



# Rx Fly Fishing!

*The monthly newsletter of the Delta Fly Fishers!*

Volume XLIX

Number 3

March 2024

Randall Baxter, Editor

Stockton, California

## Calendar

March 2, Bob McMillan Memorial Trout Bout.

March 8-9, Collins Lake Outing. Pg 2

March 10, Wulfies Equipment Prep and Swap Meet, Pg 4

March 13, DFF General meeting, John R. Williams School. No speaker info yet

March 20, Board of Directors Meeting, Oak Grove Nature Ctr, 6:30.

March 22-24, Baum Lake Outing. Pg 7

March 27, Open Fly Tying, Oak Grove Regional Park Nature Ctr, 6:00-8:30.

## Lower Mokelumne River Outing Report

By Bob Fujimura

Five DFF members met at the Mokelumne River Day Use Access below Camanche Dam to fly fish this easy to get to destination. When Bob & Jean Fujimura arrived about 30 minutes earlier on Sunday morning February 11th, Mike Dempewolf had already fished for more than one hour and caught two rainbows. Bill Brown was very kind and brought fresh donuts and coffee for the participants. Mike helped new member, Norm Cassen with fly selection recommendations. I shared soft hackle hares ear nymphs that he had previously caught rainbow with the group.

I used a two nymph indicator rig that worked well in January. However, I had no bites in the holding waters close to the parking lot. I had to move downstream to some beautiful river seams near the western boundary of the public water before I caught and landed two yearling rainbow trout in the 9-12" range. I was very pleased that I caught them on a new salmon alevin pattern that I tied. Jean caught a similar sized trout on a small Zebra midge. Mike was the top angler of this group – he landed three trout; one was the biggest fish of the day at 16". Most of the group left before lunch time and were eager to get home to watch the Super Bowl. Many thanks to those who participated on the morning of an unofficial holiday!

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Yearling rainbow trout caught using a salmon alevin fly on the Mokelumne River

# Dr. Mark Rockwell Honored at the Pleasanton Fly Show



Dr. Mark Rockwell was awarded the Delta Fly Fishers' Lifetime Achievement Award at the NCCFFI Leadership Lunch at the Pleasanton Fly Fishing Show. Bob Fujimura presented Mark's award for his over 20 years of conservation work and 5 years as the Council's President. Mark was unable to receive his award at last month's annual dinner due to his wife's recent surgery. Mark expressed his appreciation of this DFF award to the many club representatives at this lunch.

## Collins Lake!

By Mary Midgett

There will be a camp-out and trout fishing event at Collins Lake Friday March 8 and Saturday March 9. Mary will try to be at the campground with her trailer by noon and set up in site 114 by about 3 PM. Current attendees are planning a pot luck for Friday evening. Please call Mary if you plan to attend or for more details at: 1 (209) 598-4856

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Rx Fly Fishing!  
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Trout Bout (November)  
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Any correspondence regarding this publication should be directed to:

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PO Box 77862  
Stockton, CA 95207-7862



# We Got Knotty

By Amy Terra

DFF held its Knots and Leader tying day on February 17th at the Lodi Library Community Room. The ample space gave us plenty of room to spread the tables out so participants could move through the day's resources in a clockwise direction with each table having a distinct skill or leader formulation to try.

The first table had knot diagrams with lines of varying thickness to practice

the knots with. We worked on the clinch knot, double surgeons, non-slip loop knot, perfection loop and nail knot. These were all the knots that were going to be used in tying the leaders that were on the following circuit of tables. As participants left the knot tying table, they grabbed foam rounds and headed to the leader building tables.

Table two had a simple streamer lead-

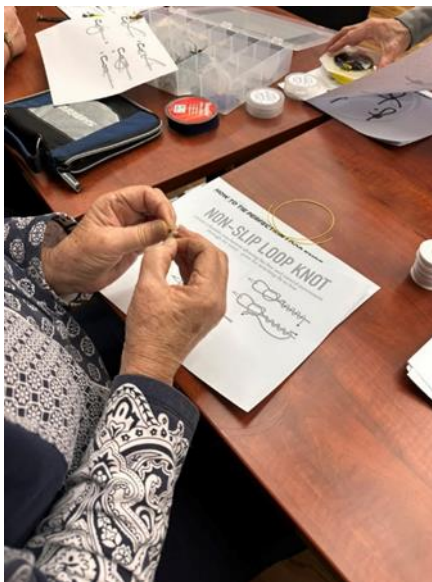
er. The next table had a dry dropper leader. The fourth table had an indicator set up while the last table had a tightline leader. Each table had all the resources including flies. Participants walked out with their leaders ready and rolled up on the foam holders. Perfect to get on the water! We had several requests to make this an annual event so look for it again next year!



