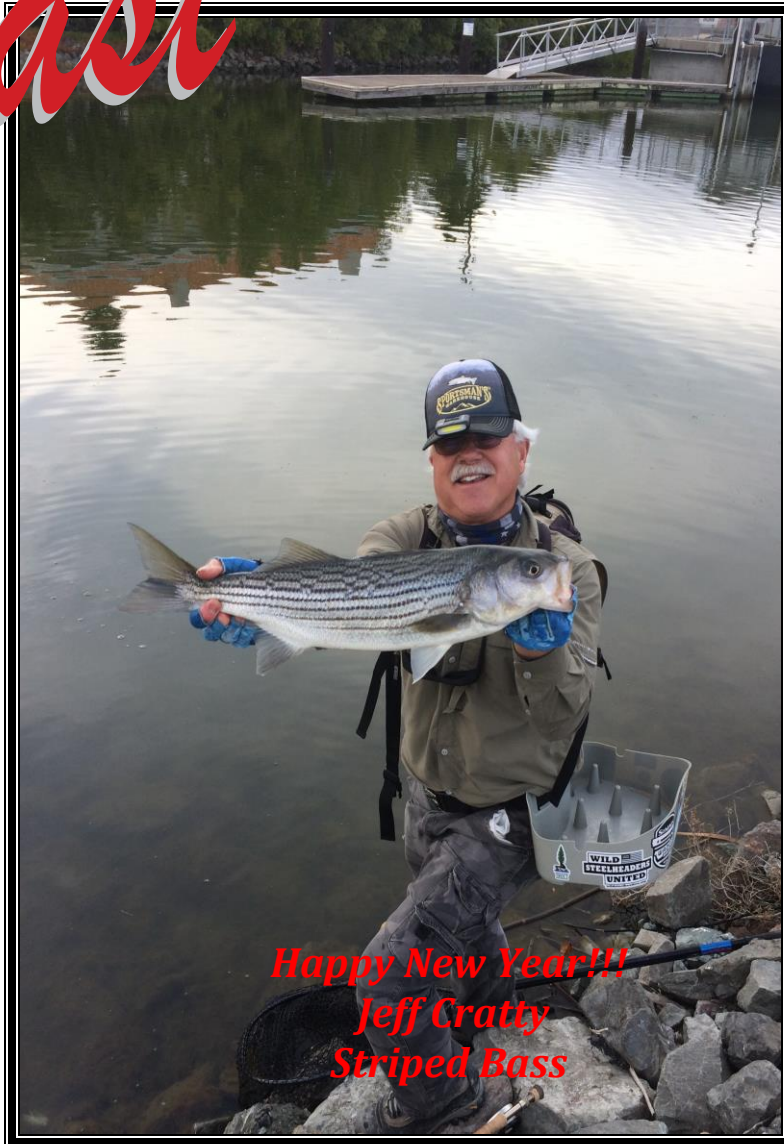


The Cast



*Happy New Year!!!
Jeff Cratty
Striped Bass*

*Sonoma County
California
Volume 48, Issue 1
January, 2021*

President's Message

2021 - A Year of Fishing, Cautiously

In a normal New Year's message, I might be imploring you to get outdoors more often and enjoy all the physical and spiritual benefits that fly fishing can provide. I would advise you that the hours spent fishing are not deducted from your allotted time on this earth, so get out there and do it now. My usual caveat would be that you do it wisely and safely: travel with companions, wear a life jacket, carry a wading stick in swift waters, etc. But with the arrival of the pandemic last year, a whole new dimension of caution has been added to our sport.

I am not a health care expert, so I cannot give you accurate information on how to avoid COVID-19 in your travels. Your best course is to listen to known health experts and apply that knowledge in your everyday actions. Even though effective vaccines are becoming available, 2021 will still be another year of risk, and to let our guard down too soon could be a tragic mistake.

