



April Vokey – Spey Casting for Steelhead



April Vokey will be talking about the British Columbia waters where she grew up chasing the salmon and steelhead migration that frequented BC's coastal waters. She began her guiding career on the Fraser and Harrison rivers for sturgeon and salmon, but left after several seasons to found her own guiding operation, Fly Gal Ventures, in 2007 at age 24. The company was built on the basis of the promotion of education and encouragement to those who looked to chase their dreams. She has since established herself as a respected authority in the sport and has traveled the globe in pursuit of gamefish on a fly rod.

Her writing has appeared in numerous industry leading publications including Fly Fisherman, Fly Rod & Reel, and Fly Fusion magazines. In July 2012, April became the first fly angler to be featured in Outside magazine for their "XX-Factor" segment. She is in the process of authoring her first book.

Also a popular TV personality, April has been featured on the Outdoor Channel's Buccaneers and Bones series, 60 Minutes Sports, The Steve Harvey show, Discovery Channel's Refined, Discovery's/OLN's Close Up Kings, and WFN's Fly Nation TV.

Most recently, Vokey proudly wrote and hosted her own exclusive series, ShoreLines with April Vokey, as shown on the World Fishing Network. The series focuses on fly-fishing's rich history and the people it consists of. Feeling limited by airtime, she has since branched out with her podcast, Anchored with April Vokey, an uncensored series dedicated to archiving the stories and personalities from some of fly-fishing's most influential people. The show is one of the only

fishing podcasts solely recorded in a face to face environment where April ensures to ask questions apart from the norm. It evolved into Anchored Outdoors in January, 2020.

In 2013, April chose to pursue her passion for saltwater species (and a blue-eyed Aussie bloke), and therefore surrendered her Canadian winters for Australia's & New Zealand's summers. She now resides in Canada for six months of the year, and in Australia for the other six. Her dog, Colby, travels with her between countries, keeping her safe from grizzlies and kangaroos alike.

She is a FFF certified casting instructor, a fly-tying instructor, traveling speaker and an eternal student of life, love, and conservation. Please contact info@aprilvokey.com to enquire about bookings.

Meeting Raffle Prizes

by Jeff Goyert



We have some great door prizes for lucky meeting attendees. Take a look! A really cool Trout Unlimited sling pack to carry all your goodies, An Adamsbuilt wader safety belt, great for you or for your fishing partner if they forget theirs, and a pair of lucky fishing socks, who doesn't need a little extra luck.

No tickets to buy, just show up at the Zoom meeting.

Table of Contents

General Meeting.....	pg 1
President's Line.....	pg 3
Fly Tying.....	pg 5
Conservation Concerns.....	pg 7
Membership Notes.....	pg 10
Fishout Schedule.....	pg 11
Gone Fishing.....	pg 14
Reel News.....	pg 15
Cartoon.....	pg 17

President's Line: Rain! Steelhead! April on November 2nd. December and January BBQ Slide Show



Ahhhh – October. Wait – it’s almost November!

Admittedly, I was very skeptical and downright depressed when the middle of October came and went with no rain. For me, rain signifies so much. For a kid who grew up loving the change of seasons in Ohio, all of them, even especially when it snowed, I was desperate for a change from the same old boring sunshine and warm weather. Seriously. Long before I was a steelhead fisherman, I longed for fall and winter, and moving to California, rain was that chance to slow down, get inside, rest, tie some flies, watch some fly-fishing shows.

So, you can imagine my delight when it started to rain, and it kept raining. It was almost like the first snow. And I loved it. The rain came gently, then strong, but never too strong. We got 10” at home and the San Lorenzo came up from 10CFS to 500 at 6 p.m. cresting at 1,500 at 10 p.m. All staying that nice tea brown color, never that dreadful chocolate milk that is a bi-product of scouring. The river mouth opened by itself and rushed out to welcome steelhead and coho – those genetic strains that have known for millennia that the San Lorenzo is home.

Let’s hope the rains continue throughout the winter in the same manner, that flows never get below 40 or 50 CFS at lowest and that the fish will thrive. When they thrive – we thrive.