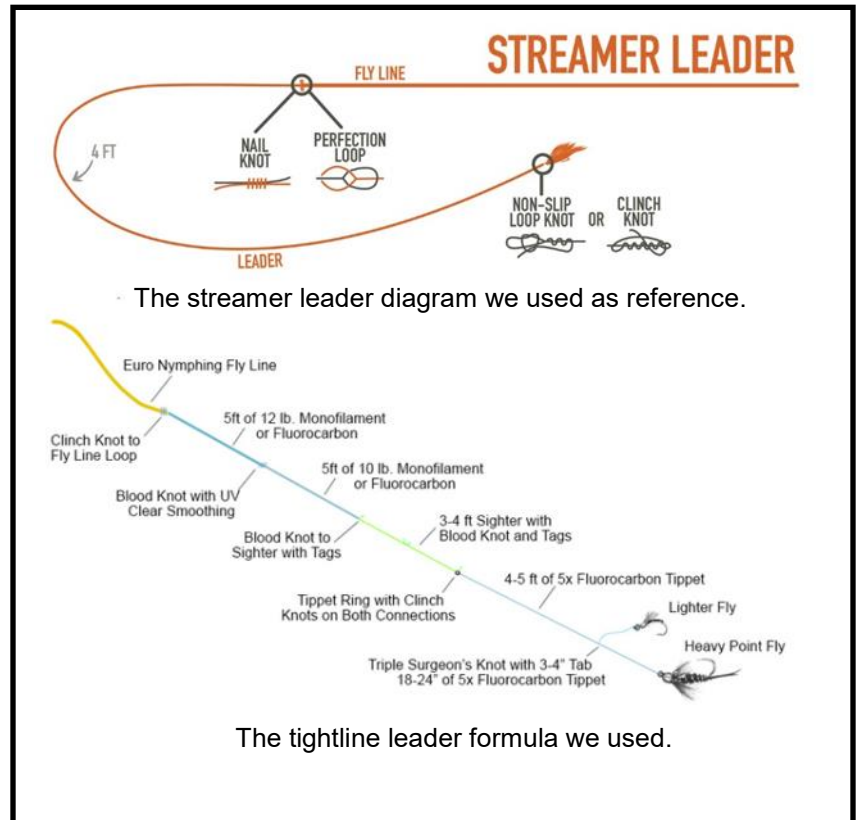
Jerry and Marie working with the nail knot tool.



Charlie, Brenda and Dena tying a streamer leader.



Brenda tying the non-slip loop knot.



# Wulffies Swap Meet

By Amy Terra

On March 10, 2024, the Wulffies will be gathering at a to be determined location at 10:30 to 1 (call number below for directions) to go through our gear, patch waders, clean lines and wax ferrules as a part of the gear organization day and swap. We are fortunate enough to get donated equipment quite often and will be putting it out for our Wulffie women's group to go through. There will be no charge for any item. All are welcome. Fly favors will be given out. The donors of the swap items will earn good fishing mojo and the receivers will get gear they need to get on the water. Everyone wins!

Dena will be hosting and leading the gear care. Bring any-



thing you want to pay forward or anything you want to clean, care for or organize. Also bring your fish stories, questions and appetite. Any questions? Call Amy at 209-329-4801.

# Baum Lake Outing Update

By Bob Fujimura

Fly fishing guides Scott Sugimoto and Gary Wickwire have a great new club clinic in store for fly fishers planning to attend this outing. They and hosts Bob & Jean Fujimura plan to pre-fish this spring fed section of the famous Hat Creek on Friday March 22. The next day, we will have a guided clinic the next day with instructions on the various techniques such as dry fly and streamer presentation with opportunities for fishing with Scott and Gary. They are also planning to provide flies and a nice lunch at the lake. On Sunday we have a final day of fly fishing as a group. This new outing is tailored to introduce new fly fishers to this well-known fishery and provide technical skills needed to maximize their fishing success. DFF members Bob Fujimura, Jerry Neuburger, and others have had some wonderful winter fishing in previous trips.

Participants should bring 3-5 weight rods with matching floating lines. This spring fed section of Hat Creek is typically clear and has consistent flow and moderate water temperatures thorough the winter. Small nymphs, emergers, and dry flies imitating midges and Blue Winged Olive (Baetis spp.) mayflies are the primary offerings this time of year. Scott recommends longer leaders (+9 ft) with finer tippet (up to 6x) for the best fishing. Small streamers such as micro buggers or mini leeches (#8-12) can be also very productive when stripped or dead-



Jerry Neuburger showing the size of trout available from Baum Lake, photo provided by Jerry Neuburger, FB post on Sept 23, 2023.

drifted or swung. Contact Scott Sugimoto ([scott@ontheriffle.com](mailto:scott@ontheriffle.com) or (530) 276-1612) or visit the Baum Lake fishing report at The Fly Shop (<https://www.theflyshop.com/streamreport.html>) for more fly selection or terminal rig recommendations. Fishing from shore is limited so bring a personal watercraft. Baum Lake has a slow current in its main channel, so watercrafts with oars and an anchor are strongly recommended to fish more lake area and to hold position. Boats using gas motors are not allowed. Contact Bob Fujimura by email ([deltaflyfishers@gmail.com](mailto:deltaflyfishers@gmail.com)) if you need loaner fishing or floating equipment.(continued next pg)

(continued from previous pg) Participants are responsible for their own lodging, most meals, and transportation for this event. There is a nearby campground run by PGE (<https://www.californiasbestcamping.com/modoc/cassel.html>) and there are motels available in the towns of Burney and Fall River Mills. Cold winter conditions at night can be expected during March so plan your lodging plans accordingly. Burney has the most dining and shopping options including a full-serve grocery store, hardware, sporting goods, and gas stations. Bob can provide referrals on lodging and dining options if needed. The Fujimura frequently dine out on their fishing trips and welcomes outing participants to join them. Due to its lower elevation, the area around Hat Creek and Baum Lake are usually not adversely

affected by winter storms – however, check the road conditions on Hwy 299 concerning the high-way summits between Redding and Burney before travelling.

