

On the Fly

Official Newsletter of California Fly Fishers Unlimited, a 501c(3) Non-profit - September - October 2026



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Lost & Found Pilot Peak Lahontan Trout

An Incomplete and Erroneous History!

By Ken W. Davis

This is a baffling mystery complicated by erroneous history and misplaced ethics: It's a story about an over-fished lake on the Paiute Reservation in Nevada, a giant trout that was declared "extinct," a federal biologist who accidentally discovered a malformed ten-inch trout in a dinky Utah creek 400 miles from the over-fished lake, and a famous fish biologist who identified the unusual trout as probably the fish considered extinct.

The environmental puzzle continues with a remote Utah landowner who bought the desert real estate near Pilot Peak not knowing there was an endangered trout in the nearby waterway. He eventually, "rescued" and protected the mystery trout for thirty years and thought of himself as one

[Continued on Page 4](#)



Ever catch a Pilot Peak Lahontan Cutthroat Trout?

Thank Steve Doudy



Utah rancher Steve Doudy next to a pond he used to protect Pilot Peak Cutthroat.

CFFU Calendar - SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2026

DISCLAIMER: Dates on this calendar are subject to change. Check the CFFU website for the most up-to-date event schedules. [CFFU Calendar LINK](#)

SEPTEMBER	EVENT	LINKS
1	GENERAL MEETING: San Luis Reservoir & O'Neil Forebay with Lee Haskin	General Meeting
3	OTTERS	Otters
6 - 13	ALASKA outing	Alaska Outing
17	OTTERS	Otters
17	Tech Thursday	Tech Thursday
19	American River Clean-up - Mile 16	American River CU
20	Lower Sac Salmon Fishing	Lower Sac Outing
26	Casting Clinic	Casting Clinic
30	Social - Safety on waterways	Social
OCTOBER	EVENT	LINKS
1	OTTERS	Otters
3 - 4	SCOUTS Fishing Weekend - Contact Frank Rinella	Frank Rinella email
5	Board Meeting	Board Meeting
6	GENERAL MEETING - John Sherman Delta Stripers	General Meeting
10	Lower Sacramento River Outing	Outings
15 - 16	Napa Striper Outing	Outings
15	OTTERS	Otters
15	Tech Thursday	Tech Thursday
24	Casting Clinic	Casting Clinic
28	Social	Social



Mike Giusti

Mike Giusti's Casting Practice:

Check your emails for upcoming dates.



As we begin to turn the corner from the long, hot days of summer into the more comfortable temperatures of fall, there is a lot to look forward to in the months ahead. For many of us, fall is one of the most enjoyable times of year to be on the water.

The improved weather should also bring welcome changes to many of the lakes, rivers, and streams that were affected by the summer heat. We can expect some of our favorite waters in the Sacramento region and throughout Northern California to begin coming back to life, offering members new opportunities to get out, explore, and enjoy time with friends on the water. Northern California offers a wide variety of productive fly-fishing op-

Looking Ahead to Fall

portunities, including well-known waters such as the American River, Lower Sacramento River, Upper Sacramento River and the Yuba River. This coming year, the Board has made it a priority to offer more fish outings within the Greater Sacramento area as well as some requiring a short drive that can be easily fished for a day.

We also have some exciting club programs planned for this fall. Our upcoming speakers will bring timely and useful information for members, with topics that are relevant to fishing in the Sacramento area and throughout Northern California. These programs, along with Tech Thursday, are a great opportunity to learn more about local waters, seasonal techniques, fish behavior, conservation issues, and ways to make the most of our time on the water. Whether you are new to fly fishing or have been involved for many years, I encourage everyone to attend, ask questions, and take advantage of the knowledge our speakers will be sharing.

Fall is also a good time to reconnect with the club. Club events are one of the best ways to meet other members, share

information, hear fishing reports, and stay connected to what is happening in our local fly fishing community. The strength of California Fly Fishers Unlimited has always come from the participation, experience, and enthusiasm of its members. So join in ... you'll be glad you did!

Looking a little further ahead, we will be electing a new board this coming December. Serving on the board is an important way to support the club and help guide its programs, activities, conservation efforts, and overall direction. Anyone who is interested in serving is certainly welcome and encouraged to learn more. We will be connecting with the members with information about the process, including the timeline, available positions, and how members can learn more about what being on the board entails. Thank you to everyone for continuing to support California Fly Fishers Unlimited through your membership, volunteer time, meeting participation, and shared commitment to fly fishing and conservation. I look forward to seeing many of you this fall—at meetings, at programs, and hopefully out on the water.



Pilot Peak Lahontan Cutthroat Trout - Continued



18 to 39 pound Lahontan Cutthroat Trout caught in Pyramid Lake circa 1930. Photo credit: Pyramid Lake Fisheries.



Clark Gable in early 1930s at the Pyramid Lake Fishing Club in Sutcliffe.

of the fish; maybe misunderstood, isolated geographically from humanity and certainly a proud survivor of the harsh environment on Pilot Peak in Western Utah.

Extreme heat, lack of water, wildfires, and remoteness contribute to the challenge for any living organism, especially fish and humans. In this case, those hardships created some hardy trout and an uncelebrated champion of trout lovers and the major savior of the Pyramid Lake fishery.

Alas, the mystery fish is the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout (LCT), the largest trout on Earth that was declared “extinct” in 1942 by the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service. There were none left in Nevada’s over-fished 27-mile-long Pyramid Lake. They could not find any trout. Zero!

Who Really saved the Pilot Peak Strain?
The unappreciated hero to anyone who has caught or appreciates the magnificent Pilot Peak Cutthroat is Steve Doudy a reclusive

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Pilot Peak Lahontan Cutthroat Trout - Continued

“Conservation will ultimately boil down to rewarding the private landowner who conserves the public interest.”

Aldo Leopold

Utah rancher and professional golf Instructor who for the love of life and fish stepped up to protect the trout.

Steve constructed one pond at his own expense and two more with help from the Utah Department of Wildlife Resources, Trout Unlimited and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The monetary help included windmills that powered air bubblers to aerate the fish ponds.

Golfing in the desert? Of course, he had to build a putting green and an unwatered target green with three practice tees adjacent to the ponds - in the harsh Utah desert. That adds some mystique to the story and the man who was most significant in saving the Pyramid cutthroat strain.

What Happened to the Cutthroats at Pyramid Lake?

How did this environmental disaster and human failure happen? The 19th and early 20th centuries were dark ages at Pyramid Lake as the Lahontan Cutthroats were caught in tremendous numbers and shipped to towns, railroad construction sites and mining camps throughout the West. Some estimates ranged as high as one million pounds annually between 1860 and 1920. Other contributing

issues include construction of dams, poorly timed water diversions in Fallon and even Paiute fishermen who netted the trout and sold them in town. In 1905 the Derby Dam was built to divert water, which it did. The Dam cut off the native spawning area in the Truckee River. That caused the water level in Pyramid Lake to drop 80 feet. The trout could not get out of the lake to spawn upstream in the Truckee. No spawning, no baby trout, no adults to catch.

Morrison Creek (aka Donner Creek):

Back to the over-grown Utah waterway called Morrison Creek overlooking the Great Salt Lake Desert where the small Lahontan Cutthroats were placed by someone more than 100 years ago. The “How-did-they-get-

there“ part of the mystery will probably never be solved. Theories abound from the sublime to the ridiculous such as “Bucket loads of trout from Pyramid were thrown from passing trains to several small creeks in Utah,” to long distance translocation by sheep herders and the trout planted by some anonymous commission. Considering the remote location and the overall watershed conditions, some of the theories fail even the simplest test of logic.

Discovering the lost fish:

In 1975, Don Duff, a biologist with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) conducted stream surveys on the Eastern slopes of Pilot Peak in the Utah Desert searching for remnant populations of the Bonneville

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Image by Don Duff of a emaciated trout he caught in Morrison Creek in 1975 that was sent to Dr. Robert Behnke.

Pilot Peak Lahontan Cutthroat Trout - Continued

It's a HARSH environment for a trout to survive



The view from Bettridge Creek of the Great Salt Lake desert (next to the Bonneville Salt Flats.)

