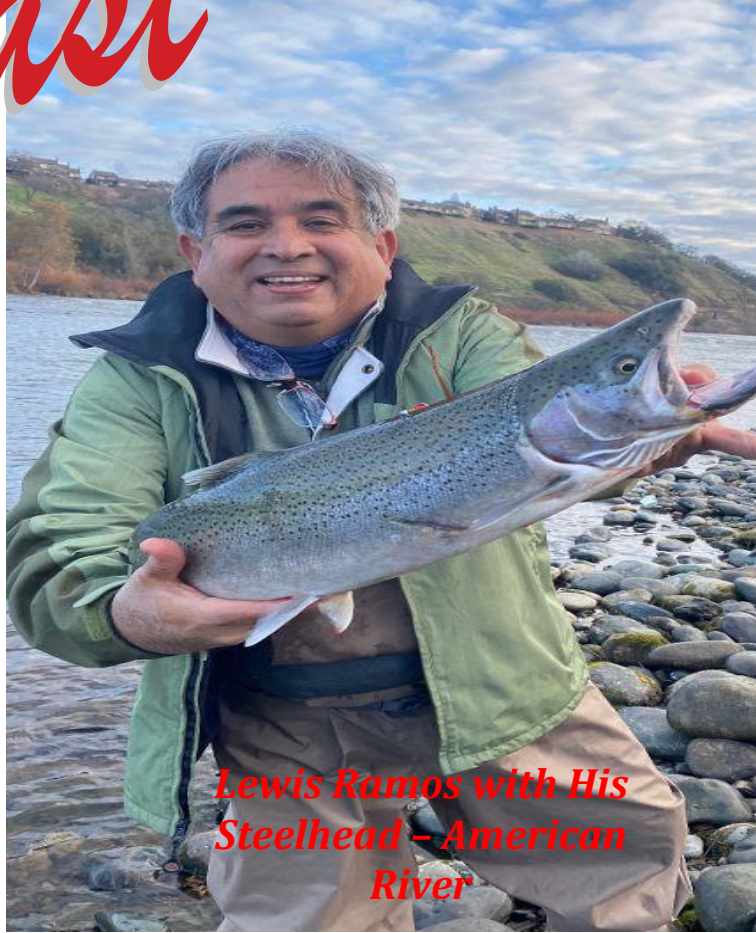


The Cast



Lewis Ramos with His Steelhead – American River

Sonoma County
California
Volume 48, Issue 2
February, 2021

President's Message

2021 - Keep Calm and Carry On

In a normal year, this message would be promoting the RRFf Cioppino Dinner, an annual social event and fund-raising opportunity that had to be cancelled this year due to the pandemic situation. For those members who had attended previous dinners, this one will be sorely missed. Besides providing us with a tasty meal and opportunities to bid on valuable donated fly-fishing gear, the dinner was a chance to meet again with friends that perhaps we had not seen in many years. It is the sincere hope of the RRFf Board that we can return to this tradition next year.

Despite the loss of the funds that could have been generated by the dinner, our club is in good financial shape. Reductions in expenses that normally would have been incurred by holding in-person meetings

(such as hall rental fees) have helped greatly. Our club has suspended collecting dues until the end of June, but many of our members have paid anyways, and for that, we thank them.

The Board is continuing to donate funds from our treasury to support programs outside the club that promote the sport of fly fishing. In the January CAST and on our website, you can see articles by Charlie Schneider on the Russian River Angler Information Signs that RRFf has helped to fund. Those signs will help to improve conservation of steelhead and salmon on our namesake river, and we are proud to be a part of that effort.

Our club outings have been cancelled and our casting program is on hold until conditions improve. In the meantime, we will continue our monthly

Zoom general meetings with speakers and topics that we hope you will find interesting and informative.

Please keep safe this year and always,

~ Ed Barich

Reading Waters

This article was first published about 20 years ago, beginning of winter. In this time of Coronavirus, it may find new relevance as its suggestions still ring true for me today...

Clack...

I look up from my place at the kitchen window, out at the street in front of my house. The raven picks his way through the walnut pieces, finding the meat, and then quickly taking flight as a car passes only inches from his meal. I can't help but reflect on the cleverness of the bird. Every time I see them, dropping walnuts from the telephone wires crossing the streets, I smile. I like ravens.

The air is crisp...as it has been for weeks now. The fall colors, such as they are here in California, blanket the yards and collect in the gutters of the crowned streets, flooding the corners as they negotiate passage through the storm drains carried by the early rains of winter. The last few days, clear skies and frost have greeted my mornings.