The outing cost is \$100 per person for covering the guide services, Saturday lunch, flies, and incidental leader supplies. Contact Bob Fujimura ([deltaflyfishers@gmail.com](mailto:deltaflyfishers@gmail.com) or (209) 329-1692) to register to attend. All participants are required to sign and submit a valid DFF liability waiver form and wear a personal floatation device if they fish from a personal watercraft. Outing fees are non-refundable, but participants can sell their spot to other members. All DFF members interested in participating should register ASAP since we will open registration to other clubs. We hope members of all experience levels will participate.

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## Sign Up for Kistler Ranch Outing

By Bob Fujimura

There are still plenty of openings for the only bass fly fishing outing for this Spring. However, we encourage you to preregister soon since we are limiting this outing to 12 members or guests to improve the fishing quality. We had a great turnout last April and don't miss your opportunity to fish three private ranch ponds near Jamestown, CA on **Sunday April 21**.

We will fish for largemouth bass and sunfish. A light lunch will again be provided by Jean and Bob Fujimura. Bring a folding chair and a pop up shade so you can be comfortable during our group lunch. For the best bass fishing, especially for using top-water flies, arrive early (7:30 am) and fish early in the morning and evening. We need to leave the ranch by sundown.

There is plenty of shore access to these three ponds – however, the best fishing is from a personal watercraft. 5 to 8 weight rods with matching floating and intermediate sinking lines are recommended. Bring indicators (float-n-fly set up work great from the shore), tippet material (2X to 0X), flies including various nymphs, woolly buggers, streamers, floating terrestrials, poppers, frog and mouse patterns. If the forecast is sunny, don't forget suitable sun wear and sunscreen.

There are several routes to get to Kistler Ranch. The simplest route for new visitors is to take the Hwy 120 exit from Hwy 99 in Manteca and travel east through Oakdale, CA and continue for 19 miles and just before the separated highways merge, there will be a left turning lane just west of the Ranch buildings on the north side of the highway. Carefully, cross the west bound highway line into a short



frontage road to the right. There should be a sign indicating the Ranch driveway to the right and drive between the Ranch buildings. There will be a small bathroom building on the left side of the road. Continue past these buildings and close any gates that you need to go through – this is a working ranch. You will come to three ponds – park your vehicles near the right pond (east side of the road). We will have lunch here – although you are also welcome to fish in the two ponds on the left side of the road. The GPS coordinates for the Ranch are 37.84633 – 120.54030. From Stockton, the travel time is approximately 70 minute drive depending on traffic conditions. Plan a little extra time to find the Ranch if this is your first visit.

The outing fee is \$30 per person to cover the ranch rental fee. The lunch menu will be DIY sandwiches with fixings, chips, water, and sports drinks. To contact Bob Fujimura (email: [deltaflyfishers@gmail.com](mailto:deltaflyfishers@gmail.com) or (209) 329-1692) to sign up or if you have questions. A signed DFF liability waiver form is required for participating and a personal floatation device must be worn if you fish from a personal watercraft. We will offer any remaining openings on March 15 to members of our neighboring fly club. Registration closes on or before April 15. Outing fees are non-refundable, but participants can sell their spot to other members. This is a great venue to enjoy foothill fly fishing and socialize with your friends. Hope to see you there.

# Second Annual Casting Day

By Amy Terra

We are so excited to be planning our second annual casting day. We are going to hold it on April 27th at Panella Park next to the Arnold Rue Community Center Park located at 5758 Lorraine Ave, Stockton, CA 95210.

Casting Day April 27th at Arnold Rue Community Center	
10-12	Women's Welcome
12-3	Open to All Casters with a light lunch being served
2:45	Raffle drawing

We are going to repeat last year's event, not just in location but also in format. We will start the day with the Wulfie's Women's welcome from 10-12. There will be coffee, tea and morning pastries followed by introductions and casting instruction. This year we will split into two groups- casters looking to establish fundamental casts and those looking to expand their fishing casts through the bronze level fly casting skills development challenge. The morning session is open to any interested female angler. No charge. Just sign a waiver, put on some protective glasses and join the fun!

Panella Park Pond



At noon, we will open the day to any interested person. There is no club membership requirement and last year we had folks from the neighborhood come out and give casting a try! The only requirement is to sign a waiver and wear eye protection. A light lunch will be provided. As our organizing committee moves forward, we hope to gather the talented casting instructors we had last year to provide top notch



## Mary and Casting Instructure Sarah Trenchel celebrating Mary's casting last year!

instruction to all participants. Last year we were able to staff not only the women's welcome with certified casting instructors but also in the afternoon we had certified casting instructors working people through the fly casting skills development, giving individual free lessons and casting support and an awesome crew serving lunch.

As we did last year, we will also have a fly fishing and casting themed raffle. Make a casting challenge or improve your casting technique throughout the day and you will earn raffle tickets for a chance to win some prizes! The day ran until 3pm last year and we plan to wrap up about that time this coming year. We had a blast last year and hope to do so again. The event will be held if there is a light rain but excessive wind or intense rain will result in a postponement. Bathrooms and tables to eat at will be available. Loaner rods will be there too. Everyone is welcome so spread the word!



Some on the water roll cast practice with CI Russ Carpenter at the pond.