November Club meeting – Tuesday, November 2nd. While I have your attention – please make note that November’s Meeting is Tuesday November 2nd – and will be via Zoom because April

President's line (cont.)

Vokey is going to be joining us to ring in the steelhead season with British Columbia Steelhead with Spey and Single-hand fly-rods.

Submit an Article Also, we want to hear from more of you. Did you know you can submit an article for the newsletter simply by going to the Newsletter-Submit tab on the website, copy and paste something you wrote and submit it to our newsletter editor for publishing? We want to hear from you! And, if it's not you, have one of your children write an article and submit it on their behalf. You never know – you could have a writer on your hands and this could be there first published piece. Submit a photo too – easy!!

Hey – if you haven't been around, I want you to know that we miss you. What an incredible year and a half this has been.

You know – it's no coincidence that in April 2020, we launched our new-website and in May 2020 had our very first Zoom meeting. Before that Zoom was part of a Mazda commercial and our web-site and Facebook page were just, sort of there, doing what it had been doing for the past 29 years.

Do you know even despite our not being able to meet in person, our membership has grown from an average of 150 to now more than 177 members. We've had an average of 25 of you on every Zoom meeting and 50 of you attended the August BBQ at the Sherriff's Posse when we thought the war was over. For the first time in 44 years, we're renewing most of our memberships "on-line", and many of you are already renewing your dues that way. Super.

We even have had six new board members who jumped on board during that time, remarkably some of them I'd not had a chance to meet until the August BBQ.

January Club Member Slide Show -Send in Your Photos. In January, we're going to be back at the Sherriff's Posse Hall for another BBQ and our annual Club Members Photo Slide Show. Submit your photos today to Tommy Polito Thomaspolito12@gmail.com then come join us the first week of January – in person!!!

While we will be missing our Annual Dinner/Fundraiser which is our primary funding source for our budget, we are working to do a number of other activities to help us with our finances to keep up with our goals in preserving and restoring trout, Steelhead and Coho habits, our high-school scholarships, youth programs/events, facilities rent, and more. Some of that can also come by way of the "Donation" tab on the membership renewal form which many of you have used. I would like to thank each and every one of you for doing this as it has made a significant difference in the importance and growth of our scholarship program for one. So, thank you to all of you who have done this. It is huge.

Well – again, don't miss the November – Tuesday meeting via Zoom. April is going to be awesome. And I look forward to seeing you soon.

Fish on my friends. Tom

Fly Tying Class: Bug Eye Nymph – Instructor: Dan Eaton

Date: Nov. 10th at 6:30 p.m.

Place: Zoom

by *Dean Eaton*



This fly is my number one choice for bass subsurface. I normally use an intermediate sink line and trail this fly 24"-48" behind a green or black Woollybugger. I've also caught trout and Stripers using the same system. Use a slow retrieve. Don't be without this fly!

Please call Dan Eaton at (831) 336-2933 to sign up and I'll get your packet of material together for you at my front door. There is no charge for the class and all materials are provided except olive 8/0 and 6/0 thread. Or at least 8/0. If you need to borrow club thread, let me know. Beginners are welcome but you will have to contact Elaine Cook at (831)688-1561 well ahead of time to borrow vise, and tools.

If you would like to tune in to watch, that's fine.

Video instruction to tie the fly can be found on the online version of the newsletter.

Fly of the Month: Kilowatt Fly

by *Elaine Cook- fly tying chairman*



If you desire or must have a steelhead fly for the San Lorenzo, here's one that comes highly recommended. Of course it will probably work for the mighty fish elsewhere. This is a variation of Cliff Watt's Kilowatt Fly. The color combinations are limitless but the 2 that seem to work best are: maroon marabou and hackle OR maroon marabou tail with both both blue and black hackles.

Fly of the Month (cont.)