Cutthroat Trout. He “jigged” a fly pattern in Morrison Creek, while avoiding rattlesnakes, and caught a few trout that were not Bonneville. What were these small, deformed trout with large heads and bodies that didn’t fit the size of the trout? He noticed that they were more bronze and had fewer spots than the Bonneville cutthroats.

Identifying the Misplaced Trout

Don consulted with Colorado State biologist Dr. Robert Behnke a world renowned expert on Cutthroat Trout who based on some physical characteristic, including gill rakers (teeth) was certain they were the “extinct” Pyramid strain of cutthroats. But, how could he confirm his suspicion? The genetic toolkit for identifying fish species was not scientifically available in 1975. And, where can you obtain uncontaminated

DNA from the former inhabitants of the lake on the Paiute Reservation north of Reno? Many people questioned the genetic reality of these misplaced trout and of course how these special fish ever got 400 miles from the spiritual homeland of the Paiute tribe. The Paiutes questioned the possibility for more than twenty years and apparently believed the Summit strain of Lahontan LCT they developed were “equivalent” to the fish on Pilot Peak.

Behnke’s big question was “Did the fish from Morrison Creek retain the piscivorous fish-eating genetics of the original Pyramid Giant trout.” Some trout were reported to reach 60 pounds. The Tui Chub, a small bait fish in Pyramid Lake were the main diet of the quick-growing cutthroats. Large schools of the 10-

inch Tui Chub facilitated the cuts to quickly gain weight and size.

On-going experience with fish caught at Pyramid confirms that the Pilot Peak strain is superior to the Summit strain considering size and fighting ability. Experienced anglers claim they can tell if the dream fish on the end of their line is a Pilot or Summit.

State Biologist to the Rescue

In 1984 Bryce Neilson a state biologist was working on Morrison Creek near the Doudy Ranch. He approached Steve with a couple of beers and said: Hey, I though you might be thirsty”. That was the beginning of a lifetime friendship. Bryce was highly involved with the project helping Steve with advice, scientific expertise, emotional support when

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Pilot Peak Lahontan Cutthroat Trout - Continued



Tui Chub (from U.S.Army)

attempts to hatch eggs failed due to sediment issues, and some funding.

Bryce electroshocked Morrison Creek and took 50 trout over to Bettridge Creek after he rotenoned it to eliminate rainbow trout the state had planted years before. For added protection, they took 50 fish and released them in a Camp Creek Reservoir near the town of Grouse Creek.

In a deal with the Utah Depart-

ment of Wildlife Resources, the state provided fencing to protect the trout ponds in exchange for allowing Bryce to place the “suspected” LCT in the pond on Steve’s property.

Once in Steve’s pond, the 10-inch mystery fish from Morrison Creek quickly grew up to 5 – 6 pounds. Speckled Dace were introduced in the ponds as a food source for the growing LCT. The voracious trout chased them across the pond into protective aquatic vegetation. Steve acting as a proud “fish parent” would, collected thousands of Mormon Crickets to feed the ravenous cutthroats. They devoured the ugly, I mean really ugly bugs with vigor.

With Nielson’s help, Doudy built two more ponds to accommodate the growing trout. They continued to tend the brood stock while interest in the fish continued to wane. Steve proudly tells the story of one of the original trout brought back from the reservoir near Grouse Creek in 1990 that he named “Bertha.” A beautiful fish, she was 5 pounds, 20 inches in length and provided

several thousand eggs. With confidence, we can announce that Bertha was “**The Mother of the Pilot Peak Lahontan Cutthroat Trout strain.**”

Misplaced Credit:

Yes, it’s a sad but true story. Even worse was the slug of people who regrettably took credit for saving the species. Ethics were non-existent even in the scientific community. Of course, we have to interject the unfortunate reality of newspaper articles and other press that were incredibly misleading and, in many cases, downright wrong. Let’s correct that history.

As you will read, there were people who contributed to getting the LCT into Pyramid Lake but the majority of the credit belongs to Steve Doudy, Don Duff and Bryce Neilson. We have to ask if any of the three guys were not involved, would we have the stunning Pilot Peak LCT in Pyramid Lake? Think about these scenarios. What if Steve had not bought the property, not build a dream home and not dug a pond? Or, if Don Duff had NOT conducted a fish survey in three-foot wide Morrison Creek? Thankfully, when he discovered the wayward fish, Don had the knowledge and took professional action to consult with Dr Behnke. A lesser biologist might have discounted the unusual find and moved on to another waterway. On a sweltering desert day, Bryce Neilson could have consumed his two cans of beer, skipped talking



Electrofishing Morrison Creek

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Pilot Peak Lahontan Cutthroat Trout - Continued

with Steve and disregarded the potential for raising the trout from Morrison Creek in Steve's Pond. Without the survey, the pond, and the friendship beer, the world famous LCT in Pyramid Lake would have remained deformed in an ecologically poor Utah "Crick." No, that's not a misspelling, that's what Steve calls creeks.

DNA Science Finally Available:

Fortunately, in the late 1990s Dr. Mary Peacock at the University of Nevada Reno, had her staff working on obtaining original DNA from preserved Pyramid Lahontan Cutthroats. The University of Michigan, the Smithsonian and Cal Academy had Pyramid specimens from the late 1880s and early 1900s, but unfortunately, they were preserved in formaldehyde which made it difficult to extract DNA. Veronica Kirchoff, Peacock's lab manager developed a technique to get usable DNA from the museum samples. Presto, she determined that indeed the Pilot Peak trout were the original Lahontan Cutthroats. What a moment that must have been to scientifically document the discovery of the original Pyramid Lake strain. That was certainly a major contribution to the LCT recovery project.

Lahontan National Fish Hatchery

The federal government then took interest in the mid -1990s when they visited the Doudy Ranch, now the Lahontan Ranch, several times and harvested brood-stock eggs from

Bertha and other females. Over the years they provided funding for tending the brood stock and multilevel support after a wildfire struck Morrison Creek. The creek was superheated, the trout were stewed and snakes were floating in the water. Eventually, LCT were brought back from Bettridge and planted in Morrison.

Alas, the folks at the Lahontan National Fish Hatchery took credit for saving the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout and claimed that the Pilot Peak Project was probably the most significant conservation project on the green planet.

You would think the Paiute tribe would be overjoyed to repatriate Pilot Peak into Pyramid Lake, but they weren't. They introduced the Summit strain Lahontan cutthroat from Summit Lake. Now both strains are found in Pyramid. The smaller Summit and the larger Pilot Peak. Tribal members have set up their own hatchery on Pyramid Lake.

The federal hatchery in Gardnerville Nevada added a million-dollar rearing facility to propagate the Pilot Peak LCT. They started planting Pilot Peaks into Pyramid Lake in 2006. Just six years later in 2012, a fly fisher netted a tagged 36-inch Pilot Peak that weighed 24 pounds. That fish was introduced into Pyramid Lake in 2007 at 8 inches which means its growth rate was about 1/2 inch per month.

Value of the Pilot Peak LCT



Considering the results of introducing the Pilot Peak LCT strain into Pyramid Lake one could argue that it was the most significant conservation project on the planet. The Pilot Peak fishery has brought millions of dollars and enormous worldwide fame to the lake. Anglers spend money on equipment, lodging, permits, guides and many travel from around the planet for the possibility of catching a giant Pilot Peak LCT.

What's Next?

We don't know. What I do know is that the federal government has planted the Pilot Peak fish in many areas and has not renewed interest in protecting the genetic gold mine in Morrison Creek. As the Father of Conservation, Aldo Leopold once pontificated: *"The first part of intelligent tinkering is to save all the pieces."* We must ques-

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Pilot Peak Lahontan Cutthroat Trout - Continued



Bertha

“Mother of the Pilot Peak LCT in Pyramid Lake”

tion if all the parts, specifically the genetic reserve, in Morrison and Bettridge creeks, have been saved or better yet protected as the LCT is a federally threatened species.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Recovery Plan for the Lahontan cutthroat Trout (January 1995) requires that Utah Landowners with LCT on their property be contacted and a management plan developed. That has not happened yet.