# Wulffie Tips Tricks: Advice from Women for Women

By Amy Terra

A fly rod doesn't really have any gender specific features. A fly reel doesn't either. Flies are gender neutral- sans some pretty explicit names for a few of them. But there are other fly fishing resources that can be a challenge for some women to access and use. I would bet that if you were to ask a group of female anglers what was one of their most challenging fly fishing pieces of equipment, I would bet some good money that at least 60% of them would have waders on their list. Why waders? Because many women have small feet compared to their male counterparts and women's waders are often just downsized versions of men's waders that aren't really designed for the variety of women's body shapes. We sometimes have to choose between a wader that is loose enough to move and hike in with a foot stocking bent over our foot and rolled up in our boot or a good fitting boot with waders that don't allow freedom of movement or have space for extra layers underneath during cold weather fishing.

When I started fishing, I picked up a pair of men's waders at a club meeting. I was so grateful for this amazing free resource. I was new to fly fishing and not sure how much I would be bitten by the fly fishing bug. I didn't have much money and really wanted to focus on purchasing a rod, reel, line and flies to get started. At that time, I could not afford both the waders and



the rod set up so the free waders were perfect for the moment and much appreciated although the fit left much to be desired. I swam in them. The chest area had folds of material. They were probably designed for a man at least a foot taller than I am. The foot bootie folded back and under my own foot so much that the toe went up my heel after it wrapped under my entire foot! It was uncomfortable but workable and it got me in the water.

Once I knew I was going to love fly fishing, I began saving up for waders that fit a little better and tried on any pair I could get my hands on. The best fit I found was the Orvis women's line. They have a wide range of height/size combinations in their entry level wader and I found a pair that I have used for over 5 years. Even though they were my best choice at the time, the wader stocking foot is still too big and you can either see the heel portion peeking out the back of my wading boot or I feel a bunch of

## Contribute to the club's welfare

I was asked to put this box in the newsletter so that those club members that live at unreasonable travel times to the club's monthly meetings might have a way to contribute to the club's welfare. At their request, I've set up a group of alternative contribution amounts. Those who participate will receive a tax deductible receipt via email.

\$5   \$10   \$25   \$50

Or send a check to:  
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Make checks payable to DFF, Salmon in the Classroom. Please include your email address. You will receive a receipt online, when the check is received.

Cal State Charity # 131478

stocking material in the toe of my boot. A few years ago I decided to upgrade to the Orvis pro-wader and saved and saved and bought a pair in the same size as the entry level wader I have been using. The material was higher quality. There was a great hand warming pocket. There were protective knee pads. However, the cut was very different and the movement is so restrictive that I cannot step up onto a rock or log when out fishing when I wear them so I returned to using my older entry level pair.

This pair of waders now has numerous repairs. The bottom edges of the rock guards are frayed and worn looking. I have reluctantly started looking for a new pair as I know one day soon they will be beyond repair. So when the Pleasanton Fly Show rolled around this year, I committed to trying on every women's wader at the show to find my next best fitting wader. It didn't take long as I could only find 2 options in the women's wader category in the entire building. The first was a pair with a foot stocking that could have fit three of my feet in each one. Same old problem in a new wader model. The second was from Miss Mayfly. Sizing with Miss Mayfly starts with your shoe size. The stocking foot fits just right. You can put a warm pair of socks under them and be as comfortable as can be. There was minimal oversizing and just the right amount of stocking foot material. I slid my foot into a wading boot and the heel stayed on my heel and my toes felt perfectly comfortable not being squished amongst excess material.

Once Miss Mayfly identifies your shoe size, then they have a variety of "fits" to suit every body shape. As I put on the waders the company rep recommended for me, I bent down into a full squat feeling no restriction of movement. I stepped up onto the chair easily with freedom of movement. Yet the wader top was snug enough to guarantee it would stay put during a long day of hiking and fishing. The material around my chest didn't bunch up leaving gaps. The waders were incredibly comfortable and I was smiling from ear to ear.

I cannot tell you what a wonderful experience it was to have a pair of waders that fit so comfortably- a pair that was designed for the female angler specifically. While I will always be grateful for that first pair of waders that got me on the water when I couldn't find or afford a pair that fit me, I am now grateful for this pair of waders that fit me from the feet up. If you have a hard time finding waders to fit you and allow you to move, check out [Miss Mayfly's](#) product line. It could just be your ticket to comfort on the water and I for sure won't be writing waders on my list of frustrations in fly fishing any time soon!



An angler comfortable from the feet up thanks to Miss Mayfly!

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# This Month's Fly Box

## FLY TYING

### "Jon Baiocchi's Unit Skwala"



accurate representation of this adult stonefly; however, it was a classic "guide" fly – simple to tie and effective on his home water. It was one of the first winter dry fly patterns that I learned to tie after I discovered for myself why Jon called the Lower Yuba River "one of the finest winter dry fly fisheries in the United States...." Jon's recipe for this pattern is still available online at his website: <https://jonbaiocchiflyfishing-news.blogspot.com/2014/01/tying-unit-skwala-adult.html>

You can also watch the tying instruction video at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3OqCrg\\_Nc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3OqCrg_Nc)

Jon would stress the importance of the longer rear legs (a key feature of this species), and the sexes were different sizes: size 10 for females and size 12 for males. When fishing this pattern, Jon strongly recommended that one study and observe the water more and make a few good presentations.

– Bob Fujimura for the NCCFFI March Rivermouth 2024 issue

This fly pattern and tying instructions go back to January 2014

March is prime time for the adult Skwala stonefly hatch on the Lower Yuba River. The late Jon Baiocchi was one of guides who generously shared his observations and fly fishing tips concerning this famous hatch over the several years that I regularly fished the Lower Yuba River. I was very fortunate to have taken a few of his clinics on this river, and later a fly tying course Jon gave to my home club, Delta Fly Fishers.

