of Beginning Fly Casting, we covered rod and reel set-up, grip, the casting arc, and a step by step approach to the Roll Cast. Before we continue, it might be helpful to reiterate the skill set involved in Beginning Fly Casting – Level 1.

### **Level 1 – Beginning Fly Casting**

You will learn to:

- Set-up a fly rod & reel
- Roll Cast
- Perform the pick up & lay down cast
- False Cast
- Cast over the opposite shoulder

To review the Roll Cast, you will recall that this cast is performed on a three-count, slowly, never lifting the fly line from the water. Here are the steps:

#### **Roll Cast – Step by Step**

**“1” – “To the Top and STOP”** (hand by ear, rod tip at 12:30)

**“2” – “Accelerate to an Abrupt Stop”** (at 10:00)

**“3” – “Follow it Down”** (after the abrupt stop, follow the fly line down to the water with your rod tip)

Again, remember that the clock face positions refer to the stopping point of your **rod tip!** 12:00 o’clock is straight up (directly overhead). The most common error when practicing the roll cast is for the angler to stop the rod tip too far back at the #1 position, and too low at the #2 position. Watch your rod tip while practicing to make sure that you are stopping it at the correct spot. As the roll cast happens pretty much right in front of you, it is easy to watch your rod tip while you are practicing. That said, while practicing your fly casting it can be very helpful to watch your rod tip and fly line when performing all of your fly casts. This can help you with timing and verify that your rod tip is actually stopping where it should.

Let’s reiterate a few points before we continue with Level 1 of Beginning Fly Casting.

1.) The principal key to fly casting is to accelerate the rod tip until the abrupt stop. The crucial part of this is the *continued acceleration until the stop*. Picture increasing the speed of the rod tip (which increases the bend, or “load”, on the fly rod) until the forward motion “hits a wall”. Using a hammer and nail metaphor, to drive a nail the head of the hammer accelerates until it hits the nail head (which stops it abruptly). Likewise, if you were to take an artist’s paint brush, load it with paint, and then try to “flick” that paint at someone else, your success at doing so would depend on how completely you stop the forward acceleration of the paint brush. An abrupt stop will allow some of the paint to leave the brush and continue the journey forward. A common mistake for beginning fly casters is to slow down the acceleration of the rod tip in anticipation of the stop. This might have to do with trying to stop the rod tip at the correct position on the casting arc (clock face). What this does is allow the energy of your cast to dissipate (and the load on your fly rod to lessen) prior to your stop.

2.) Your casting arc (the distance your rod tip travels when executing a fly cast) will vary with the amount of fly line that you are casting. Our beginning fly casting instruction is based on throwing about 35 feet of fly line. Shorter lengths of fly line (beyond the rod tip) will require a shorter casting arc, whereas longer lengths will require a longer casting arc. The roll cast does have limitations as far as distance. If you are trying to roll cast too much fly line, the line will have difficulty breaking the surface tension of the water and becoming airborne. Too little fly line on the water during the cast will not provide enough tension to load the rod properly and will also affect power and casting distance. The basic roll cast is effective to about 40, or maybe 50, feet when performed efficiently.

3.) The position where you stop your rod tip will set the bottom of your casting loop. The top of your loop is set by the position of your rod tip during the acceleration of your rod tip before the stop. When casting directly overhead, the highest position of your rod tip *during this acceleration* creates the top of your casting loop. Learning to control the size of your loops is important for effective fly casting. In windy conditions, a tight “J” loop will drive your casting energy forward and be less affected by the

wind. A wide open “C” loop will throw some of your casting energy “around the circle” of the wider loop and allow less of this energy to drive your casting loop forward. Stopping your rod tip high (near the 10 o’clock position) forms the more efficient “J” loop. Stopping the rod tip lower (near 9 o’clock – or even lower) forms the less efficient “C” loop that sends some of your casting energy “around the loop”. If you stop your rod tip too high, making the loop too tight, the fly line will collide with itself and also dissipate your casting energy. This is known as a “tailing loop”.