Our visit in July 2026

For what seems like an eternity, I have wanted to see Pilot Peak Creek, which is where I was originally told held the Pilot Peak Cutthroats. That was incorrect information. Wrong creek! Every time we drove toward Salt Lake City, we passed the Pilot Peak sign and I would drool. Enough, I recently got Steve's contact information from Doug Oullette, the famed Pyramid Guide, and called Steve to arrange a visit to the infamous creek.

In July 2026, Laurie and I visited

the very remote Lahontan Ranch, which is purposely “hidden” and protected by its reclusive owner. We interviewed Steve and Karin, his highly intelligent and business savvy partner. We toured the ranch ponds, drove up Steve's access road and then endured a very rough road to Bettridge Creek. We walked a short section of Bettridge Creek where we did see one small trout in a pool smaller than my childhood 20 gallon guppy tank.

The situation is extraordinarily complex. The creeks are somewhat overgrown with native plants and numerous Russian Olives a water guzzling invasive plant. Cows on adjacent Bureau of Land Management property are allowed to wander in the creeks and upstream springs in an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

Whats an ACEC
An Area of Critical Environmental Concern is a formal designation by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

for specific public lands that require special management attention to protect important historic, cultural, scenic, fish and wildlife, or other natural resources, or to safeguard life and safety from natural hazards. (Taken directly from the BLM website).

Steve has some protection from the cattle with fencing that is not always adequate. Adding to the situation, a drought has hit the already harsh environment reducing the size and number of already marginal pools in both creeks.

Rest assured, even at 70 years of age Steve Douady is still enamored by the majestic trout and proud to have been “selected” to take part in the protection and recovery of the Pilot Peak Lahontan Cutthroat trout.

Thank you Steve Douady and Bertha the “Mother of the Pilot Peak LCT.”

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Pilot Peak Lahontan Cutthroat Trout - Continued

Morrison Creek - Utah



From HERE



Bettridge Creek - Utah

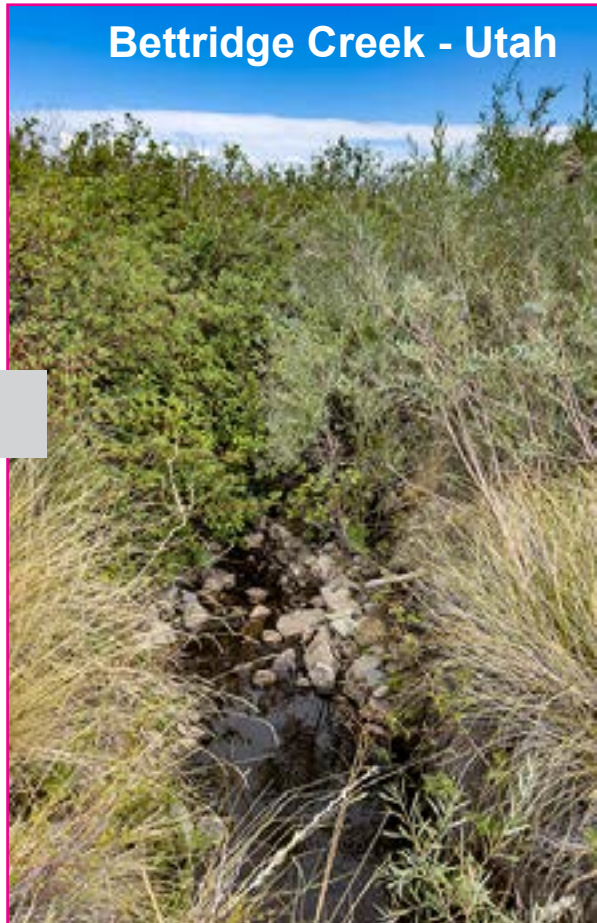


Image 7/17/2026 Saw one trout in small pool at bottom of the image.

Back to PYRAMID LAKE



Doug Oullette: Former Pyramid Guide and great friend of CFFU. 20+ Pound LCT caught on January 29, 2015.

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Pilot Peak Lahontan Cutthroat Trout - HELP

How can you help protect the LCT genetic resource living in Morrison Creek? Consider donating to the GoFundMe account set up to assist the Lahontan Ranch with issues on Morrison Creek. The money will go toward the following:

1. Fencing to protect the sensitive creek from ongoing cattle damage.
2. Brush mowing and road grading to facilitate better access for creek protection which is walked almost daily.
3. Hire drone operator to monitor remote areas and difficult terrain
4. Monitoring water right filings to protect the creek.
5. Future educational efforts.

NOTE: We expect to provide updates in this newsletter



**Protect Morrison Creek
and Pilot Peak Lahontan
Trout Project**



**GoFundMe Account Link
HERE**



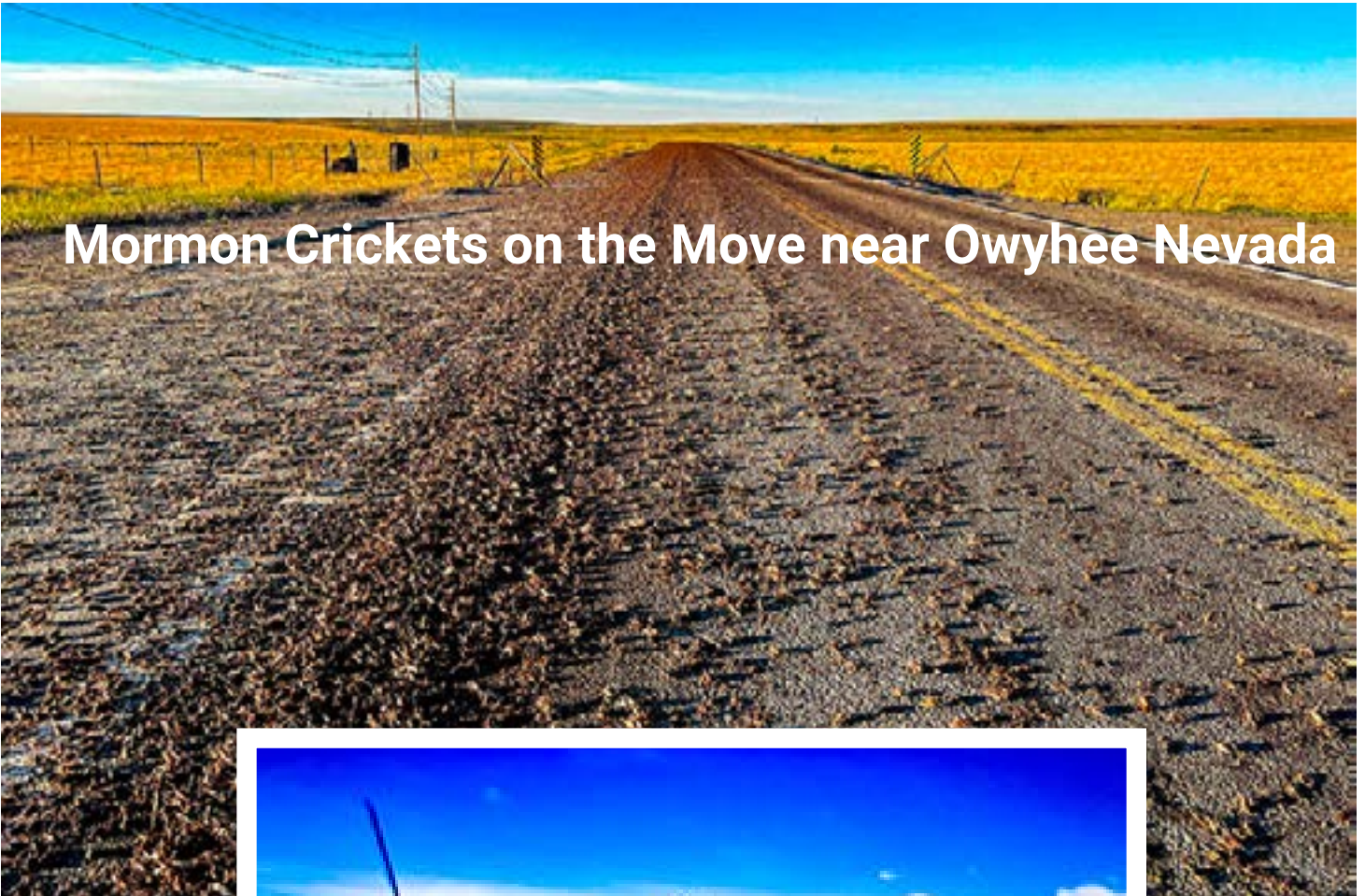
Karin Griffin & Steve Doudy on the Lahontan Ranch overlooking the Great Salt Desert.

