

# The Cast



Sonoma County  
California  
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*A Fine Truckee River Fish*

## President's Message

### Fly Fishing – a social sport

There are a lot of misconceptions in the media about the sport of fly fishing. Some of it revolves around the mystique of its methods, such as fly casting or fly tying, which are often deemed to be skills that are beyond the reach of the “average” person. However, with a modest amount of training and practice, most novices can acquire a sufficient grasp of those skills to actually catch a fish. Of course, that minimum goal may just be the beginning of a lifetime quest to experience all the personal accomplishments that can be found in the sport of fly fishing.

Another misconception is that fly fishing is a strictly a solitary sport. If a TV commercial shows someone fly fishing on a stream, that person is typically alone, enjoying the splendor of the outdoors (and

invariably hooking a trout in a wild location). As an excuse to “get away from it all,” fly fishing satisfies our human craving to reconnect with nature and get away from human noise and concerns. Sometimes we just need to get our daily minimum ration of peace on the waters.

But there are other times when being alone in nature is, well, just being alone. As social creatures, we find that there can be even greater satisfaction in sharing the outdoors with others. For those of us who have participated in club outings in the past, this year has been particularly challenging. Not being able to go on a fishing trip with friends is like eating your favorite meal without any spice – nourishing, but not especially satisfying. I would like to believe that there will be a day soon when, like opening day of trout fishing, the “all clear” will be announced and we can go back to the kinds of club group experiences that we all miss. More likely, that will be

a long, gradual process that we will have to endure, but I know we can handle it.

The one attribute that the media often misses about fly fishers: we are *very* patient.

Although we did take July off from publishing our monthly newsletter, the Russian River Fly Fishers are still active during the COVID-19 pandemic. So just to keep you up to date, here is a quick summary of what's going on with the RRF:

- **General Meetings** – Although we cannot meet in-person, we have been continuing our monthly General Meetings on the second Wednesday of the month using the Zoom video application, and we will continue this method of communication with live speakers for the foreseeable future. Our Program Director, Don Shaw, has arranged to have interesting speakers on fly fishing topics for our enjoyment as the highlight of each meeting. We have found that attending a live video meeting using Zoom is a bit difficult for some of our members, so in the future we plan to also record the meeting and send out a link to the video afterwards so that it can be more easily viewed later at our members' convenience.
- **Casting Program** – The casting pond at Galvin Park is OPEN for use by individuals, immediate family groups, and other persons practicing strict Coronavirus safety protocols. This includes all Santa Rosa City and Sonoma County health regulations regarding safe physical distancing and the use of face masks. On Thursday evenings, fly casting instruction may be available for those casters who have their own equipment. It will consist of demonstration and verbal instruction only...no physical contact will be permitted. See more recent and detailed information at

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

- **Club Outings** –All club outings previously listed on our club calendar have been marked CANCELLED. With the present COVID-19 situation, the board decided that we could not recommend overnight travel to distant locations. We hope to get this program up and running again when the pandemic situation improves. In the meantime, we recommend our members consider visiting local waters and take all the necessary precautions to stay safe.
- **Membership and Dues** – Our club roster now includes 180 members – an all-time high! Because club expenses (such as the cost of meetings at Veteran's Memorial hall) are much lower now, the board has decided to forgo requesting member pay their dues until the club can resume its normal operations. That includes new members; so, if you have friends who might be interested in joining the club, let them know that they can do that for free (for a limited time) to see if being an RRF member is something they would like to continue.
- **RRFF Board Meetings** – We are continuing our monthly board meetings. In July we welcomed two new members: Penelope Gadd-Coster and Tim Reuling. Let's thank them for their commitment to helping our club meet our members' needs.

Here's hoping that in these challenging times our members are still able to get outdoors and enjoy all the peace and beauty that nature provides.

Tight lines,

~ Ed Barich

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## Fly Fishing 101 – Rods, Reels and Fly Lines

*This is Part 4 of a series of articles written specifically for those who are new to fly fishing and who are trying to navigate the waters of basic fly angling knowledge. It is my hope that the information here will help dispel some of the mystery and will provide you with a preliminary understanding of our sport. Please note that the information presented in this series is based on my 30 years of fly fishing experience and on my fly casting and beginning fly fishing teaching programs. Other anglers may offer additional insights and considerations.*

### 1. Fly Rod Recap –

In our last article, we looked at fly rods and I presented my recommendation for a versatile, beginning fly rod for our area. Following is a summary of that recommendation.