4.) After you stop your rod tip abruptly at 10 o’clock, always follow the fly line down to the water with your rod tip. This is the #3 step of your roll cast and ends with your rod tip either just above, or slightly submerged, in the water. This step removes slack line from your presentation and is the “fishing position” as well as the beginning position for your next fly cast. *Your next fly cast cannot begin until the end of your fly leader/tippet is moving, and until this happens you are wasting casting energy removing the slack line from your presentation.*

### **The Pick-Up & Lay-Down Cast**

Once you have become proficient with the principles of the roll cast, and have learned to stop your rod tip where you wish in relation to the clock face, we can move on to the pick-up and lay-down cast. Many fly casters move to this cast too quickly before learning how to control where they stop their rod tip. The nice thing about the roll cast is that it allows you to concentrate and focus on the forward portion of your casting stroke without worrying about throwing fly line behind you.

The pick-up and lay-down cast introduces throwing the fly line into the air behind you. It also operates on a 3-count, with the addition of a “pause” after the 1-count. This pause allows the fly line to unroll and straighten out behind you before the fly cast begins its forward motion.

The timing of the pause is crucial. Too little pause does not allow the casting loop to straighten out and thereby provide the resistance that will load your rod on the forward cast. This can also cause tailing loops, and is known as “creeping”. Too much of a pause allows your casting loop to straighten out,

become affected by gravity, and then begin falling to the ground. This also dissipates your casting energy and forces you to try to overcompensate for this loss of energy during your forward stroke. Ideally, your casting energy should be preserved in the continuous motion of your fly line. As your casting loop unrolls behind you to its fullest extension (during the pause) you begin the forward casting stroke to maximize the energy transfer and provide the greatest load on the fly rod. When timed correctly, this efficient use of timing and power creates a presentation that is fluid and graceful and your casting loops remain smooth and “on plane”.

**Step 1** – Beginning with your 35-feet of fly line fully extended on the water before you (no slack), and your rod tip either just above or slightly submerged beneath the surface, you will “lift” the fly line and leader from the water while accelerating to an abrupt stop at 12:30 – 1:00 o’clock. Remember to begin slowly so that you don’t “rip” the fly line off the water (and spook any fish nearby), but once begun accelerate steadily until the abrupt stop. This will throw the fly line high into the air behind you.

**Pause** – Pause for a moment to allow the fly line to begin unrolling behind you to the straight position. It is helpful to watch the fly line do this so that you can regulate the timing of when to begin the forward cast. Just as the fly line unrolls to straight behind you...

**Step 2** - ...begin the forward acceleration of your rod tip to an abrupt stop at the 10 o’clock position (exactly the same as the roll cast). The forward acceleration will begin as the casting loop fully unrolls, not allowing it to begin falling toward the ground but also not “creeping forward” before it has fully unrolled. Again, timing equals efficiency.

**Step 3** – Follow the fly line down to the water with your rod tip, ending up with the rod tip either just above the surface or slightly submerged, to eliminate all slack line from the presentation. Again, this is the same as practiced with the roll cast.

This is the ending position of the pick-up and lay-down cast; one cycle of lifting the fly line and leader from the water and throwing it behind you, pausing to let the line straighten out, and then applying the forward cast (practiced with the roll cast) to deliver

the line and leader forward without slack. I “count” this as follows:

“1 – Pause” (throws the line into the air behind you –rod tip stops at 12:30 – 1:00 o’clock - and waits for the casting loop to unroll)

“2” (applies the forward casting stroke practiced with the roll cast, abruptly stopping the rod tip at 10 o’clock)

“3” (after the stop, rod tip follows the fly line down to the water – ending at the starting point)

**Please note** – We practice our casting fundamentals with 35-feet of fly line beyond the rod tip. The amount of time that you will pause to allow your casting loop to unroll is directly related to the length of fly line you are casting. Longer lengths require a longer pause, whereas shorter lengths will require a shorter pause. Again, while practicing it can be beneficial to watch your casting loops unroll both in front of you and behind you to help you gauge proper timing. You may rarely do this while actually fishing, but casting practice offers the perfect opportunity for this observation and provides you with this capability to employ when needed on the water.