BUG of the Month - Mormon Crickets

By Ken W. Davis

Mormon Crickets (*Anabrus simplex*) is a misnomer, they are actually a katydid. Although flightless, these ugly bugs may travel up to two kilometers a day in their swarming phase which can be a serious agricultural pest and sometimes a traffic hazard. They are called Mormon Crickets due to the “**Miracle of the Gulls**” event in 1848. Following feverish prayer events by Mormon settlers, legions of Sea Gulls arrived to save their crops from the devastating bugs. The gulls apparently fed for two weeks on the nasty creatures. They do make great fish food as our grandkids in Idaho use them for catfish bait. The ugly bugs are fancied by trout (See the Pilot Peak article). Mormon Cricket flies are available on eBay.

Mormon Crickets on the Move near Owyhee Nevada



Photos © Ken W. Davis

NICE CATCHES



Greg Nyland with a Grayling in Montana. Great catch as Grayling are unusual in the Continental United States.



Bili Barron with a tremendous catch on the Little Truckee.

MENTOR OUTING - AUGUST



Mike Guisti, Casting Instructor, helping new member Brad Simkin with his casting at the August Mentor Outing.

New Members Meeting



New members meeting- Rick Wiesner, Penny Reisig Mike Brozo and Ben Hoecker-Cavetti standing with past president (center) Jeff Stephens

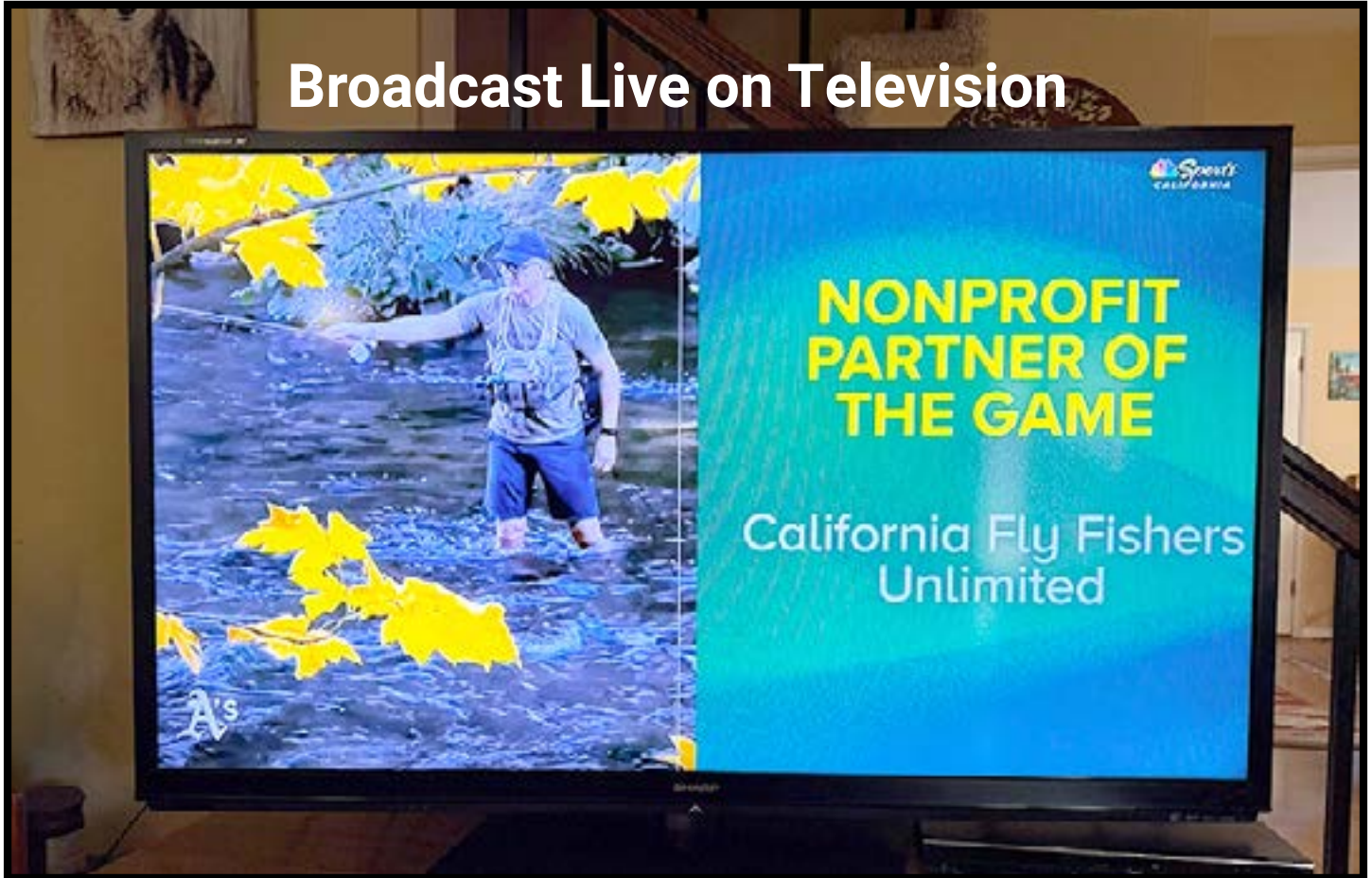
Challenge Coin - Recipients



Congratulation to Paul Smith and Rich Kendall for receiving this month's Challenge Coin.
(Left to right: Paul Smith, Jeff Stephens, Julie Kaye and Rich Kendall)

CFFU - A's Non-Profit Partner at the Game

Earlier this summer, the Oakland Athletics Foundation selected CFFU as their Non-Profit partner of the ballgame on August 12, 2026. They provided a table for fly tying and club information, and gave the club 30 tickets to the game. They also broadcast our logo on the field scoreboard and the image below provided by the club was broadcast on television. The TV announcer read the information below and talked about fly fishing after the segment.



Audio from Dallas Braden, the A's television announcer, "Well folks, tonight we want to recognize the California Fly Fishers Unlimited as our non-profit partner of the ball game. Since 1962 they have promoted the art of fly fishing, while preserving local aquatic resources through conservation efforts. From scholarships programs for universities and colleges they are dedicated to protecting our Northern California ecosystems. For more about their environmental and community work head on over to CFFU.org"



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CFFU - A's Non-Profit Partner at the Game



A's Stealth Bomber



Tied by Jeff Morin



How Salmon Anglers in Scotland and Wales Invented Two-Handed Spey*

The Problem Solvers

By Bill Barron

In past centuries, fly angling was about a goal and solving a complex set of problems. The primary goal was food. The problems were myriad. Where are the fish? What are they eating? How can I fool the fish into thinking my fly is a live insect? How can I cast my fly where the fish will eat it?

By A.D. 2000 many of these problems had been solved. For example, the Roman author, Aelian, described how Macedonian anglers learned to fool fish with an artificial Roos: [People Have Fly Fished For Thousands of Years](#)

“They wrap the hook in scarlet wool, and to the wool they attach two feathers that grow beneath a cock’s wattles and are the color of wax,” wrote Aelian, describing an ancient artificial fly.”



By the 15th century, fly fishing began shifting from survival to a leisure activity for wealthy English landowners, aristocrats, and Scottish gentry. The publication of the first comprehensive guide to the sport, **A treatyse of fysshynge wyth an Angle**, by Dame Juliana Berners was published in 1496

This changed dramatically in the early 1800s, and fly fishing for salmon become a popular sport in England, Scotland and Wales. This rapid evolution was fueled by several factors:

- Societal changes, such as unionization, freed up more time for leisurely pursuits
- Accessibility - the expansion of railways permitted anglers to travel easily to remote salmon rivers
- The rise of Gaudy flies - an explosion of bright, highly elaborate salmon fly patterns facilitated by the British Empire's global trade routes. This provided flytyers with previously inaccessible

feathers and furs such as the Golden Pheasant (crests and tippets), Toucan (yellow breast feathers), Macaw (red and blue tail feathers), Indian Crow (chatterer), and Jungle Cock (used for "eyes" in the wings). Flies at left from Kelson's *The Salmon Fly*, 1895.