I like the **9-foot, 6-weight, graphite, medium-fast action** fly rod for Sonoma County and Northern California. Why? The 6-weight fly rod offers you the versatility of pursuing anything from small to large trout, shad in our nearby rivers, and small bass on local farm ponds and lakes. Although a little heavy for panfish and small trout, it can still be fun and is flexible enough for mountain streams and lakes, but also offers the backbone and stiffness to cast large flies (like poppers, frog patterns, big streamers, etc.) in the often windy conditions found on our local farm ponds and lakes. For bass fishing, you may also need to drag your flies (and fish) through weed growth, and the 6-weight offers you those capabilities. It is a good choice for pursuing large trout in Putah Creek or the Sierra, and for shad fishing in the Russian River and the Central Valley. If you can only purchase one fly rod to begin your fly angling initiation, a 6-weight would be my first choice.

As also mentioned, this 6-weight graphite fly rod is available as part of a “starter set” at our local fly shops (*Outdoor Pro Shop* and *Sportsman’s Warehouse*) that will include a reel and a fly line for

usually less than \$200.00. These set-ups (from a reputable manufacturer – SAGE, Redington, Orvis, TFO – to name a few) are a good investment for the beginning fly fisher and offer an inexpensive alternative to what can become a substantially more costly endeavor as you move into higher-end fly rods and reels.

### The Fly Reel –

At its most basic level, the fly reel is simply a receptacle that stores your fly line, leader and backing. However, as our fly angling adventures move toward bigger waters, and to the potential for larger fish, the fly reel plays an increasingly significant role in line management.

Fly reels can be set up for either a left-handed or right-handed retrieve. Traditionally, fly reels were right-hand retrieve, however, there are a greater number of people who now retrieve using their left hand (perhaps because many of us fished traditional left-handed spinning rods before we began fly fishing). Most fly reels can be converted to your retrieval preference, but it is important to remember that the drag system on your reel must also be set up to work properly based on the hand that you choose. Otherwise, if you take a fly reel that is set up for a right-hand retrieve, and you wind the line on to retrieve left-handed, you will be retrieving your line against the drag system. Also, your reel will be “free-spooling” whenever you strip line off the reel (or a larger fish makes a run) which will often cause a backlash that results in tangled line on the reel spool. (“Stripping line” is when you pull line off of your fly reel in preparation for fly casting.) The drag is set up properly when the fly line leaving the reel engages the drag resistance, and there is no resistance when you are winding the line back on the reel. Correctly attaching the fly reel to the reel seat at the butt of the fly rod is also crucial. The fly line always comes off the bottom of the reel spool (never from the top of the spool) and is threaded forward through the stripping guides, snake guides and tip



top guide on the fly rod (always being careful not to miss any of them).

When angling for smaller fish, the drag on your fly reel often does not come into play. The fish are not large enough to make explosive runs that require you to fight them “on the reel”, so it is preferable to manage your line using your fingers – stripping line in to bring the fish closer, and letting line slip through (with resistance from) your fingers when the fish pulls hard enough to warrant this. In these instances, the fly line is never wound back onto the reel so the drag system is never engaged. It is when fighting larger fish (that have the potential to make long runs) when it is beneficial to get your line “on the reel” and allow the reel’s drag system to provide the consistent, even pressure to help tire those fish quickly. Many reels now, even the cheaper models, have fairly good drag systems that provide consistent pressure. Inconsistent drag pressure can result in a broken tippet (which is attached to the end of your leader) or a pulled fly and the loss of the fish. Most fly reels also have the edge of the spool exposed, so if a fish makes an extended run additional drag can be added using light pressure from your palm (called “palming the reel”). However, care must be taken when doing this as any inconsistencies in pressure may also cause the fly to pull out or the tippet to break.