I believe it is important for our mental health to get outdoors every once in a while, and breath some fresh air. Fly fishing is a great excuse to do that, and if you can do it safely, I recommend it. Ultimately though, you are the best judge of the risks you are willing to take.

Please keep safe this year and always,

~ Ed Barich

Flyfishing 101 – Beginning Fly Casting (Level 1)

In Part 6 of this beginning fly fishing series, we will begin to examine the basics of fly casting as outlined in Level 1 of the FFI's Fly Casting Instruction Program. Fly casting proficiency is a lifelong pursuit, and the extent of your accomplishment will depend on how much you practice and on the fly fishing experiences that you pursue. There is always something new to learn.

“Well, until man is redeemed he will always take a fly rod too far back. Just as natural man always over swings with an ax or golf club, and loses all his power somewhere in the air; only with a rod it's worse, because the fly often comes so far back it gets caught behind in a bush or rock. When my father said it was an art that ended at two o'clock, he often added, “closer to twelve than to two,” meaning that the rod should be taken back only slightly farther than overhead (straight overhead being twelve o'clock).” ~ Norman Maclean, *A River Runs Through It*.

Learning to fly cast is perhaps the most important factor in determining your successful pursuit of fly angling simply because your ability to deliver your fly to a fish will directly affect your chances of catching that fish. Thankfully, there are a few basic casts that are easy to learn and with practice can enable you get on the water with some chance of success. These casts incorporate the basic principles of fly casting and break them down in a manner that they can be easily practiced once those fundamentals are established. Level 1 of the **Fly Fishers International (FFI) Fly Casting Instruction Program** gives a good overview of these basic fly casting techniques.

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

Mastery of the above skills will afford the beginning fly caster with numerous opportunities to fish with a fly successfully and will provide a necessary basis for exploring more advanced techniques. At the RRFF Casting Pond in Dan Galvin Park, our volunteer instructors present these skills as outlined above. I will cover each here and present the important considerations that should be remembered as you practice these fundamentals.

Setting-up a Fly Rod & Reel

First, it is important to remember that fly reels can be set-up for either right-hand or left-hand retrieve. Traditionally, fly reels were retrieved with the right hand, however many anglers now choose to retrieve the line with their left hand, while fly casting with their right. You must determine which method you prefer and have your fly reel set up so that the line is wound on the reel correctly and incorporates the drag system properly. Your fly shop can take care of this for you.

Once you have the reel properly set-up with the fly line, you can attach the foot of the reel to the seat of your fly rod. **Remember, the fly line always comes off the bottom of the reel and goes forward to the first stripping guide.** The first guide(s) on your fly rod have a larger opening and a foot that attach them to the fly rod. These are called “stripping guides”. The remaining guides are a twisted piece of wire that mounts directly to the fly rod and hold the line close to the rod. These are called “snake guides”. The guide at the tip of your rod is known as the “tip-top”. The easiest way to thread the fly line through the guides on your fly rod is to strip the fly line from the reel and double it over, then use the doubled-over fly line to string the line through each guide. In this manner, if you happen to let go of the fly line it will come to rest at the last guide you threaded (instead of slipping back through all of the guides and requiring you to start over). **If you place your reel seat and reel on the ground to facilitate this process, DO NOT do so on surfaces that may allow sand or gravel to get into the inner workings of your fly reel!** You can take off your hat and lay it on the ground so that the reel and reel seat can be placed inside it and protected from contamination.

Make sure that you thread your fly line through each guide without skipping any (from time to time, this happens to all fly fishers). An easy way to check this is to grab the end of your fly line after you have finished and pull on it to put a bend in the fly rod. This will enable you to easily see if you have missed any guides. The guides on your fly rod are placed in such a way as to keep your fly line close to the rod and to minimize "line slap" against the rod blank, which can inhibit a smooth transfer of power when fly casting and affect casting distance.