- Explosion of literature on fly fishing and tying. Izaak Walton's, *The Compleat Angler*, became a staple of English literature and among the most frequently printed books in the English language. It stimulated many to start fishing as it portrayed fishing as something good for anyone wanting to feel close to nature. In 1836 *The Fly-Fisher's Entymology* revolutionized the sport by documenting natural insects and matching them with artificial flies.

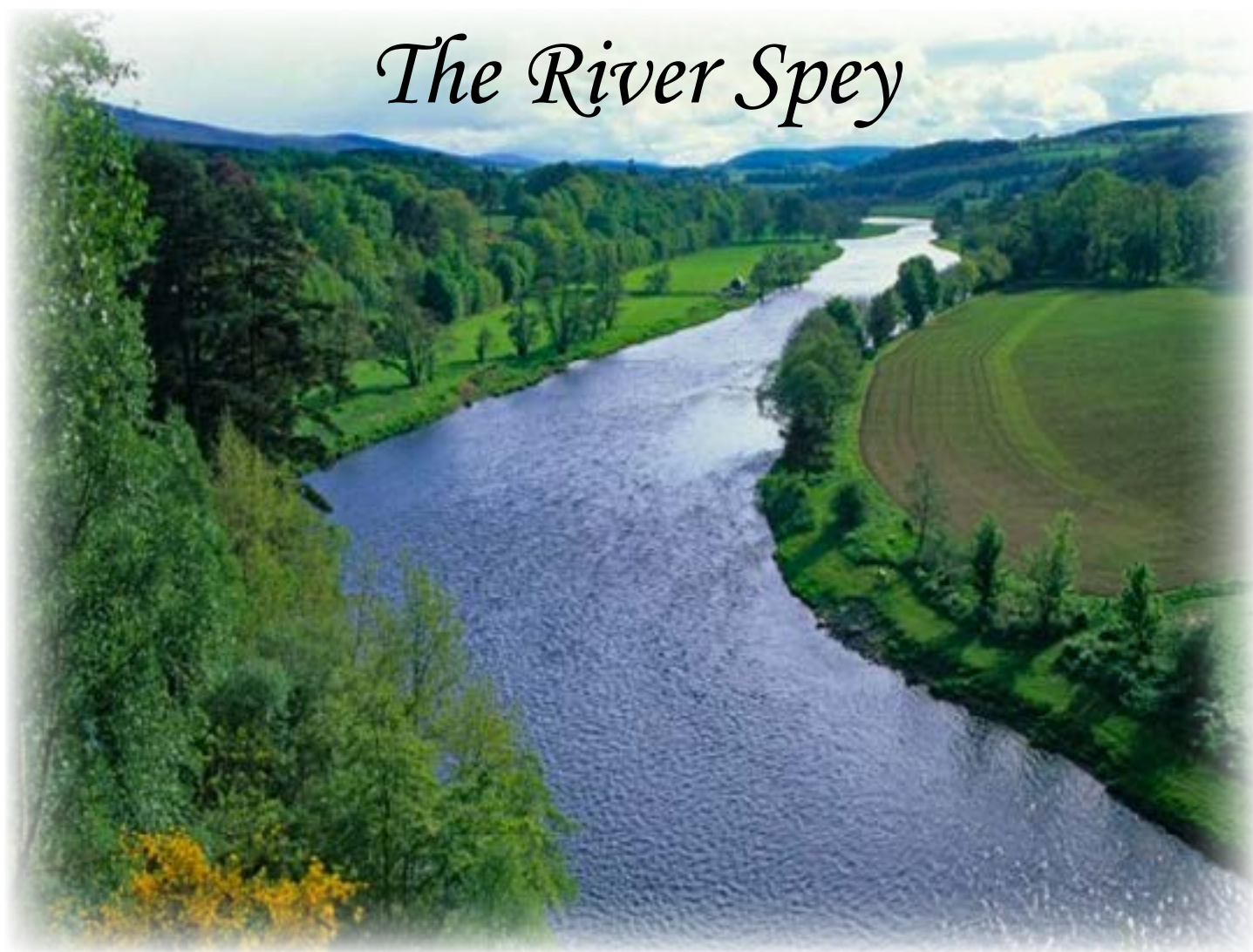
The Invention of Two-Handed Spey*

The “Big Four” Scottish salmon rivers, the Tweed, Tay, Spey, and Dee, became among the most popular and accessible salmon fly fishing destinations. However, these destinations confronted the angler with several, yet to be solved, problems:

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Inventing the Two-Handed Spey

- Size: These rivers were 100 to 300+ feet wide
- No back casting room: Banks were densely populated with shrubs and trees
- Salmon “lies”: Fish were often tucked against the far bank



The River Spey

Although the two-handed Spey cast “solution” to the above challenges is commonly believed to have originated in Scotland, in fact, anglers in Wales were simultaneously tackling these issues.

The first description of which we are aware comes from Francis Francis in his **A Book on Angling, 1867** .

*“It is a species of cast that is made when there are high banks or rocks at the angler's ack, so that he cannot send his line behind him. And it is one that requires some practice to make from the right shoulder, and a good deal more to accomplish neatly from the left. ... **This cast is called by various names ; sometime ‘the Welsh or Spey cast’, or according to the name of some other river where it is practiced.**”* [Author's bold]

The left hand holds the rod below the reel, and the right grasps it at a convenient spot above ; sufficient line is let off the reel for the cast ; the point of the rod is waved backwards over

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Inventing the Two-Handed Spey

the right shoulder ; the right hand comes almost to the level of the shoulder. Give the line time to extend itself backwards, making a sweep round with the point of the rod, still feeling the line as you do so direct it towards; the mark as in trout-fishing.

..he raises his hands well up and carries the rod up to his shoulder pretty smartly; but he does not send the fly back over the shoulder, but rather fetches it in towards his feet, and he must take care that in doing so it does not come too high above the surface of the water, or it will not catch the water again at the right spot. About two or three yards above him to his right hand, and a little in front of him, the fly must touch the water, but must go no further. This action brings the line into the form of a great bow or arc, to which the rod is the chord. [The D loop]. The instant the fly touches the water [Touch and Go], a sharp downward turn and cut is made, not towards the spot you wish the line to go to, but to establish a sort of centrifugal action, .. and the line flies towards the point required;”

Francis believed the cast to be so complicated that it was not possible to describe it adequately, hence he advised, as we do today; learn from a skilled instructor and then practice:

“It is impossible on paper to teach the tyro how to cast a salmon fly. ...Let him note how it is done, and then flail away to the best of his ability for a day or two until he can pitch the line out somehow. Then let him get some adept to instruct him how to get it out properly, and to correct any fault in his manipulation. After that, practice, practice, practice, and watching a performer now and then at work will do the rest.”

He also urged what current day instructors constantly harp on, i.e. slow down, avoid overpowering the cast, and make as little noise as possible:

“ A greater mistake cannot be made than to overcast either your throw or yourself. Some anglers are so fond of making long casts just to show off, that they will risk cutting a fly to pieces rather than move a few yards; ... never use more strength or vigour in making a cast than is absolutely necessary, for all beyond that is not only downright waste of power, but positively defeats the end the fisher has in view.

“ Let him study ...not how much noise he can make by swooshing his rod through the air, but whether he cannot avoid making any at all. “

Francis details advantages of the Spey cast - requires less effort, possible with little back cast space, and permits longer throws:

“... rod sends out the lighter part with much less exertion to the angler than is required for the usual overhead throw. ...you can fish these casts from the bank, which you could not command unless in a boat, for, as the line will never be brought behind you, no rock, tree, or bank impels the throw. The fly, too, can be pitched much further by this than any other means.”

Unfortunately, it was impossible to learn the cast from Francis' complex explanation and the absence of helpful diagrams. These shortcomings were addressed in 1895 by George Kelson who penned a thorough, 596 page treatise on every aspect of fly fishing for salmon, **The Salmon Fly**.

Inventing the Two-Handed Spey

His detailed and lengthy text and diagrams permitted the angler to learn not only the Spey cast but many others including the Switch, Air, Flip, Governor, and Dance casts.