Most of the starter sets that are available now have a fairly good drag system on their fly reels, at least for a beginning fly fisher who is learning the fundamentals of line management and how to fight a fish. These fly reels are matched to the weight of the fly rod and corresponding weight of the fly line, so are sized appropriately and have the proper line capacity. Lighter rods utilize smaller reels with less line capacity, whereas heavier rods use larger reels that can accommodate the heavier (thicker) fly lines and the need for extra backing on the reel spool. When fishing for steelhead, salmon, pike, and most saltwater species, having increased line capacity and a good drag is an essential element for success as

many of these fish have the potential to take all of your fly line and send you “into your backing” during your efforts to land them.

### **The Fly Line, Backing, Leader and Tippet –**

The line on your fly reel is a multi-component system that starts at the arbor on a bare spool. To the arbor is attached your “backing” (a slim diameter, often Dacron, line that is quite strong – often 50 lbs. test) using an **Arbor Knot**. This backing is used to fill the remainder of the spool that will not be filled by your fly line. The rear end of the fly line is attached to this backing (an **Albright Knot** is a good knot for this) and is wound onto the reel. Your fly line is also approximately 50 lbs. test. The backing and fly line together should pretty much fill the spool. To the forward end of the fly line a monofilament “tag” is attached (approximately 50 lbs. test, 12 – 18 inches long) and is secured to the end of the fly line using a **Nail Knot**. At the forward end of the tag, a **Perfection Loop** is tied (about ½” in length). This facilitates a “loop to loop” connection with your tapered monofilament leader (which tapers from about 40 lbs. test down to a variety of line size possibilities, the lightest being about 2 lbs. test – or 8X). Leaders can vary in length and are tapered to help them roll over while presenting the fly. The 40 lbs. butt end of the leader also has a **Perfection Loop** so that it can attach easily to the loop on the monofilament tag (and changed when necessary). To the tapered end of the monofilament leader, additional tippet (either monofilament or fluorocarbon) can be added to lengthen the overall leader. This is always the same diameter (or one diameter designation less) than the end of the leader (a 5X leader would have a 5X or 6X tippet). Good knots for this are the **Blood Knot** or the **Double Surgeons Knot**. Additional tippet can be added to extend the leader even further. The higher the number designation for both leader and tippet, the smaller the diameter (and lighter the breaking strength) of the line. 0X equals approximately 15 lbs. test (as its breaking point) whereas 8X equals

approximately 2 lbs. test. Finally, the fly is attached to the end of the tippet material using either an **Improved Clinch Knot** or **Non-Slip** or **Lefty Kreh Mono Loop**. The knot used here is often dependent on the type of fly being used.

***The fly line is the most important component of this multi-part system.*** It must be balanced to both the rod and the reel. For our purposes, a 6-weight fly rod should be throwing a 6-weight fly line. As the fly line is what we are learning to throw when fly casting, a line that is too light, or too heavy, for the rod will impede fly casting efficiency. This matched rod, reel and line system is designed to work together, a 6-weight rod with a 6-weight reel and 6-weight line creating a balancing point usually just in front of the cork grip on the fly rod.

For the beginning fly caster, I recommend using a Floating fly line – either a double-tapered (DT) or weight-forward (WF) designation. Floating lines are much easier to learn to fly cast with, and provide good versatility on the water as far as targeting both surface feeding and sub-surface feeding fish. Weight-forward fly lines are quite popular and make it easier to “shoot line” when you are fly casting (as the first 30 feet – sometimes a little more - of the line is slightly thicker and heavier than the fly line behind it). This added weight up front makes it easier to feed additional line into the fly cast. The double-tapered line has a uniform thickness between the equal tapered sections at either end of the fly line. Some claim that this feature helps with consistent loop control and casting accuracy. If you have purchased a starter set for your first fly rod combination, your rod, reel and fly line should all be pre-matched for you. Most starter sets utilize a WF Floating fly line. You may have to attach a monofilament tag to the end of your fly line, and then add a leader, but otherwise you should be ready to go. When learning to fly cast, I recommend a 7.5 foot, 3X leader (with no additional tippet added).