Jon's Unit Skwala Fly wasn't the most elaborate or

**Mettler**

**Tasting Room:** 7889 East Harney Lane  
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Thurs to Mon 11am-5pm(209) 369-3045



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2 column inches each newsletter issue for the year for \$400 or in-kind goods and services, six months \$200, quarter \$100, one month \$40. The ad may include artwork and will link to the advertiser's website.

Additional column inches of ad space may be purchased at \$200 for the year, \$100 for six months, \$50 for a quarter year, \$20 per month.

Included:

- A digital subscription to the club's monthly newsletter.
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# Conservation

By Ron Forbes  
Conservation Chair

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In every species of fish I've angled for, it's the ones that got away that thrill me the most, the ones that keep fresh in my memory. So I say it's good to lose fish. If we didn't, much of the thrill of angeling would be gone.

— Ray Bergman

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## A RECORD NUMBER OF STEELHEAD RETURNING TO THE MOKELUMNE THIS YEAR

Last month's newsletter spoke about the 28,614 salmon returning to the Mokelumne River this year. It was an outstanding record breaking run! In late February we got more great news. An article by Dan Bacher in the Stockton Record reported a record number of steelhead have also returned to the Moke this year. To date the staff at the Mokelumne River Hatchery have tallied 1,430 steelhead returning. The hatchery classes steelhead 18 inches and over as adult fish. This year 760 adult steelhead have returned along with 661 juvenile fish. Pre pandemic we had a then-record breaking run of almost 13,000 salmon returning to the Mokelumne River, but only 69 steelhead were counted. The innovative combined efforts of East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) and the Mokelumne Hatchery have made this year's successful run possible.

Our club's January speaker Michelle Workman, Supervising Biologist for EBMUD, commented, "The steelhead run is a good, healthy run, with lots of fish compared to other years. The size of the fish is similar to previous years. The hatchery is now spawning steelhead and they have harvested about 250,000 eggs so far, probably from about 125 females if you assume there are about 2,000 eggs per female. The steelhead smolts coming from fish spawned last year will be re-

leased in 3 stages in February, March and April."

In my calls to the Coleman Hatchery last month after asking three sources, I could not get any information as to the number of steelhead returning to their hatchery this year. Despite the fact that the Coleman Hatchery is the largest hatchery in the state they could not make their steelhead egg quota this year. They had to obtain steelhead eggs from our hatchery and other hatcheries to fill their quota. This year it has been difficult to get accurate information usually provided from hatcheries regarding the steelhead returns.

This season you can fish the Mokelumne River below the dam starting January 1st through the 31st of March. The Mokelumne reopens from the fourth Saturday in May to the 15th of July. During both open dates you can have a bag limit of one hatchery trout or one hatchery steelhead.



Checking redds on the Mokelumne River.

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It's difficult to understand why a new Friant-Kern Canal is being constructed without first having strict, enforceable groundwater overdraft laws in place and strict, enforceable Sustainable Groundwater Act (SGMA) policies. Under Gov. Jerry Brown's administration in 2014, our legislature established California's first SGMA. That was ten years ago. Despite the critical nature of groundwater issues, the state is allowing districts until 2025 to complete their SGMA plans for state review and approval. How long it will take for reviews and approval is highly problematic. The land will continue to subside with ongoing delays.

Recently, Rogelio Caudillo, ETGSA general manager, made an ambling statement that pretty well defines where ETGSA is at currently. "All GSAs in this situation are frantically working toward revising yet another Groundwater Sustainability Plan to be compliant with the DWR-State Board Standards. Importantly, the ETGSA continues to work with the Community Water Center, Self Help Enterprises, and other non-profit entities serving domestic water needs to ensure plans are acceptable. It takes time to correct the years of overdraft conditions that have caused the cur-

rent conditions in the Tule Subbasin. The ETGSA will continue to work with our shareholders and community leaders to achieve sustainability and ensure domestic well needs are met." No comments about their overdrafting groundwater, canal subsidence, or their lack of assuming any of their financial responsibilities.

Caudillo's comments about "frantically working" to present a compliant SGMA is nothing more than another smoke and mirrors attempt to avoid addressing the reality of what ETGSA continues to do. The Tulare farmers and other farmers in the central and south San Joaquin Valley are directly responsible for the valley sinking more than 25 ft.. During the assessments for the restoration of Friant-Kern Canal, it was determined ETGSA's cost share should be \$125 million. However, over 80% of the ETGSA farmers voted against paying the amount they owe!

The news website GV Wire put it best with an article headline stating, "Farmers Who Helped Sink The Friant Kern Canal Reject Fee for Their Share of the Fix!" The shell game goes on and on. Once again we are asked to pay so corporate farmers can make millions of dollars and not assume their financial responsibilities.

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## Amy's Casting Corner

This month's casting corner is going to be all over the place. There is just so much to share! So hold on tight- here we go.

This month's casting highlight was definitely the Pleasanton Fly Fishing Show. NCCFFI and GGAC put on a three-day casting celebration as a part of the show. As long as I can remember, there has always been free casting instruction. Just prior to COVID, Sarah Trenchel and Russ Carpenter began offering the Fly Casting Skills Development (FCSD) Program at the show. The FCSD is a 4 level assessment of fishing casts with increasing challenge as you progress through the levels. The Foundation level is great for those who are completely new to fly casting. Bronze provides basic fishing casts and helps develop fundamental casting mechanics. Silver adds complexity in casts including mends, distance and constant tension casts. Gold is the most challenging level with loop control, offside



**The casting instructor crew from Pleasanton 2024!**

accuracy, curve casts and a 70 foot cast requirement.