"The"Spey"admits of many variations and, without exception, produces signal results. It is, therefore, just one of all other casts to master and apply in 'places for which the system is adapted, as, for example, where the line cannot be fully extended behind the Angler

"The tackle being extended down stream, you first get a downward curve in the portion of line out of water, by raising the rod somewhat gently ... ; then, without any intermission, you get the curve in the contrary direction (upward) on the eve of lifting the fly-end out, by slightly dropping the rod-point when near the perpendicular, outwards ; and, still carrying the rod easily and regularly back and round inwards, so that the point of it forms the outline of a reversed letter S, you finally complete the cast, just as the fly-end of the line is lightly striking the water near your outer side, by a hearty " thrash-down" [forward cast] aimed at the destined direction of the fly..."

"Now the great thing in this cast, the pure essential part upon which it entirely depends, is to compel the line to strike the water after lifting it out instead of

sending it back in the air." [rod loading]

How and why the name "Welsh Throw" was abandoned and replaced worldwide by "Spey" is left to the imagination. For a modern day re-enactment of the Welsh throw see: **Celtic Fly Casts**.

What About The Rod

In the early 1800s, Scottish anglers employed Greenheart wood, imported from British Guyana, to manufacture Salmon rods. This wood had better flexibility than the previously used North American Hickory, and was extremely water and insect resistant. Unfortunately, it is extremely heavy, e.g., an 18ft rod weighs 2-3lb (an 18ft graphite rod weighs 12oz)

A major innovation in salmon rods came from Alexander Grant in 1894. Grant was a violinist, violin maker and a champion fisherman. He merged his acoustic expertise with rod craftsmanship in two distinct ways:

Acoustic Tuning: Because the density of natural greenheart wood varies from piece to piece, he hand-planed the wood and struck each rod section with a tuning fork, listening for the exact sound frequency. He altered the taper until the sections vibrated at the exact

Continued on Page 21

Inventing the Two-Handed Spey

musical note required to work in total unison.

Vibration Transfer: Just as a violin body transfers string vibrations to produce sound, Grant designed the overlapping splices, bound together with linseed-treated leather lacing, so the energy from the caster's hand would wave continuously from the butt to the tip without hitches

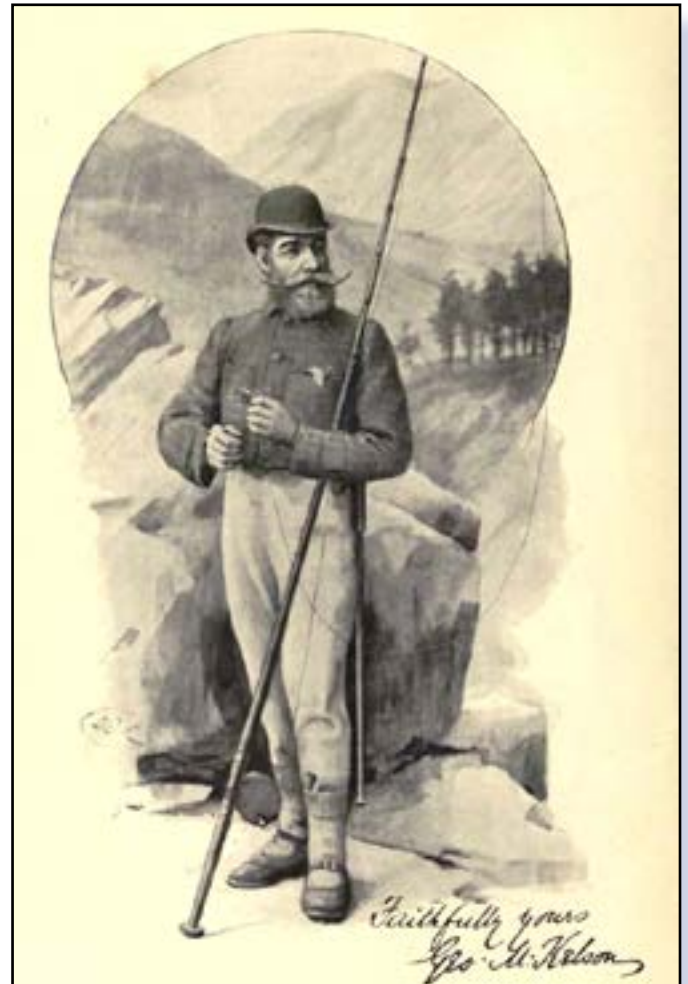
The lap joints enabled the rod to bend and caused the load of the fly line to distribute evenly throughout the rod allowing longer casting distance. In 1895 Grant used a 21ft rod to set a world record of 65 yards, a cast not exceeded until 2005 by Scottish angler, Scott McKenzie.

The rod was patented and the rights sold to Charles Playfair & Co. Marketing material demonstrated how to bind the sections together and how to cast the rod, the preferred method being the Planet cast.

* A key reference for much of the above is The Spey Cast or Fly Throw: **History in England, Roots in British Columbia and Popularity in North America** by Art Lingren. 



From: The Salmon Fly Geo M. Kelson. 1895



The Author: **Geo M. Kelson**

Surf Dancing

By Captain Jeff Morin



Have you ever stood in a natural place where the noise is so loud, that it is actually quiet? Instead of the anxious drive to seek a quiet room for solitude and comfort, you stand, for just a moment, and listen to the roaring ocean surf crash, rhythmically at your feet. Standing there, the gulls peck at washed up pacific mole crabs, a formation of pelicans fly across your vision and your feet - your feet have now sunken 6 inches in the sand, so you move, you surf dance. You waltz or cha cha, whichever is your style, with your partner, the beautiful foamy surf.

As you strip your fly line into your stripping basket and gracefully dance backwards, never turning your back on your partner, you pick up the line of the water. You play out line with a double haul with a spring to your step, head first into the surf, sending your sinking fly line over the approaching breaking wave. Sometimes the surf is violent

and you approach with apprehension, but the surf is comforting and welcoming.

You lower the rod tip to stay in step with your line, in direct contact with your fly, with a tight line. The surf leads you in this dance, pushing you naturally forward, always swaying, and sucking you back in and at times, giving you a surprise smack on your side. If you are lucky, you feel the familiar vibration at the end of your line and you quickly strip the fly line into your basket until a resistance is met, raising your rod tip to the cloud covered sky. There is a heaviness to the line and you can see and feel the rod flex under the weight. So, you begin to move with determined steps, backwards up the beach, while simultaneously stripping your flyline into your stripping bucket, while most of the line falls at your feet in the excitement; mixing with the salt and sand, as you drag a crab up the beach. Got you!

My first surf fish on the fly rod was a Barred Surf Perch on the sands of Ocean Beach San Francisco with the other club members that answered my call for our first surf fly fishing outing. Many caught their first fish in the surf that day and it was exceptionally exciting to see and hear the members' curiosity and interest grow.

Fly fishing the surf may sound and when you step on the sand, look incredibly overwhelming. Just like attempting to pick apart a mountain stream from riffle, run and pool. You first wonder where to start. My best advice is to grab a stripping basket, give me a call, and let's just start by throwing a line on the water.



In the NEWS: FLYFEST 2026

Fly Fishers International is proud to announce
GEORGE DANIEL
as a Headline Presenter for
FLYFEST 2026

Author. Educator. Innovator. Competitor.
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REGISTER NOW AT [FLYFISHERSINTERNATIONAL.ORG/FLYFEST](https://flyfishersinternational.org/flyfest)

FlyFest 2026
Presented by *The Fly Shop*
REDDING, CA | SEPTEMBER 24-26



Western States Native Trout Challenge

Speakers: Laurie Banks & Ken W. Davis

Saturday 26, 2026 - 9:00AM - 10:00AM

Self-proclaimed trout bums Laurie Banks and Ken Davis love to chase trout. Their involvement in the Western Native Trout Challenge (WNTC) changed their lives. It took them to beautiful locations in the west and introduced them to native species they had never caught. Laurie was the first woman, and they were the first couple to complete the program. Their presentation will explain the challenge, help getting you started and give you keys to being successful. Laurie will also cover how your catches can be melded with state trout challenges and Fly Fishers International's Cuttcatch program.