There are many types of fly lines on the market, including floating lines, sink-tip lines, full sinking lines and shooting heads. Among these types, there are also variations on each. Typically, a full fly line is 100 feet long and has a 50 lbs. test Dacron core that is coated with a plastic covering. Floating and sinking properties are found in the coating, with smaller diameter sinking lines offering faster sink rates than larger diameter ones (less resistance). Fly lines often last for many years (with proper cleaning and care), which is a good thing as fly lines today can frequently exceed \$100.00 each.

As you are beginning to understand, there can be many nuances that apply to fly fishing equipment and how it is set up. These possibilities will become clearer to you as you learn more about fly fishing, about the fish you wish to pursue and the techniques available to pursue them. However, fly fishing does not have to be complicated, and it is important to realize that you do have a choice as to how far down the rabbit hole you wish to go! I have presented to you some of the basics regarding your first fly rod, reel and line combination, based on the opportunities available in our area and offering you as much versatility as possible (using only one fly rod). Perhaps at times I have imparted a little too much information, but I hope that this helps illustrate the wide range of connected factors that influence our pursuit of fly fishing. It is always a bit overwhelming at the outset, but you can also make it as simple as you would like it to be. Just remember, the fly fishing industry is continually developing new products for you to purchase. Sometimes, it may be prudent to stick to the basics.

In my next article, we will begin to explore the Fly Cast. This is perhaps the most important skill in your pursuit of fly fishing, and it is a life-long practice that you will never fully master. At whatever level of fly casting ability you currently find yourself, there is always something more to discover and to learn. Your fly-casting capabilities will become the foundation of your fly fishing arsenal. The abilities

you develop through its practice will determine the adventures that await you on the water.

And so we begin...Tight Loops!

~ Steve Tubbs

RRFF Fly Casting Director

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## Club Website Update

The club website <https://www.rrflyfisher.org/> has a few new videos that may be of interest while you are staying home.

<https://www.rrflyfisher.org/mikes-video-page.html>

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## September Dues Update:

It is appearing likely that we will not be back to normal operations, and as a result, we will not be asking for dues payments for the 7/1/2020-6/30/2021 year for the foreseeable future. We will continue with existing members not being required to pay dues, and new members can join for free. However, some people have been choosing to pay dues, and if you chose to pay them, we will gladly accept a dues donation.

We suspended all club social activities on 3/18/2020 due to Covid-19. The casting pond reopened in June, and we have limited instruction on Thursdays at 4:30 pm. In June, we also replaced our monthly general meetings with Zoom meetings. Our monthly fishing outings have been suspended indefinitely. It also seems likely that our annual February Cioppino Dinner fundraiser will not be possible.

In May, we announced that we would suspend dues payments for the July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021 year until things returns to "normal." We are saving money by not having to rent the Veterans Hall or pay speakers, but we do have significant ongoing

expenses for insurance, The Cast newsletter and our annual donations to worthy causes (Steelhead in the Classroom and possibly Casting for Recovery). We have sufficient savings to make it through the year without dues, but it will leave a dent in our bank account.

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 on-line, or you can mail me a check. It goes without saying that any contribution to the club would be very much appreciated.

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

Thank you.

Mike Spurlock, Treasurer

**415-599-6138**

**20 San Domingo Way**

**Novato, Ca 94945**

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## Virtual Zoom September General Meeting – Date C

We will be having a **General Meeting of the Russian River Fly Fishers on Friday Sept. 11 at 7PM** using the Zoom video sharing application. We had to postpone from our usual "second Wednesday" date due to the cancellation of a planned speaker.



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## September Calendar of Events

**BEGINNING 3/18, BECAUSE OF THE  
CORONAVIRUS SHELTER IN PLACE  
ORDER, ALL CLUB MEETINGS,  
OUTINGS AND FLYCASTING  
CLINICS ARE CANCELLED UNTIL  
FURTHER NOTICE. PLEASE ALL  
STAY HEALTHY AND SAFE.**

## RRFF Board of Directors

## RRFF Board of Directors

President: **Ed Barich**

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Vice President: **Doug Mackay**

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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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Casting Pond Monitor: **Binky Castleberry**

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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 30<sup>th</sup>

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