I stand at the open window, thinking of the change of seasons. The espresso machine hisses as it steams the milk for my mocha, a ritual that has become for me a sort of western "tea ceremony." I perform the ritual every morning, the steps no longer requiring thought yet performed always in the same manner. Taking comfort in the process, enjoying the present, waking to the day.

Winter is definitely here. I am typically a child of summer, preferring tee shirts and shorts to long pants and jackets. I don't fish much in the winter. An occasional striper trip, perhaps an outing for steelhead. Most of the time, my fly rods and reels stay in storage, freshly lubed and awaiting warmer days. But my mind still thinks of fish and I surround myself with reminders of my most passionate hobby.

Evenings are short now. By the time I get home most nights, the daylight has given up and a cold, dark has already settled in. I retreat to the warmth of my tiny house, cranking up the wall heater and sinking in to the leather sofa, often with a book in hand. I am an avid reader and always have been. Although not physically on the water in winter months, I am often mentally there – transported by the words of others, reading of their journeys, intermingling them with my own and living them in the pictures of my mind.

Over the years, a few of these books stand out in my mind. These are books or stories that I will read again, or have read again many times, and for whatever reason they have fueled my imagination and touched my "fishing" soul. This is the time of year to revisit them, to build a fire, to get comfortable and fish the home waters of experience and memories. Following are some of my favorite fly-fishing books and short stories. These are not "How-to" manuals. Perhaps you will find them as enjoyable as I have.

About 15 years ago, I read *The River Why*, by David James Duncan. A wonderful story set in Oregon's Willamette River valley; it follows the meandering adventures of a young man in search of self. Since that time, I have re-read the novel twice, enjoying it anew each time through the authors' vivid imagery and adept style. This work led me to his other novels, none about fishing but equally well developed and a pleasure to read.

Two (modern classic) fly fishing books that come to mind both dealt with the midlife crisis. Howell Raines' *Fly Fishing Through the Midlife Crisis* and Harry Middleton's *The Bright Country* were both "good reads" that have survived my personal test of time. Both stand out when I glance through the titles on my bookshelves, and both will find their way into my hands again.

In the same vein are the novels of Thomas McGuane. *Ninety-two in the Shade* follows a young man as he tries to break into the exclusive world of flats guiding in Key West. It is one of my favorite McGuane novels. *The Sporting Club* follows the crises of an "old money" fly fisher in an exclusive fishing and hunting club in the woods of upper Michigan. Both are great stories. *Live Water* is an account of some of McGuane's personal experiences fly-fishing and is also enjoyable. Thomas McGuane was honored this year by the Federation of Fly Fishers in Livingston, MT with the Roderick Haig-Brown Award 2000, presented to the author of a book, books or a combination of books that best embody the spirit and the philosophy of Roderick Haig-Brown.

Islands in the Stream, by Ernest Hemingway, has always been one of my favorite Hemingway novels. Published posthumously and thought by some to be autobiographical in nature, it is set in the gulf and captures (for me) the essence of that part of the world. It contains some classic fishing narrative and a story that spans the loves and losses of one man's life...and it is a story whose imagery returns to me often. Another Hemingway work, *Big Two-Hearted River*, is a short story that nostalgically captures the feel of the west in the early part of this century. Fishing with live grasshoppers, camping under the stars, hopping rail cars... Again, this work touches me deeply; hitting something that feels so true and causes me to turn back to it again and again.

Perhaps the best way to explore a number of writers and writing styles quickly is through an anthology. *The Armchair Angler*, edited by Terry Bryckzynski and David Reuther is an excellent compilation of

fishing stories by some of the legendary names in the sport. A mixture of fact and fiction, it is a great way to experience the story-telling prowess of some of the most popular angling authors. *The Sports Afield Treasury of Fly Fishing*, edited by Tom Paugh, is another anthology worth reading and devoted exclusively to fly fishing.

There is one fly fishing short story that, for me, stands alone and above all others. *A River Runs Through It*, by Norman Maclean, is a superbly written story based on his early life in Montana. Even before Robert Redford introduced America to this story with his movie of the same name, I had read this work probably half a dozen times. Well-crafted and containing some beautiful prose, *A River Runs Through It* captures a slice of America and spices it with the art, grace and sport of fly fishing. It addresses that mystical quality of fly fishing that I think all of us sense at some time when fishing the lakes, rivers and beautiful places where we practice our art. Nostalgic, and yet so timeless in its truth, I heartily recommend this story to everyone who hasn't yet read it. Don't be content to have just seen the movie. As always, the book is so much more. Treat yourself to some of the most beautifully written passages about this wonderful sport that means so much to each of us.