Aquatic Invertebrates for Fly Fishers

Speaker: Ken W. Davis

Saturday 26, 2026 - 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

Aquatic invertebrates are the basis for fly fishing. Anglers debate over size, shape and color, but Ken Davis believes that presentation is most important. Understanding how mayflies emerge, stoneflies hunt, and dragonflies move is essential, if not paramount to a successful fly-fishing experience.

Magazine editors have called Ken, one of the best invertebrate photographers in the nation. Ken's images have been published by National Geographic, American Angler, The Flyfisher and hundreds of other books, periodicals, encyclopedias and websites. His presentation will cover all the major groups of aquatic invertebrates using high-definition images, subsurface video clips showing how trout react to water bugs and artificial flies and his personal experience with fly-fishing.

In the NEWS: FLYFEST 2026

FlyFest 2026

September 24 - 26th

Redding, CA

[LINK to PROGRAM HERE](#)



Short-line Nymphing Predation Czech and Euro-Nymphing

Speaker: Ron Rabun

Saturday 26, 2026 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM

This presentation provides insights into Short-line Nymphing pre-dating modern Czech and Euro techniques. Commonly known as Ted Fay Two-fly Technique historically used on Shasta Area rivers. Ron will present basic foundations and discoveries from over 60 years of experiences. You will learn basis setup, flies, casting and angling techniques. Beginner and advance anglers will likely discover new and improving foundations to their current angling experiences.



Tension Casts with Heavy Line

Speaker: Sam Yee

Friday: 9/25/2026 1:00 PM - 5:00 PM

This class focuses on: Casting adjustments for sinking lines (*Lefty style, side arm, shifted casting plane, *More power, weight shift, torso & shoulder twist, *Double Hauling, *sinking lines. sink tips, *integrated shooting heads with weighted clousers. Pick ups: Raising the sinking line to the surface (roll cast pick up and spiral pick up); Avoiding the overload at the end of the stroke (tension casts horizontal Belgium cast, vertical Belgium cast, vertical Belgium cast with backcast presentation. AND much more. Eye protection, TFO rods and line provided for 10 students

In the NEWS: Forest Bathing

“Shinrin-yoku is simply being in nature, connecting with it through our sense of sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch.”

Dr. Quig Li - 2018

By Ken W. Davis

“Yes Honey, It’s true, there is a scientific study that documents that fishing in a forest can boost my immunity and specifically help built defenses against cancer.” That’s what I told Laurie (who doesn’t need any more reasons to go fishing) and it’s scientifically accurate according to a physician in Japan.

Dr. Quig Li, an Immunologist at the Nippon Medical School in Tokyo, has done scientific studies concerning the health benefits of being in healthy forests. He describes the Japanese phrase *shinrin-yoku* to mean bathing in the forest atmosphere, or taking in the forest through our senses. It is simply being in nature, connecting with it through our sense of sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. He claims that many forest trees put off natural aromatherapy that can provide a boost in our immune system, attitude and general well-being. I like it.

The Study: Dr. Li took 12 men on a three-day forest trip consisting of slow walks with no special breathing or set routes. Blood tests afterward showed a clear increase in natural killer cells, the immune cells that help the body fight viruses and cancerous cells. He noted that the elevated levels remained measurable 30 days later.

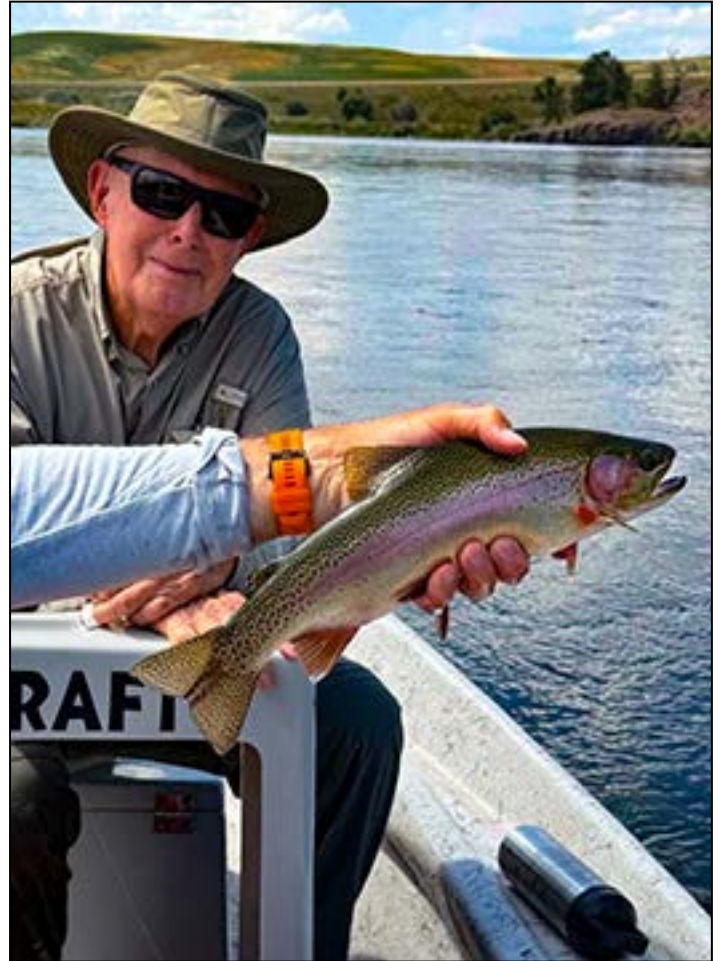
His control group walked the same distance through a city showed no change in the important natural killer cells. His prescription: ***Visit a forest at least once a month and take in all the atmospheric health value that trees produce....(and fish while you’re there) .***

From: Dr. Quig Li. 2018. **Forest Bathing: How Trees Can Help You Find Health and Happiness.**



Congratulations - 60th Anniversary

Special congratulations and best wishes to our wonderful friends Betty and Keith Pfeifer on their 60th wedding anniversary. A great trip on the Missouri River, staying at the DeMark Lodge. 🦋



"Fishing is like love: it's not always the fish you catch, but the memories you make."

"The best catch of my life wasn't a fish – it was finding someone who loves fishing as much as I do."

"My heart beats only for you – hook, line, and sinker." **Unknown**

'You make my heart skip a beat – or maybe that's just the fish.' – Unknown

PONDERINGS: What a Waste?

By Forrest Oldham



Forrest with a group of CFFU members discussing hooks and flies.

Hopefully you, the reader, will not consider my efforts in this column to be a waste. I put a bit of thought and time into these comments, hopefully helping some of you to work out your personal solutions to problems. I have dedicated this to considerations on waste. I have noticed a lot of life involves waste. I will keep the thoughts here relative

to our journey as fly fishers. First thoughts on this came to me from my fly-tying table. Many, me included, found lots of materials being “wasted” such as the webby portion of a dry fly feather and started to save this potentially useful stuff. Rarely have I used the stuff, but I have used some when really convenient. I have concluded it best to accept

this stuff as waste and send it to the waste can. An exception is the pink or orange marabou resulting from tying steelhead/salmon flies. I use some on alevin fry patterns for the yolk sack. Another waste I gained control over is false casting. If, unless for drying out a dry fly, I false casted more than three times, I was wasting the remaining casts. You know, the fly must be on or in the water to get a fish. Yet another waste I found was in trying to conserve on tippet material by tying my knots with minimal lengths of tag ends. Not only is this more difficult, it is time consuming with fumbling the ends to get them to behave and go where I want them. I found it best just to give myself a little extra and, again, accept the waste. The most troublesome waste I consider is the waste of precious time living and not getting to all the fishing and fishes I want to experience. 

August Speaker - Maury Hatch



Maury Hatch at the tying table before his presentation on Delta Striper fishing at our August General Meeting.

Tim's Tying Corner - Stick-on Eyes

By Tim AuYoung



Tim AuYoung at the tying table

Hello everyone, I hope all is well.

All is well with me as I reminisce with myself about this past trip to Baja, La Ventana, Todo Bien Hotel and Resort, June 16-21, 2026. I give credit to John Durand for organizing this unofficial group outing specifically targeting Rooster Fish and Mahi Mahi.