Material:

- Hook: Gamagatsu 60 degree jig hook size 2
- Thread: black 140 denier or 3/0
- Eyes: "Lead Eyes" 1/30 oz. (barbells)
- Glue: UV resin, Zap-A-Gap, or Super Glue
- Tail:
 - 1. Orvis – New Age Holo Flash- Kaleidoscope color (Can substitute Flashabou or Mega Baitfish Emulator)
 - 2. Spirit River UV2 maroon marabou. (Can substitute maroon marabou)
- Rear Body: FNF UV Jelly-biscuit color. (Can substitute UV Polar Chenille-hot pink color)
- Forward Body: both UV ice dub- purple color AND Salar Synthetic Mikkeli-blue color
- Wing: same Holo Flash
- Hackle: maroon marabou

Instructions:

1. Crimp barb.
2. Attach thread behind hook eye. Wrap thread base to rear of shank then forward to blend in hook.
3. Paint eyes with 2 layers red nail polish then one of Sally Hanson's-Hard As Nails nail polish. Attach at bend of hook with many figure 8 and circular tight wraps. Apply glue. Wrap thread to rear of shank.
4. Tie in small clump of Holo Flash. Cut to length of hook.
5. Tie in clump of marabou. Same length as Holo Flash.
6. Tie in UV Jelly. Make 2-3 touching wraps forward, forcing thread as you turn. Tie off, cut excess.
7. Blend both forward body materials. Place in dubbing loop. Advance thread to 1/4 back on shank. Twist dubbing loop making a thick chenille. Wrap forward a thick body. Tie off, cut excess. Pick out body with a bodkin.
8. Turn hook upside down. Tie in small clump Holo Flash on top of shank. Cut to hook length.
9. Select lg. marabou feather. Strip barbs off one side of feather. Tie in tip. Wrap, preening back barbs as you go. Tie off, cut excess. Whip finish, cut thread, apply glue.

This is not an early season fly. It can be swung on a Skaget line in the estuary when big fish are in, or dead drifted on a tight line through a riffle or under a bobber. It also can be jigged like a spoon through a pool or frog water. You may have noticed that there isn't a lot of room for a back cast on the upper reaches of the San Lorenzo. That's why most seasoned Steelheaders fish exclusively with mono line much like euryonymphers. Strip casting is the common method of presenting a fly on the S.L. It is a similar technique to flipping for bass and allows the angler to pitch a fly into tight pockets in very tight quarters. Not to say that you can't use a traditional fly line but many times anglers spook fish with a role cast over a run or pool, especially in low clear water.

Conservation Concerns Fish Handling–Best Practices

by Conservation Director Bob Garbarino



Before I delve into the subject of this article, I want to thank Steve (Stosh) Rudzinski for encouraging me to get involved in a more active role in SCFF as Conservation Director and to Tom Hogue and the board for welcoming me and their support. If any of you reading this have any input, questions about conservation as it pertains to the club or want to get involved, please contact me.

On the subject of fish handling to help them survive after release, I came across an organization devoted to that endeavor. I never heard of them but some of you members may have. The outfit is called Keep Fish Wet. I found out about them while visiting the FFI website. Reading some of the science-based tips on the website has me realizing I can do much better in the process of landing (or netting), photographing (if desired) and releasing fish under various conditions.

[Here is a summary of the Tips found under Best Practices on the Keep Fish Wet website](#)

Follow Local Regulations

Examples are some areas prohibit removing specific species of fish from the water and requirements to use barbless hooks.

Think Twice Before Going After Spawning Fish

One of the reasons given is that targeting and catching fish while spawning can disrupt and impact their lifecycle. This depends on the species of fish and spawning habits.

Be Wary of Warm Water

As water warms, the dissolved oxygen in it decreases. This causes the fish to get stressed quicker and take longer for them to recover. Some species are less resilient than others.

Use Barbless Hooks

Barbless hooks cause less damage to the fish's mouth and are easier to remove. They are also much easier to remove from your body and clothing.

Use Artificial Baits

We fly fishers by nature adhere to this suggestion. This is the number one cause of fish mortality as they are more likely to swallow bait.

Use Rubber Nets

Rubber nets cause less damage to fish slime, scales, fins and gills. Hooks are less likely to get stuck in the net.

Limit Use of Lip Grippers

Lip grippers should only be used if there are no alternatives to controlling and handling fish (tiger fish, is an example). If it is used, never hold a fish vertically.

Carry Hook Removal Devices

Ideally this tool will help reduce the time it takes to release the fish with less damage. If the fish swallows the fly, cut the line instead of trying to remove the fly.