### **The False Cast**

The false cast is what most people picture when they think of fly casting, and when done correctly results in the smooth and graceful forward and backward motion of the casting loop as it unrolls in either direction. The fly line “snakes” through the air, back and forth, with a timing and tempo that is constant and beautiful to watch. In order to accomplish this, the fly caster must understand the principles outlined above – the acceleration to an abrupt stop, the timing of the pause, and how to control loop size. Unfortunately, many fly anglers begin false casting without a complete understanding of these components.

False casting, besides being beautiful to watch when performed efficiently, has some practical uses when fly casting. It is used when the angler wishes to change the direction of the fly cast, to increase (or decrease) the amount of fly line being cast, to dry the fly when dry fly fishing, and to line-up the fly presentation for casting accuracy. False casting is often used too much when fly fishing. Remember,

when you are false casting your fly is in the air and is not actually fishing. Keeping this in mind, it is best to use false casting as little as possible, and I encourage all fly casters to limit their false casting to the least number of cycles. If you can make an effective presentation with a pick-up and lay-down cast, do so. Fish can often see the fly line when it is cast over them. False casting can spook sensitive fish.

Timing is very important when false casting. This is determined by the efficient transfer of power between the back cast and forward cast, which depends on the “pause” between each. Too little pause (“creeping”) does not allow the fly rod to load properly, as does too much of a pause, which allows the fly line to straighten, lose momentum and begin falling to the ground or water. Achieving a smooth false cast necessitates a deft understanding of timing the pause between casting strokes.

To execute the false cast, begin with the pick-up and lay-down cast. However, when you stop the rod at 10:00 on the forward stroke (Step 2), pause and allow the casting loop to unroll over the water. Just before it fully unrolls, begin another back cast (throw the line behind you) this time accelerating to an abrupt stop at 2:00 o’clock. Pause again to allow the casting loop to unroll behind you, and just as it unrolls fully begin your forward acceleration to an abrupt stop again at 10:00. Then follow your fly line back down to the water with your rod tip (starting position).

Notice the casting arc of 10:00 to 2:00 (you may have heard this in reference to fly casting). This casting arc provides a level trajectory of your fly cast, parallel to the ground and water, where your casting loops unroll both in front of, and behind you, on the same plane. As the amount of fly line you are casting affects your casting arc, the 10 – 2 arc is specific to about 35 feet of fly line. Casting shorter amounts of fly line require a smaller casting arc and longer amounts will require a longer casting arc. Also notice that the arc extends equally beyond the apex (12:00) of the casting stroke. This creates loops that are the same size moving both forward and backward. Remember, where you stop your rod tip creates the bottom of your casting loop.

When practicing your false cast, I recommend that you begin with only one false cast until you can time

the pause correctly and efficiently load your fly rod. You will find that when you begin the false cast, the rod loads very easily when you are lifting the line from the water for your first back cast. But when you make the second back cast, unless you time the pause correctly, the fly rod will not load as efficiently. For this reason, many fly casters find that the longer they false cast, the more their fly cast falls apart because the transfer of power between the forward and backward cast becomes less efficient. Practice executing one false cast until you are proficient with it, then try two false casts. As your proficiency and timing improve, you can add false casts. Practice is crucial for developing the feel of the rod loading between the back cast and forward cast.

**Remember – when you are fishing, it is always best to use the least amount of false casting that is practical for any situation.** Learning to make accurate presentations with only one false cast is an extremely useful skill and keeps your fly on (or in) the water longer.