Pointer – Please consider wearing a hat for sun protection when fly fishing and **always** wear sunglasses (polarized are best) for eye protection and improved visibility while fly fishing. It is a given that all fly fishers will hook themselves from time to time. Using **barbless hooks** facilitates removal when this happens, and **eye protection** can prevent hooking yourself in the eye.

Once your rod and reel have been set-up, make sure that you have a monofilament leader attached to the end of your fly line. Approximately 7.5 feet of 10 lbs. test leader, with a piece of yarn (the size of a Lima bean) tied to the end of it, is perfect for practicing fly casting.

The Roll Cast

The Roll Cast is the perfect cast to begin your introduction to fly casting. It is a cast that is used more than any other in fly fishing and has unique properties that enable you to fish in situations when you cannot throw the fly line behind you. If you are indicator fishing from a drift boat, you will be roll casting all day long. The Roll Cast is used when you need to get the slack out of your fly line, when you need to set-up other fly casts, and to present a fly while fly fishing. It is a good starting point in that it is concerned only with the forward casting stroke, and it can be broken down into three steps that illustrate some of the fundamental concepts of fly casting.

The Casting Arc – Before we begin, it is important that you understand what the "casting arc" is and how it is measured using the clock face as a reference. *The casting arc refers to the **starting point of your rod tip** (when you begin your casting stroke) and the **finishing point of your rod tip** (when*

you make the "abrupt stop" at the end of your casting stroke). **Note** – this refers to the starting and finishing point **of your rod tip!** These points are noted in relation to the clock face. Twelve o'clock is when your rod tip is directly over your head. Three o'clock is when your rod tip is parallel to the ground directly behind you (and your fly rod is parallel to the ground as well). One and two o'clock are reference points that are 30 degrees equidistant from each other between twelve and three o'clock. Conversely, nine o'clock is when your rod tip is directly in front of you (and your fly rod is parallel to the ground). Ten and eleven o'clock are reference points that are 30 degrees equidistant between nine and twelve o'clock.

Your casting arc will change depending on the amount of fly line you are casting and the type of fly cast you are performing. For beginning fly casters, we often start with approximately 35 feet of fly line. In order to false cast 35 feet of fly line (and keep it parallel to the ground), the rod tip will stop at approximately the two o'clock position (when throwing the fly line behind you) and at approximately the ten o'clock position (when throwing it forward). Throwing shorter or longer lengths of fly line will require different stopping points (using the clock face as reference).

Begin the roll cast by stripping (pulling from the reel) approximately 35 feet of fly line. Point your rod tip down at the water and sweep it slowly back and forth, dragging your fly line across the surface while feeding the stripped line through the guides and beyond the tip top guide. The resistance of the fly line on the surface will help feed the line beyond your rod tip. Once all of the fly line is beyond your rod tip and piled in the water in front of you, you are ready to begin.

Holding the fly rod – There are three primary ways to grip the fly rod. One method is "fore-finger on top" while a second method is "thumb on top". Perhaps the most versatile (and recommended) is the third method, with the "V" between your thumb and forefinger on top (as if you were shaking someone's hand). This grip allows for a wider range of motion while minimizing the tendency to turn your wrist when making longer casts. To efficiently use your fly rod, you should hold the grip toward the

forward end of it, leaving about ½ inch beyond your thumb and forefinger exposed.

Step 1 - With the fly line piled on the water in front of you, you will slowly raise your rod tip to the 12:30 position (just past directly overhead). **Do not lift the fly line out of the water!** To execute this, bend your arm at the elbow while keeping your wrist firm, and slowly bring your hand up so that it is directly opposite your ear. Your thumb should be pointing straight up, and your elbow will raise slightly to allow your hand to be next to your ear. With the rod tip at 12:30, your fly line will drape down next to you and slightly behind your shoulder, forming what is called a “D Loop”. If the fly line hits you, or is hitting the rod or reel, angle the rod tip away from your body slightly to move the fly line away from you. **Stop!** This is Step 1 – “To the Top and Stop”. **Check to make sure that your hand and rod tip are positioned correctly!** Before executing Step 2, make sure that your fly line is not moving on the water.