On the shuttle ride to the fishing dock, I had a brief conversation with various other fishing colleagues about “eyes on the flies”. We all conversed and spoke about various “eyes”, and how to attach them to the pattern.

Jokingly, I shared that a tying tool very useful for me was the basic “cauterizer” that physicians use to remove warts and other skin anomalies. “Not starting your fly on fire” was a very amusing comment as not everyone has had this happen

to them. Needless to say, basic comments on using the “cauterizer”: The tips are very delicate and can break, bend, or otherwise make the tool unusable, especially getting used to it for the first time. Costs usually run upwards of \$20

- Some of them are more easily battery changeable than others. The tips work by heating the strands of material with the glowing red tip emitting heat maybe $\frac{3}{8}$ " away from the target area. So, be very careful not to get too close.
- After use, I replace the cap so the tip does not get damaged on your VERY NEAT DESK (not), then I do the other side of the fly if applying “eyes”
- Because of the heat transference, start farther away than you think, then move slowly towards the target area.
- For use on real or normal/synthetic materials, like some saltwater flies, some people indent the tip so that the stick-on eyes fit flush with the headed surface. As a matter of preference, sticking the eyes on top of the headed area then may be cemented, or resined to adhere more permanently.
- To adhere the “stick-on eyes”, I use my bodkin to GENTLY peel the eye off the backing, careful not to take the backing with the eye itself. If you do that, then the cement on the back of the eye does not seat the eye when placing the eye where you want it. Also be careful not to stab yourself using the bodkin to remove the eye itself.
- Placing the eye is a matter of personal preference. Depending on the stick-on eye you use, some have the black pupil centered, some of the other types of eyes have black pupils that move inside the eye itself. Both types have small, medium, and large eyes to choose from. The color of eyes is also a choice for some of the stick-on eyes.

Bottom line, you have many choices of eyes to adhere, and depending on the type of fish targeted, those variables will guide you to which eyes you utilize. On this trip, we targeted Roosters and Mahi Mahi, so specific sizes of hooks demanded specific sizes of eyes. Depending on the tyer, we all had different ways to coat the eyes once placing the eyes where they needed to be. Resins and different permanent adhesives were used to include basic head cements.

So there you have it, know your target fish, choose which types of stick-on eye preferred, then have some fun and start experimenting. Speak to your fishing colleagues and get their opinions, then fish on!



GO Zonkers - Christie's Mouse Fly Works in Alaska

By Christie Roberts

Christie Roberts' rabbit zonker Moorish mouse variation was a huge hit with Alaska guide Jonathan Hubbard in Talkeetna, Alaska. His clients were able to get this triple (and many more) using her mouse.

Christie teaches CFFU's beginning fly tying class. If you are interested in learning to tie your own flies contact Christie christieroberts966@gmail.com or check out the CFFU calendar for upcoming classes. 



**Nice
Fly
Christie!**

Jim Berdan - Tying a SCUD

Simple UV Scud

Fly name: UV Scud

Fly originator: Author and Guide Pat Dorsey

Tied by: Jim Berdan

RECIPE

Hook: Tiemco 2457, Size 8-18

Thread: Danville's Flymaster 6/0 – Tan

Tail/Antenna: Antron Yarn – Cream

Rib: Mono Tippet – 4X

Shell Back: Thin Skin – Speckled

Body: Ice Dub – UV Tan

COMMENTS

Scuds are small crustaceans, sometimes called freshwater shrimp, and in some streams and lakes they are a primary food source for trout. They grow quickly and can survive in a variety of habitats, but they are most prolific in slow, weedy spring creeks and lakes. Though they all share the same silhouette, they can come in a surprising variety of sizes and colors. They run from size 8 to extremely small. The most common colors are olive or tan.

Scuds are very sensitive to light and prefer to remain deeply hidden during the day. Overcast days and periods of low light are the best times for anglers to use their imitations.

INSTRUCTIONS

STEP - 1

Pinch the barb and tie in a dozen or so strands of cream color Antron yarn on top of the shank, long enough to extend past the bend and eye of the hook.



STEP - 2

Tie in a length of tippet at the bend. Cut a piece of the speckled Thin Skin, about 1/8" wide, and tie it in at the bend. In lieu of Thin Skin, you can use a strip of plastic sandwich bag.



STEP - 3

With a generous amount of Ice Dub, dub a body with tapers at both ends, and leave the threat just behind the eye.



STEP - 4

Pull the Thin Skin forward to just behind the eye, tie in and trim the excess. I usually will do a two turn whip finish, or half hitch, to secure the Thin Skin before proceeding.



Continued on Page 31

Continued - *Tying a SCUD*

"It just pisses them off that you can catch trout, I mean really big trout, on a fly that a five-year-old can tie in twenty seconds!"

Ed Engle

STEP - 5

Palmer the tippet material forward in fairly close wraps to form the segmented body and tie it in just behind the eye. Remove the waste piece of tippet, whip finish, and apply head cement.



STEP - 6

With a dubbing brush (I use a 22 caliber bore brush), pull down a generous amount of the dubbing, which will represent the legs.



STEP - 7

With a dubbing brush (I use a 22 caliber bore brush), pull down a generous amount of the dubbing, which will represent the legs.



That's it. Give it a try.

Fly Tyers Exchange



Paul Smith
Chairman of the Fly Exchange

**"The fish is not the
only thing that's
hooked when you go
fly fishing."**

Unknown



Lil Green Bugger # 20.
Tied by Todd Carr



Iron Blue Wingless.
Tied by Paul Smith



Italian Pettiro Rosso Nymph.
Tied by Jim Berdan



Days of Grace

Fishing is a chance to wash one's soul with pure air; with the ripple of the stream and the shimmer of the sun on the blue waters.

It brings meekness and inspiration from the glory and wonder of nature, and charity toward tackle-makers. It brings mockery of profits; the quieting of hate and lift of the spirit. And it brings rejoicing that you do not have to decide a darned thing until next week... An Assyrian tablet from 2000 B.C. says:

The gods do not subtract from the allotted span of men's lives the hours spent in fishing.

from a speech by Herbert Hoover

The Great Auburn Ravine Clean Up

THE GREAT AUBURN RAVINE CLEAN UP

Join Friends of Auburn Ravine!

MCBEAN PARK SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 26TH

Starts 9AM • Ends NOON

- Our Clean Up Captains will lead you to a section of the creek or a city park ranked by difficulty. Minors MUST be accompanied by a guardian!

- We will provide: gloves, bags, pickers & bug repellent. If you have a trash picker or gloves we encourage you to bring them!

- Please bring: closed toed shoes, water, sunblock and a hat! After there will be FREE PIZZA for volunteers! Cheese and pepperoni!



SCAN FOR MAP

LEAVES NOT LITTER!



And join Friends of Auburn Ravine this fall for our Salmon Surveys!

A fall activity for (almost) the whole family! Help us monitor the Chinook salmon population as they swim against the stream. We provide equipment and training!



Continued on Page 35

The Great Auburn Ravine Clean Up

Meet Point in McBean Park for the Great Auburn Ravine Creek and City Parks Clean Up

Saturday, September 26
9AM

The yellow push-pin marks the spot.)



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Newsletter & Club Information



CFFU Club Meetings

First Tuesday of each month.

Richard Conzelmann Community Center
2201 Cottage Way, Sac., CA 95825

[\(PDF Map Link\)](#)

General Meeting Schedule:

6:15 P.M.: Fly Tying Demo - Coachman Corner

7:00 P.M.: Program Presentation

8:00 P.M.: Club Information

CFFU Membership

New Member: Individual: \$40.00

New Member: Family: \$55.00 (Includes spouse and children under 18 years old.)

New Member: Junior: \$35.00 (Under 18 years old)

JOIN CFFU: Membership Form: [\(PDF Link\)](#)

CFFU Board of Directors

Please visit the CFFU Website for information about the Officers, Directors and Club Committee Leaders

[LINK to CFFU Leaders](#)

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Newsletter Submissions

All submissions, images and other material are due by the 25th of the month. The Newsletter Editor reserves the right to reject any article or image that does not meet the Editorial Guidelines.

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Banner Image

A line of anglers, sitting on ladders, fishing in Pyramid Lake. Ken W. Davis image.