### **Casting Over the Opposite Shoulder**

Wind is often a factor when fly fishing, and there will be times when the wind will be blowing directly into your casting shoulder and pushing the fly line (and the fly) into your body. To help ameliorate this, we can simply move the rod tip so that it is over the opposite shoulder and downwind from our body. This will move the fly line downwind from our body as well, and allow the cast to unroll without hitting us. There are a few ways to do this, but I will outline the simplest here using the roll cast as an example.

**Step 1 – Roll Cast** - Slowly bring the rod tip to 12:30, bending at the elbow and finishing with your hand up at ear level (thumb pointing straight up) and your elbow slightly raised. **Stop!** Now look at your hand. Your palm, and your reel face, will be on the same plane and facing you. To move your rod tip (and therefore the fly line) to your opposite shoulder, simply rotate your wrist so that your palm and the reel face are now facing forward. This will shift your rod tip so that is now over your downwind shoulder, moving the fly line downwind as well and allowing the wind to blow your fly line away from your body.

**Step 2** – With your palm and reel face facing forward (hand still up by your ear), accelerate the rod tip to an abrupt stop at 10:00 (using the exact same motion that you perform with a normal roll cast).

**Step 3** - After the abrupt stop at 10:00, follow the fly line down to the water with your rod tip.

The key here is that the fly line always follows the rod tip, so moving the rod tip to the downwind side of your body will move the fly line to the downwind side of your body. Doing so will allow the wind to then blow your fly cast (and fly) away from you. This will feel awkward at first, but with a little bit of practice can be a simple solution for fly casting when the wind is blowing into your normal casting shoulder.

We have now covered the casting skills presented in **Beginning Fly Casting – Level 1** as presented by Fly Fishers International. Proficiency with these skills will provide you with a strong foundation for your fly fishing adventures and give you the necessary building blocks to pursue more advanced techniques. Fly casting proficiency is probably 95% practice as compared to only 5% instruction. You need to get on the water and practice fly casting in order to develop the feel of the fly line loading your fly rod and to develop loop control. Ideally, you will want to be able to make any fly cast that is required by controlling your loop size, casting arc and trajectory regardless of the conditions. Our RRF Casting Pond is a perfect venue to practice your fly casting. Our instructors can help you fine-tune your practice and stay on track.

In my next article, I will begin to explore some of the basics for getting out on the water and actually fly fishing. Until then, please join us at the RRF Casting Pond (in Dan Galvin Park) to practice your fly casting. During Daylight Savings Time, we meet every Thursday evening from 4:30 until 7:00 pm. This is a great way to enjoy a Sonoma County wine country evening with friends...

~ *Steve Tubbs*  
RRFF Casting Instruction Director

## Steelhead in the Classroom Update

Steelhead in the classroom is underway and the eggs are hatching. There will be 8 weekly 15–20-minute episodes which include discussion with biologists and following member Tom Greer's tank. These are being used by the participating classes to follow the action. We are currently on episode 4 and the eggs have hatched into alevin since last week. Make a note and take a look at the website about mid-day each Monday: <https://www.rrflyfisher.org/>

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## Dues Suspension for the Year July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021 to Continue

In May of 2019, we announced that we would suspend dues payments until things return to "normal" and it appears that we will not achieve that during this year. We have cancelled plans for our annual fundraiser Cioppino Dinner. We are saving money by not having to rent the Veterans Hall or pay speakers, but we do have ongoing expenses for insurance, pond maintenance, publishing copies of the Cast newsletter. We are paying for some new signs to be posted on the Russian River to educate anglers. We are also considering donations to Steelhead in the Classroom for development of a video on the life-cycle of steelhead to be used for classes which are being held remotely.

Some people are choosing to pay dues in spite of our suspension, and if members choose to make this donation, you can go to the website to pay dues online, or you can mail me a check. It goes without saying that any contribution to the club would be very much appreciated. Thank you.