The first year Sarah and Russ offered the FCSD, I was able to cast through the bronze and silver tasks. The gold took me another year

to attain. After I attained gold level casting, I was able to join the GGAC casting instructor team. After COVID, I was also able to help Russ and Sarah facilitate the FCSD program, not only in Pleasanton but at Yuba Fest and for other local clubs and gatherings for the past several years.

The first year that Sarah and Russ facilitated the FCSD at Pleasanton, they set up one bronze and one silver course. The next time we facilitated at Pleasanton, we needed to add another silver course because so many who had attained bronze returned to try the next level. This year, we had to add two gold courses to the two silver and two bronze courses to meet the need for the advancing casting skills of our local angling population. Our club should be very proud of our own Robert Fujimura who attained his silver level fly casting skills development. Bob and Jean have been working hard on their casts and it shows. Hoping it pays off for them on the water with more opportunities to catch fish on their adventures!

Another addition to the casting program has been the Train the Facilitators program. This two-hour program teaches people how to set up and run people through the FCSD program. We have

been fortunate to have several of our DFFers go through the program since its inception. Dena and I attended the first year. Bob, Randy, Sam Yee, Sam Thompson and Tim Costello have also gone through the program. When we combine these experiences with our home-grown casting instructors of Larry and Leo, our club has casting support that our beloved Jim Rich would be so proud of!

Moving forward, we hope to provide the club members and anyone interested in learning casting support. Look for the article on our casting day in April (pg6) in this newsletter and we will be starting our Friday Night Casting as soon as the time change occurs in March. I am still working out which Friday night it will be so look for more information to come. We will try to have enough teaching support to meet the needs of newer casters as well as continue to develop the skills of our ever more skilled membership by working through the FCSD casts at whatever level is needed. We love that sometimes during our Friday night sessions people just walking by join us to try fly casting and we also love to see casting skills grow and develop! More information to come- Looking forward to lots of casting, fishing and fun!

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## Revising an old friend

By Amy Terra

The closest water to me is a river I haven't fished in two years. I am not sure why, but I always seem to drive past the turn off to this river and drive a bit farther to my favorite spot a little farther along the road. The funny thing is, the river I haven't fished in two years is the first place a fly fished on a river. I cut my fly fishing teeth on its waters. I caught my first trout on a fly there- albeit completely by accident. I have caught small fish and big fish here. It has always been a good spot and I am not sure why I haven't spent more time there recently but I haven't. So today I drove out there, made the turn towards the river, put on my waders and stepped into the water. The river was crowded in the spots that tend to hold big fish. That was fine with me because I was not in the mood to hunt a trophy fish. I was perfectly fine just fishing. I moved into a little riffle that emptied into a nice pool. No one was here because just about everyone knows that pool has a big sunken tree in it. I imagine that underwater tree looks like a decorated Christmas tree filled with flies and lures- all bright and sparkly. I know a few of those decorations came from me, but I also know that the fish hold here in plentiful numbers so I began to fish trying to avoid adding another shiny fly to the tree

decorations.

Fishing this river is like fishing with an old friend. Things change subtly but the heart, character and connection remain unchanged underneath the surface. This was evident to me today. As I made my way across the riffle, fishing as I went, I noted a few new patterns of gravel, a different pool here, a large rock where it hadn't been before. I saw evidence of salmon carcasses as I carefully waded around redds. Fish were rising regularly across the riffle and well into the pool. My river friend seemed to be doing well. The river looked healthy and the fish were active. This made me happy- knowing the river had fared well since I last saw it so long ago. I could step right back into my relationship with my old friend. My old river friend was as familiar today as it had been then. This familiarity is not to be taken lightly. They say you can't make old friends. Old friends require a level of respect that supersedes direct contact. There is a knowing that you wish each other well without seeing or hearing it directly. There is an acceptance that not all will feel exactly the same when they gather again but that is just fine... as long as friends are reunited eventually.

Thanks for a great day, my old friend. Here's hoping that it isn't so long until we get together again. It is always a delight to spend time with you.

# I don't really hate indicator fishing

By Randy Baxter

To say I have a love-hate relationship with indicator fishing is perhaps a bit extreme. I have long realized the benefits of indicators in helping detect subtle takes and for detecting takes in general when using extremely small flies both on the surface and subsurface, but have favored straight-line nymphing techniques for trout and fall Steelhead. I often use weighted flies on a long leader (12-14 ft), casting a quarter upstream to a quarter downstream to allow the fly to sink and drift before the start of the swing. Rather than maintaining a constant say 60 ft cast for each swing, I begin each location fishing short, perhaps 20-25 ft and lengthening successive casts 3-5 ft (depending on water clarity). I begin casts starting well shoreward of the main current and extend successive casts to reach the middle of the current before repositioning downstream and repeating the process. This is more like traditional nymphing methods with a swing added at the end. Casting a quarter downstream, even with weighted flies and downstream steps doesn't often allow much time for the drop before the fly is moving across the current. The swing method does not effectively present a fly to those fish holding deep right along the seam between the fast and slow current; the fly typically passes high overhead. However, by quartering upstream and allowing the fly to drop as it's carried downstream achieves good depth and some drift prior to the fly lifting in the current for the swing. I often have good success hooking fish on the drift and even more so just as the fly begins to lift at the start of the swing... and of course those fish that hit as the fly is swinging on a tight line provide the tug that fuels many a future daydream... but this article is about indicator fishing.