Limit Fight Time

Try to bring the fish to hand quickly without overplaying it. This will reduce stress on the fish.

Hold Fish In or Over Water

If held over land or a boat and if it slips out of your hand, that is obviously not good for the fish.

Grip Fish Carefully

Try to hold the fish gently without squeezing. Avoid placing your hand over the fish's mouth and gills. Hold larger fish at the base of the tail and support the body close to the pelvic fins.

Consider keeping very large fish in the water.

Photograph Wet Fish

This shows fish in their element which can make cool photos. Try to keep air exposure to ten seconds or less.

Only Revive Fish That Cannot Swim

If a fish can swim away on its own, let it do so. It will recover better. If the fish appears to have lost its equilibrium, submerge it and face it into the current. If you are in still water, move the gently to simulate swimming. See the website for other techniques specific to other fish like tuna.

Conservation Concerns

November River Cleanup Days

by *Bob Garbarino*

Hi SCFF club members,

There are three river cleanup days scheduled in November. This is a great way to provide community service in a hands-on fashion. Volunteering for these events could be an opportunity for those members with children needing community service credits for school.

Soquel Creek

Saturday November 6, 2021 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Organized by Save Our Shores

Meet at Paper Mill Rd at the bridge to Bridge St.

For more information and how to sign-up (registration is required) visit:

https://saveourshores.org/event/soquel-river-cleanup/?instance_id=518

San Lorenzo River

Saturday November 13, 2021 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Organized by Save Our Shores

Meet at riverwalk, on the corner of Beach St. and 3rd St, located near the train trestle by the Boardwalk

For more information and how to sign-up (registration is required) visit:

https://saveourshores.org/event/san-lorenzo-river-cleanup-2/?instance_id=520

Salinas River

Sunday November 21, 2021 9:00 AM

Greg Smith is the Salinas Valley Fly Fishers representative for this event

For directions and more information visit:

<https://www.santacruzflyfishing.org/2021/10/volunteer-for-salinas-river-cleanup-sunday-november-21st/>

Membership Notes

2022 Membership Renewal Oct/Nov/Online

by Bob Peterson

To date we have 170 members on the roster including 40 new online members since 2021 , which is almost 25% of the membership. For Oct and November we would like to encourage members to renew online at santacruzflyfishing.org/membership which has proven to be more efficient, accurate, and cost effective offsetting postage and printing costs. Members can still renew by check mailed to PO Box 2008, Santa Cruz, Calif 95023. In December, a renewal packet will be sent to those members who have not renewed online...last year over 50% of members renewed online. For those new members after July 1, 2021, will not need to renew for 2022.

Please contact me if you have questions or membership concerns....Robert6367@aol.com

A gift suggestion



Its just about that time when my loved ones say, “I don’t know what to get him, he buys all the fishing stuff he wants when he wants.”

Maybe a hint would be for to look at the items from the [Santa Cruz Fly Fishing Store](http://SantaCruzFlyFishingStore.com). For your holiday shopping, we are going to set up pickup in Aptos for the items. After you purchase, you will coordinate a pick up place and time with Kevin Murdock.

Or maybe if you can’t wait until Christmas, just buy some stuff yourself.

[Gearing Up: Fishout Schedule – November](#)

EVENT NAME	EVENT DATE	SPECIES	FISH MASTER
O'Neill Forebay – Nov 4 – 7 2021	November 04, 2021 – November 07, 2021	Striped Bass	Kevin Murdock (831) 238 -3037
Pyramid Lake Fish-out April 3rd-9th 2022	April 03, 2022 – April 09, 2022	Lahontan Cutthroat Trout	Mike White – (831) 706-5556
Mammoth Fishout – 2022	September 24, 2022 – October 08, 2022	Trout	John Cook fishmaster– (831)688-1561 or (831)234-6515

O'Neill Forebay – Nov 4 – 7 2021

[Islands Oneill Forebay](#) (Click for address and map)

Fishmaster: Kevin Murdock (831) 238 -3037

We will camp at the same place again at Medeiros Campground site #23 I will try to get again, there are 4 sites there and more than one car per site is okay. New people should contact me personally for details. Bring everything to camp bare bones style, only a single vault style toilet which is not too bad compared to the other porta potties throughout the campground. Bring water, and food and cooking gear, there will be a camp stove or two to use or cook over the camp fire.