Of course, there are so many others, the books of John Gierach, the humorous stories of Patrick McManus... so many good books and stories. But these are the ones that still stand out for me. Many of these works I haven't read in years, but when I hear someone mention them, or see them on the shelf, their words still move me, and I entertain the idea of reading them yet again. We see these stories through our own eyes and relate each of them to our own experiences. The images they evoke are unique to each of us, a product of our experience, of our own fishing trips, of our beliefs and of the things we hold dear. These stories merge with us, calling to mind our own memories, integrating themselves into our experience and coloring the landscape of our thoughts. Because of this, I can only give you

the titles that have moved me. Your experiences and memories are not mine, and your reactions to these works will not be the same as mine. But there are stories out there that will touch you and will hit those areas deep inside you that resonate with your own personal truth. They will move you as these stories have moved me.

We are now poised at the edge of winter. Warm fires, a cushy chair, blanket... and books. My mind will become the fishing grounds for the winter, as it usually does. I will read more books and remember my own fly fishing memories in the process. Perhaps I will write some of them down for others to share and to spice with their own experience. My winter will be filled with sunshine, mountain streams, beaches and the leaping fish of my own memories and those of the storytellers I read. And when the warmer weather comes, and the fly rods are once again in hand, my personal world will be that much more enriched by the images I've visited this winter.

I hope that some of these stories will touch you as they have me.

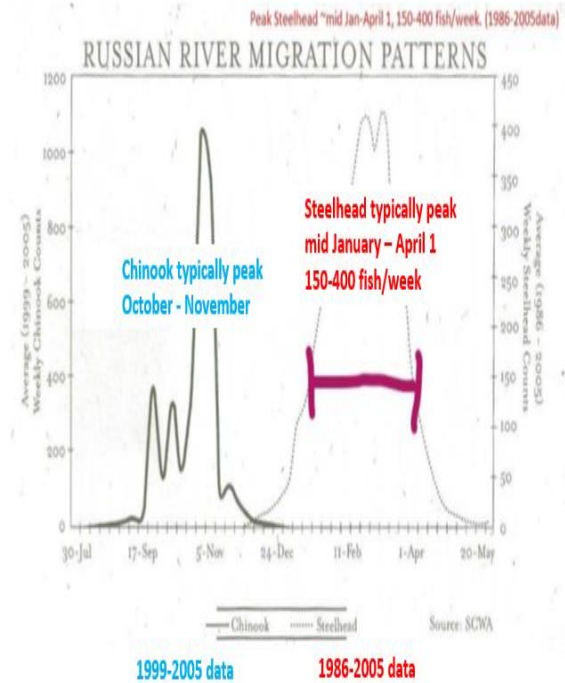
~ Steve Tubbs
RRFF Casting Instruction Director



Ed Barich – Steelhead fishing – American River

Update on the Russian River Steelhead season - How is this season shaping up?

Depending on the rains, steelhead typically begin to arrive in December and peak mid-January to April 1:



I talked with Ryan Watanabe, our North Bay District Biologist, to get some data about how this steelhead season is shaping up.

- So far, the Warm Springs Hatchery has seen 176 steelhead this as of end of January.
- This compares to an end of January average of 886 for the last 9 seasons and a range of 72 for the worst year and 1242 for the best year.

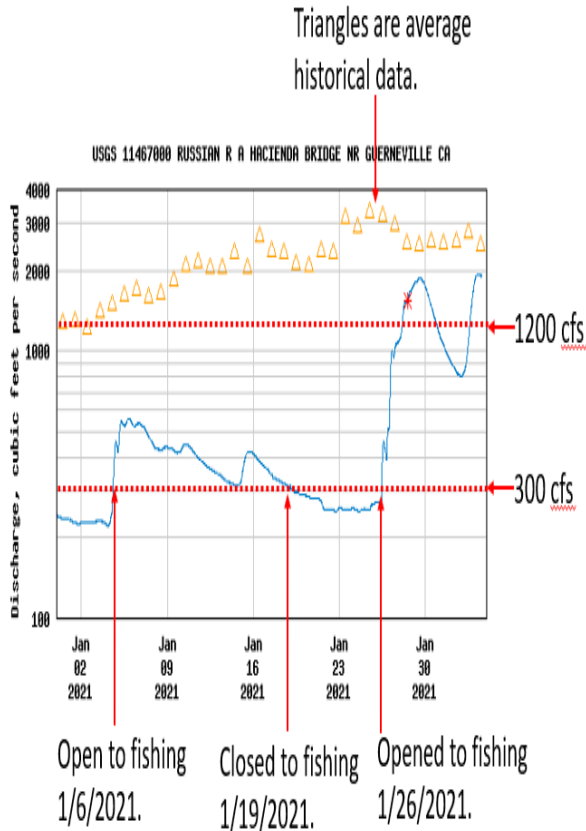
So far, the current season is off to a slow start because of late rains. Good rains in February and March could easily change this as it has in some years past.