[https://www.rrflyfisher.org/store/c1/Featured\\_Products.html](https://www.rrflyfisher.org/store/c1/Featured_Products.html)

~ Mike Spurlock, Treasurer 415-599-6138. 20 San Domingo Way Novato, Ca 94945

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## RRFF Website Addition

Do you want to take a 6-minute fly-over from the mouth to the source of 9 different California Rivers? Click this link: <https://www.rrflyfisher.org/california-rivers-google-earth-flyover-videos.html>

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## Virtual Zoom April General Meeting

The club held a general meeting on **Wednesday, April, 14<sup>th</sup> at 7PM** using the Zoom video sharing application. Many thanks to **Phil Rowley**, who gave us a very informative and detailed presentation on fishing stillwaters for trout and other species. His presentation was entitled **10 Habits for Stillwater Success**.

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## New RRFF Vehicle Logo

Steve Tubbs, RRFF Casting Instruction Director, has designed a new RRFF vehicle logo (**6.25" X 4.825**), and the results are impressive. Thanks so much for all of your hard work on this project Steve!!!! The club has ordered 300 of these, and we can order more. In addition, if there is sufficient interest, we could order other sizes: **Small Logo Decal - 4" x 3.088" and Boat Logo Decal - 12" x 9.263"**



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## April Calendar of Events

**14<sup>th</sup> General Meeting Zoom -  
speaker [Phil Rowley](#) (10 Habits for  
Stillwater Success)**

**21<sup>st</sup> Board Meeting Zoom**

**29<sup>th</sup> Club Outing at Cassel  
Campground/Baum Lake/Hat Creek  
(Ed Barich, Trip Leader)**

**Casting Pond Clinic on Summer  
Schedule - Thursdays 4:30 pm - 7:30  
pm (We are following COVID  
protocols)**

## RRFF Board of Directors

## RRFF Board of Directors

President: **Ed Barich**

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Vice President: **Doug Mackay**

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Treasurer & Webmaster: **Mike Spurlock**

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Membership Chairman & Pond Steward: **Doug Mackay**

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Raffle Committee: **Paul Matzen**

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Raffle Coordinator: **Gregg Wrisley**

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Member at Large: **Brendan Galten**

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Member at Large: **Penelope Gadd-Coster**

Member at Large: **Tim Reuling**

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Day Fishers & Fly Tying: **Lee Soares**

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Casting Pond Steward: **Doug Mackay**

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Casting Pond Monitor: **Binky Castleberry**

477-2805 [fsh2xslc@att.net](mailto:fsh2xslc@att.net)

Conservation Chairman: **Charlie Schneider and Tom Greer**

**Russian River Fly Fishers**  
c/o Mike Spurlock  
20 San Domingo Way  
Novato, CA 94945



## 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).*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Referred by \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail Address\* \_\_\_\_\_  
Main Interests in the Club? \_\_\_\_\_  
How Many Years Have You Been Fly Fishing \_\_\_\_\_  
Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

\* Required for e-mail newsletter

### Please mark one of the following categories:

**I apply as a new member:**  Single membership – \$50 annual dues  Gold membership - \$1,000.00 (one-time)

Family membership – \$55 annual dues [JOIN ONLINE @ www.rrflyfisher.org](http://www.rrflyfisher.org)

Junior membership – \$25 annual dues

**Existing membership renewal:**  Single membership – \$50 annual dues  Gold membership - \$1,000.00 (one-time)

Family membership – \$55 annual dues [RENEW ONLINE @ www.rrflyfisher.org](http://www.rrflyfisher.org)

Junior membership – \$25 annual dues

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.

Dues paid by a new member joining the RRFF after March 1st of any year will cover the balance of that year and also the membership dues for the following fiscal year. The RRFF fiscal year runs from July 1st to June 30<sup>th</sup>

**Due to Covid-19. Dues Are Optional. Donations are appreciated.**