Gear to use: 7 or 8 wt rod, full sinking line like Rio Outbound Short or Tungsten T-11 shooting head with a good running line. 15 lb test fluorocarbon leader (6' is long enough so the fly gets down deeper). Lee Haskins or Jim Hall has flies for sale. Both are listed in our club roster and you can make an order directly with them. Float tubes of course or small craft like flat bottom dingy's and some kayaks work okay except when windy. (It can really BLOW you away there and we hope for good conditions but we have had big rainstorms in years past so prepare for the worst).

One thing we never have enough of is firewood for the evening rap sessions, the size of wood that comes in a box at the grocery store is perfect for our portable fire tubs.

The camp is only 70 miles from Santa Cruz and directions can be easily be found on your GPS system. Call or email me @ (831) 238 -3037 or troutdock89@gmail.com to be on the list so I have a good idea of how many will attend. We always have a good time at this event. See you there, Kevin

Pyramid Lake Fish-out April 3rd-9th 2022

[Pyramid Lake](#) (Click for address and map)

Fishmaster: Mike White – (831) 706-5556

The Pyramid Lake trip is one of the best-attended fishouts the club has, and for a good reason. Lahontan Cutthroat Trout cruise parallel to the shore in easy casting distance from shore. Cost for the week including meals and lodging and is around \$300+ per person depending on the number in attendance. You need not fish all six days as there may be openings (usually later in the week.) Contact Mike for more details (831) 706-5556, to check on openings, or be put on a waiting list. First come first served.

You can also make your own arrangements either by bringing your own RV (Pyramid Lake Lodge has hook-ups and sells permits to park on the any of the beaches along the lake) or staying in Reno. Reno is 45 minutes away. Call Pyramid Lake Lodge to inquire about last minute cancellations in their cabins as well (775) 476-0400 and check out their website to see what the cabins look like at www.pyramidlakelodge.com. The General Store in Sutcliff offers meals on selected nights only to those who call in before 2:00 PM. Check at the General Store for details.

Equipment: 6-9 weight rods with hi-speed, hi-D shooting heads or fast sink integrated lines to fish the bottom in 6 to 9 feet of water, and a floating line for indicator fishing. You should bring a stripping basket and a ladder that will accommodate it. A ladder helps to get you up out of the cold water and enable you to cast out to where the fish are. You can still catch fish without one but not with near as much consistency.

Flies: Woolly buggers in black, white, purple, olive, midge, caddis and mayfly nymphs to name a few. If as in years past the Confab in February is offering the opportunity to see how some of the best Pyramid patterns are made plan to attend and bring a vise and tie some yourself. Flies may also available from club member Jim Hall who ties some very good flies specific to Pyramid cutthroat as well as other species at reasonable cost. His number is (831) 713-6835. There is a general store with provisions as well as tackle and an assortment of flies.

How to get there: Take US 80 to Reno-Sparks, take the Pyramid Blvd. off ramp and go north about 35 miles. Crosby Lodge is at Sutcliff, near the Ranger Station.

If you have any questions about equipment or how to get there, check the “Gearing up” columns in the March 2007-2009 archives on our great club website, or call Mike White at (831) 706-5556.

If you are considering going to Pyramid again this year with the club and you have not already done so, please contact the person who is booking the trailer you stayed in last year. Trailer-masters, if your trailer has gaps or cancellations, you can call Mike so he can pass the names of members who don't have lodging to fill the empty spots.

Fishing, Camping, and New Ladder Regulation:

Fishing and camping permits can be purchased online prior to the fish-out. We would highly recommend doing this. Go to www.plpt.nsn.us to obtain your licenses. There is also an RV Park available at (775) 476-1155.