Step 2 - Applying the power. This is the most important key to fly casting! It requires you to control your rod tip and thereby control the size of the loop of line that you are casting. Your rod tip will move from the 12:30 position and **accelerate to an abrupt stop** at 10:00 o’clock. Let me emphasize - **Accelerate to an abrupt stop!** This has been likened to hitting a nail with a hammer, or flicking paint from a paint brush. The casting stroke accelerates the rod tip until the moment it stops. **It does not slowdown in anticipation of the stop, but accelerates until it stops!** What happens is this – the fly rod is a flexible lever, and the acceleration of the rod tip causes the rod to “load” (bend) from the resistance of the fly line on the water (or from the momentum of the fly line through the air). The bend in the rod increases until the abrupt stop, when the fly rod springs back to straight and throws the fly line forward. This allows the fly rod to do the work of throwing the fly line. So, as you accelerate the rod tip from the 12:30 position to an abrupt stop at 10:00, you are actually setting the size of your loop and how the casting energy moves forward.

To execute Step 2, your hand (beside your ear at 12:30) and forearm will move forward and down, bending at the elbow. Your hand and forearm should be an extension of the fly rod and move as one piece. Your elbow will move from a slightly

elevated position (at 12:30) back to hanging comfortably at your side (at 10:00). **Do not reach forward, or move your elbow from your side!** (If you do this, hold something under your arm while practicing to keep your elbow in the proper place). Reaching will adversely affect the forward energy of your fly cast. As you stop the rod tip at 10:00 o’clock, press forward slightly with your thumb, which will keep the reel seat close to your forearm and give you greater control.

Note: When using a roll cast to straighten-out fly line that is piled up in front of you, it may take more than one roll cast to remove all slack from your fly line. Once the fly line is fairly straight, you should be able to remove all remaining slack with one roll cast. When practicing the roll cast, never lift your fly line out of the water. Instead, drag it slowly across the surface while bringing your rod tip to the 12:30 position and then make sure that it stops moving completely before you execute Step 2. The fly line provides the “anchor” that will help load your fly rod in Step 2.

Loop size – The size of your loop is determined by where you abruptly stop the rod tip! When applying the power in your casting stroke, the apex of the casting arc as you accelerate the rod tip forms the “top” of your loop. Where you stop the rod tip sets the “bottom” of your loop. Tight loops, where the top and bottom of the loop are close to each other, throw the energy of the fly cast forward. Wider loops, while throwing some of the energy forward, also throw casting energy around the loop. Tighter loops drive well into the wind, whereas wider loops are beat down by wind and much less effective. Learning to control your loop size is one of the principal benefits of practicing fly casting. There are instances when throwing tight loops are necessary, and other times when throwing a big, wide open loop is required.

Step 3 – “Follow it down”. This is an important step in successfully completing the roll cast. When performed correctly, the roll cast will remove the slack from your fly line and allow a straight line presentation of your fly line, leader and fly. A key to making this straight line presentation is to follow the fly line down to the water with your rod tip after you make the abrupt stop at ten o’clock. Once you have made the abrupt stop at 10:00, you have sent the fly

line on its way. You could literally drop the fly rod in the water at this point and the line would still continue forward. To keep slack line from being reintroduced to the cast, as soon as you abruptly stop the rod tip at 10:00 immediately begin to follow the fly line down to the water with your rod tip. The rod tip should end up either just above the water, or slightly submerged, as the fly line settles on the water in front of you. **Be sure to abruptly stop the rod tip first, before beginning to follow the fly line down as it settles on the water!** If you stop your rod tip higher, the distance between your rod tip and the water will create slack line (as gravity will cause your fly line to hang down from the rod tip). That hanging fly line is slack line. To view this, place your rod tip at 9:00, then lower the tip to the water. You will be able to observe the amount of slack fly line created by the hang down.