I first used indicators fishing size 16 and 18 black AP nymphs (for Andre Puyans, their inventor) for Brown Trout on the upper Trinity River just below Lewiston in the mid-1970s. Both the fly and technique were taught to me by a fishing mentor and long-time friend who learned from Andre himself. At the time, a drought (and lack of scouring winter flows) allowed aquatic vegetation to build up below the dam and bugs and fish thrived. Twelve

to 20 inch Browns and occasional Steelhead took up feeding positions in the channels through the vegetation and we cast unweighted nymphs up and across the channels fishing the nymphs just below the surface and used a small piece of floatant-treated white poly-yarn rolled football shaped just above the tippet junction to detect subtle takes in the smooth water to set before an often quick rejection from the fish. In some cases, fish movement could also be used to indicate a take, but even at 20 ft such movement was difficult to observe. Such indicators are also useful with fishing midge larval, pupa and adults near or on the surface, and have been a staple for winter fishing for trout.

Where trout and Steelhead overlap in distribution, heavier tippets and tackle are needed even if flies remain small (size 16-10) in some situations. In such situations, additional weight in the form of split-shot or pliable weight is needed to sink heavier tippets and leader, and larger floats are needed to suspend the heavier weights. This creates some casting problems for a shoreline angler: this rig is not well suited to a traditional casting stroke even if 10 ft rods are used. Long rods, circle casts and big flop casts are used to reposition flies upstream for another drift. Adding multiple flies to such a rig is helpful in determining what the fish are feeding upon, but invites periodic tangle disasters. Most shoreline anglers with such a rig have a limited effective casting distance, which can be a problem on some medium and larger rivers.

Access to a boat alleviates problems reaching distant seams. As we found during a recent lower Sacramento River drift trip, the boat's oarsman (your guide) positions the boat allowing anglers to reach fish-holding seams. Boats allow anglers to fish 10-20 ft out from the boat using "flop casts" that keep the flies, weight and indicator in proper order. Also, such flop casts can be taught to virtually anyone in a matter of minutes, so even new anglers can successfully fish flies under indicators from a boat.

Locations like the lower Sacramento River in and near Redding provide excellent opportunities for beginning fly anglers to achieve some success fishing for Rainbow Trout and the occasional Steelhead depending on season fished. For bigger game, guides on the rivers of the Olympic Peninsula (OP) in the state of Washington have also been perfecting indicator fishing techniques for Steelhead, such that at least recently their

fishing success defies the Steelhead moniker of “fish of a thousand casts”. On a recent trip to the OP, water conditions, seasonal timing and long drifts possible when drift boats pace indicator fishing a seam, resulted some fish of a dozen casts and others of less than a hundred casts. In short, fairly spectacular for Steelhead fishing.

We drove up to the OP and the town of Forks Washington which was our homebase for 5 days of Steelhead fishing at the end of January 2024. The week previous to our arrival water levels had been on the low side and the weather frigid (Temps in the 20s to mid 30s). However, several days before we arrived, a warm front dropped a bunch of rain, melting snow, raising all the rivers and warming air and water temperatures,... and stimulating more Steelhead to move into the rivers. Some of the rivers were closed to fishing; others like the Hoh were too high to launch safely, so we were relegated to fish the Sol Duc River, not a bad option as it turned out! The predicted and continued rain through our fishing week must have put off some anglers, because even though the Sol Duc was the only fishable river, fishing pressure was light – only 6 to 8 boats a day on the two primary drifts. Also, heavy rain on our last fishing day and over the following night did finally wash out the Sol Duc for a few days after we left.

Our tackle consisted of a 10 ft 7 wt and a 9 ft 8 wt single handed rod equipped with some type of thin floating line used to cast, a short stout section of heavy (30lb?) monofilament (2.5-3ft) looped to a 7.5 ft section of 20lb fluorocarbon ending in a swivel followed by a 2 ft section of 12 lb tip-pet and a ¾ inch diameter yarn ball of various and often mixed colors tied in 3 inches above a size 2 hook. Several wraps of weighted tape were used to add weight just at the swivel and sink the yarn. Finally, a 1 inch diameter indicator was affixed to the fluorocarbon within 2 ft of the top loop and adjusted occasionally to fish over and among the boulders. We caught fish on a variety of yarn colors, but a multicolored hot pink, hot orange, yellow and chartreuse puff ball seemed to be the most effective pattern.

The rain and runoff had the Sol Duc River run-

ning consistently bank-full and glacial green throughout our 5 days of fishing; visibility remained surprisingly good at 2-3.5 ft (**see pictures**). The riparian vegetation glistened varied hues of green in response to the constant rain. The high water seemed to stimulate the Steelhead migration as we encountered fresh fish daily. It also incentivized the fish to follow nearshore seams upstream rather than fight main center-channel currents upstream... and we used this knowledge targeting shoreline current seams along straight channels, switching sides to work the most likely travel corridor or holding water behind shoreline boulders or trees. The guides earned their money rowing in the stronger current, yet keeping us close to shoreline seams allowing us to flop our casts into the target seam



**Shoreline trees and glacial flows of the Sol Duc River, Washington**

and then rowed to match the pace of the indicators moving through the slower current.