When did the current Steelhead season start?

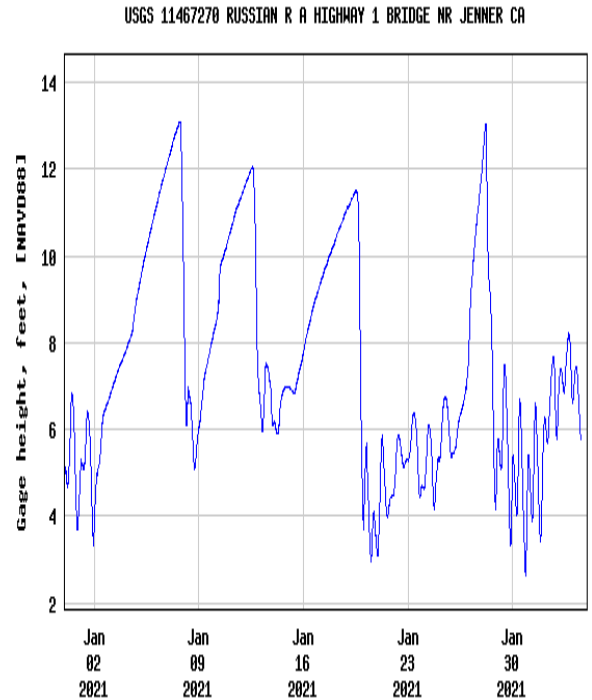
Below is the flow at the Hacienda Bridge in Guerneville from January 1 – February 3 showing that the river has been open (> 300 cfs) and within

practical upper limit (1200 cfs) for fly fishing about 18 days.

- At <300 cubic ft/second, the Russian River is subject to low flow closure of fishing October 1 – April 30. The river did not open until 1/6/2021, more than a month later than last season.
- It then closed on 1/19 and reopened again on 1/26 as shown on the chart.



- Normally when the mouth is open, the level cycles with the tides between 3 and 8 feet.
- When the level goes above 8 feet, the mouth is probably closed as has happened 4 times so far this year.
- If the river does not breach itself, Sonoma Water will usually open the mouth to avoid flooding at Jenner.
- Also, when the mouth closes, it will begin to back up clear above Monte Rio making it hard to fly fish the lower part of the river.



To get latest level:

- Text 11467270 to WaterNow@usgs.gov
- Or send email to WaterNow@usgs.gov, with Subject: 11467270

Click this link to [Sign up to receive E-Mail notifications when the estuary opens or closes.](#)

Much of this information is also on our website at:

<https://www.rflyfisher.org/river-flows--fishing-reports.html>

Pray for rain.

~ Mike Spurlock

To get the latest flow:

- Text 11467000 to WaterNow@usgs.gov
- Or send email to WaterNow@usgs.gov, with Subject: 11467000

If there is any doubt, be sure to call 707-944-5533 before you fish to make sure the river is open!!!

When is the mouth open for fish to come in?

The level chart at the Highway 1 Bridge at Jenner will give a clue as to whether the fish are able to enter the river.

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

In May, 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

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

Virtual Zoom February General Meeting

We will be having a **General Meeting of the Russian River Fly Fishers** on **Wednesday, February 10th at 7PM** using the Zoom video sharing application.

There will be a presentation by **Lance Grey**.

This presentation has a little of everything – an overview of what Northern California has to offer the fly-fisher. The venues include rivers to the beaches; Moss Landing, Yuba River, American River, Feather River, Lower Sac, Lake Almanor, East Park Res, Lassen Park and the little Spaniard creek called Putah Creek. Northern California has many types of fish to cast a fly too. Steelhead, trout, shad, stripers, surf perch, bass, rock fish and halibut are represented in these presentations. We mix and match for areas and club desires. This will be a great program.



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RRFF Board of Directors

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364-1671, galtenb@gmail.com

Member at Large: Penelope Gadd-Coster

Member at Large: Tim Reuling

Coordinators

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Casting Pond Steward: Doug Mackay

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Casting Pond Monitor: Binky Castleberry

477-2805 fsh2xslc@att.net

Conservation Chairman: Charlie Schneider and Tom

Greer

February Calendar of Events

**BECAUSE OF THE CORONAVIRUS
SHELTER IN PLACE ORDER, ALL (in
person) CLUB MEETINGS ARE
CANCELLED. MONTHLY MEETINGS
ARE BEING HELD VIA ZOOM.
PLEASE ALL STAY HEALTHY AND
SAFE.**

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 30th

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