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)

Okay...enough information for now. Next time we will look at the remaining skills presented in **FFI Level 1 - Beginning Fly Casting**. In the meantime, if you are interested in pursuing this further on your own, there are excellent casting instruction videos online (Orvis, Sexyloops) that can give you additional pointers. If you are a member of **Fly Fishers International**, you can access their informative casting instruction videos on their website as well.

I look forward to practicing with you at the Casting Pond!

~ Steve Tubbs

RRFF Casting Instruction Director

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 in March 2021. 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 January General Meeting

We will be having a **General Meeting of the Russian River Fly Fishers on Wednesday January 13th at 7PM** using the Zoom video sharing application.

There will be a presentation by **Jon Baiocchi** entitled “Skwalas” on the Yuba.”

Jon’s newest Power Point program covers everything a fly angler needs to know about the famed Skwala stonefly hatch on the Yuba River, arguably the best winter dry fly fishery in the state of California.

“Skwalas” on the Yuba” covers the life cycle of this unique stonefly including identification characteristics, habitat, behavior, and the importance of this big meal for the resident wild trout and steelhead. Also covered in the program is

weather and timing, the other game – mayflies, trout behavior, tactics and rigging for nymphing and dry flies, water to target, and the go to flies both nymphs and dries. New highly detailed animated slides and beautiful photography give this fascinating program clear and concise information that can be used on future trips by the visiting fly angler. This is a program you do not want to miss!

Russian River Angler Information Signs Update

Steelhead season kicked off in the Russian River last week with the first lifting of the low flow closure for the 2020/21 season. Though flows remain low and the river mouth mostly closed in the past weeks, intrepid anglers were greeted by new information signs funded and installed by Russian River Fly Fishers with help from Redwood Empire Trout Unlimited and The Russian River Wild Steelhead Society. This collaborative effort is intended to inform anglers of regulations on the river and promote safe catch and release practices to ensure that wild fish aren't harmed when caught.

The signs come during a critical time for the river's fish. Years with early season low flow – like this year – often see spawning tributaries disconnected from the mainstem river despite mainstem flow being sufficient for brief openings of the recreational fishing season. This means migrating fish, both steelhead and federally endangered coho salmon, are relegated to the mainstem river until more rain comes. Since coho generally spawn earlier than steelhead in the Russian River, anglers are much more likely to encounter coho early in the season in dryer years. As of Friday Jan. 8th, just 13 steelhead have returned to Warm Springs hatchery marking a slow start to the steelhead season. With that in mind, we hope anglers will be extra mindful to not drag fish on the bank, use a rubber net, minimize handling time and keep fish's gills underwater when catching and releasing fish.

CDFW has noted that license sales increased dramatically this year, likely because folks are looking for safe outdoor activities in response to COVID-19. We expect many new anglers to be on the river this winter and I hope RRF members take pride in the signs when they see them at access points along the river, knowing we are doing our part to educate anglers and protect the resource.

The folks at the coho brood stock program just let us know that they recently released some Floy tagged adult coho salmon in the river. Adult coho releases are one recovery strategy used in the Russian River to help restore coho populations. These fish have intact adipose fins and are marked externally with a pink Floy tag in their dorsal fin. If accidentally caught, please release quickly and unharmed!

Some of you may have seen or remember a similar Floy tagging effort with steelhead over the last couple years. That effort will continue again this year. Steelhead will be tagged with colors other than pink and will be missing their adipose fin. You may harvest steelhead missing their adipose fin that have a Floy tag.

Long and short of it, be extra careful if you accidentally hook a tagged coho, they need to get up tributaries and spawn. Only harvest steelhead with clipped adipose fins. Please report Floy tagged steelhead (just steelhead, not coho) to Warm Springs hatchery just like in past years. Visit www.rrfish.org for more info. "

~ Charlie Schneider, RRF Conservation Coordinator



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January 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.

RRFF Board of Directors

RRFF Board of Directors

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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 30th

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