Like other indicator fishing situations rapid angler responses to “pull downs” dictated hook-up success. Visual focus on indicators floating through the seams was acute early in the day, but as the bite often picked up through the day, focus became more fuzzy. Although I successfully set on my share of fish without prompting, I can still hear the guide’s sharp admonition to “hit it!” causing me to flinch-set whether it was directed to me or not. The constant focus on the indicator proved hypnotic as the dark wet shoreline vege-



**Overhanging trees provide a glimpse into a nearshore seam. Lots of boulders break the current for migration and provide soft-water resting areas.**

tation, submerged boulders and periodic downed trees streamed past through a narrow field of view. Looking up and refocusing afar during drifts was done at our peril. When fish hit, having the fraction of a second warning of the indicator going down often proved valuable for clearing line, stripping up any slack to maintain tension and lowering rods to allow line drag to assist in maintaining tension on fish soon to explode. Virtually all the Steelhead hooked immediately screamed away

from where they were hooked; more than half jumped multiple times and several chose to run unerringly upstream, creating problems as we worked to maintain position or drifted downstream. The upstream run, from the fish perspective, proved successful several times: fish were lost. Most of the Steelhead we landed were only starting to show their rainbow colors; a few were ocean silver and olive (see picture) and a few were vividly striped (see picture). Over all, we lost as many fish as we landed though the ratio of landed to lost improved through the week.

The Sol Duc contained long drifts interspersed with substantial (class 3) rapids and a few slow water pools that allowed us to look up and refocus our eyes. It's a beautiful river and home to mink, otters, deer, kingfishers, mergansers, bald eagles and probably lots of other critters we didn't see in passing.

The fishing depended a lot on the guides. They selected the fishing lanes and communicated the seam to be fished and the starting and stopping locations, had us adjust our drifts as needed and as mentioned called out hits consistently, while all the time keeping the boat paced with the indicators and thinking ahead to warn of overhanging trees, instream obstacles and the need to retrieve gear prior to the next rapid. A couple of good guides kept us in fish all week as they rowed us through some spectacular scenery and over



**Day 2, Steelhead 2, a fresh hen just shy of 10 lbs**



**Day 4, Steelhead 6, a buck starting to show his colors.**



some beautiful water. I would caveat this trip to someone relatively new to fly fishing even though the flop casts are easy to learn and master. The big and vigorous fish tested our line and rod control, and those not familiar with periodically checking line for tangles, clearing line in an instant, making sure that slack line isn't wrapped around boat obstructions and adept at stripping in slack quickly will be at a frustrating disad-

vantage for landing these Steelhead; barbless hooks generally require tension to hold. On the other hand, if you and your guide are prepared for some lost fish due to angler error, the hook up rate was such that a lot of learning can happen quickly, and a thoughtful novice angler might be provided the opportunity to obtain valuable knowledge and improve skills rapidly... and perhaps catch a fish of a lifetime! Tight lines... R.

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## Relishing in the routine

By Amy Terra

I used to hate the time it took to get on the water. I hated how long the drive took. I hated the time spent getting my rod rigged up. I especially hated getting myself in my waders just to realize I needed to use the bathroom one more time before hitting the water. All of these things represented to me less time actually fishing. I would dread the routine of preparation. All I wanted to do was fish.

My view of this has changed over the years of fishing. My drive now represents a growing increase in anticipation as the miles pass towards the river. There is usually singing and music from my favorite bands as I travel from my home. If I am fishing with a friend, this time is spent chatting. For some reason driving to and from fishing makes people comfortable in sharing pieces of themselves that they may not have otherwise shared. I think that is why fishing buddies become so close so quickly. Fly fishing is a powerful common experience that feeds friendships. But I digress. We were talking about the dreaded routine leading up to fly fishing. Either way, I relish the drive now. I am getting to go to a beautiful place to do my favorite thing. The drive is worth it and I understand that now

Once the ride is over, gear is brought out. I love to drop my tailgate and have it serve as a prep table. Rod first- I decide how to fish. Which reel and line I use somewhat dictates my tactics of the day. I used to hate this part. I used to think that choices made now could impact my entire day. I would second guess myself over and over, feeling particularly stressed by the choices of this part of the preparation. What if I choose a sinking line and all of the fish start rising. I would have to change my entire setup in time to take advantage of the hatch. But, if I choose a float-

ing line, I may miss out on opportunities in those deep holes that hold those big fish. I could use two rods but then I have to remember to grab my second rod after I set it down and that can be a problem for my short term memory. It used to seem like a poor choice here could lead to missed opportunities on the water. Now I fish what I have- not worrying about what I am missing, but rather concentrating on what I have going on. I think this is what they refer to with the "bird in the hand" saying. I have learned to embrace my preparation choices holding onto the bird in my hand but making note of the river's offerings for future planning. It isn't a loss in my mind though. Everything is added to my mental notes but nothing is regretted. How can one have regrets when they get to go fishing?

Now pulling on the waders and lacing up my boots is the final step before I step foot in the water. It has become the cherry on the sundae or the turning off of the computer on Friday afternoon leaving work. It is the sign that I am almost on the water. I relish this step now. I am almost there.

The routine of preparation has become a ritual. The ritual has taken on an almost religious characteristic that soothes my soul as I move through each component. The ritual culminates with the first gentle step into the water, reminding me what I am here for. Reminding me of what I get to do. I relish every moment of it now. There is no frustration or hurry. I just relish in the routine that leads to the water.