As with any great fishery there are always a long list of rules and regulations. We would recommend you review them on the website above. Suffice to say those of us who have been going to Pyramid Lake for many years are a good source of information as well. We will help inform and guide all newcomers. 15.6 USE OF LADDERS, ETC. Any ladders, milk crates, boxes or other objects used in the water as a fishing aid must be occupied or closely attended (i.e. remain in the area) by fishermen at all times. Any person who leaves such objects unoccupied in the water for more than one hour will be deemed guilty of littering. 15.6.1 Fishing aids described above must have a permanent tag affixed that has the name, address, and phone number of the owner of the fishing aid. If the permitted angler using the fishing aid is not the owner, the owner will be the responsible party for any infractions by the permitted angler.

This year we have five trailers reserved. (6,7,8,9, and 10) As of September 1st 2021 we have 5 openings available. These openings will fill up quickly, so contact Mike immediately at (831) 706-5556. Last year was an incredible experience with many fish over 15 lbs brought to the net. If you cannot commit early and make it into one of our reserved trailers you can always make your own arrangements by contacting the Pyramid Lake Lodge at (775) 476-0400.

Mike White (831) 706-5556, lumberguy73@hotmail.com

NOTE: Due to insurance regulations, all attendees must be paid up members of Santa Cruz Fly fishermen, so get your membership paid up if you haven't done so yet.

Mammoth Fishout – 2022



[Mammoth Lakes](#) (Click for address and map)

Fishmaster: John Cook fishmaster– (831)688-1561 or (831)234-6515

Dates: This fishout will take place over two consecutive one-week periods. You may sign up for one or both weeks. Week 1: Sept 24 – Oct 1. Week 2: Oct 1 – Oct 8.

Location: The town of Mammoth Lakes is located on the eastern side of the Sierra, 6 or 7 hours drive from Santa Cruz. There are many lakes and streams in the area to fish.

General: We will be staying in condominiums in the town of Mammoth Lakes. Condo has a lovely hot tub, so bring your suit. Two people per bedroom. Most people bring a sleeping bag to share king size bed or a pad and sleeping bag to sleep on floor. A private room option is possible at an increased fee.

Cost: TBD

Food Preparation: Breakfast and lunch items will be purchased by the fishmaster ahead of time. Each person will be assigned a Kitchen Day. On that day, tasks will include setting out breakfast and lunch items, store unused food, and preparing the evening meal and clean up afterwards.

SignUps: Call John Cook letting him know which week or both or private room up to May 1st. We will be leaving town mid May, so need to put things together and confirm reservation by then. Receiving your \$ will reserve your spot. I will maintain a waiting list and, if space becomes available you will be notified by phone, even while we are on summer vacation.

Covid Issues: TBD

Posted on October 28th, 2021

Gone Fishings: ForeBay FishOut results

Good old campsite #29 was available again, the palapa posts 10' apart and the new wind screen tarp cut to 8' X 10' was a bear to put up in strong winds and thankfully, our VP Kevin Murdock was already there with a site and his boat and tent trailer and helped lash together enough wind break that everything does not blow off the picnic table and you are chasing it across the field.

Two days of white caps and and flapping plastic day and night, our vehicles rocking through the night was like sleeping in the sailboat. I have to thank the 3 brave fishermen/campers who came on Thursday and sat it out, always ready for the wind to stop howling. Kevin arrived first and Jim Hall and Michael DiCiano in his Airstream land yacht. Jim's dome tent bent in the wind like those blown air wind sock stick men you see to attract customers. Kevin had an extra bed and his dog 'Cooper' had someone new to flop on that night.

Huge thanks to all Lucky 13 of us and especially if you brought some firewood as my portable fire tub kept us all warm as we circled the fire and told stories and laughed through the night. Steven Rawson came to camp only and he brought his Dutch oven and from scratch made a cherry pie cooking with charcoal and timing it perfectly with ice cream to top off his fish taco's as the main course our last night there.

Fishing was spotty at best Saturday and Sunday's report just in has Michael landing 8 and Sam 1 fish. Other fishermen (no women this year for the first time). Jeff 'Yog' Goyert, Jim Hall, Jeff Zischke. John 'Davis', (Cuban cigar guy), Scott Kitayama, Jerry, Phillip, and Mike White who came up Friday night in his

motorhome and when he opened the door the smell of good food was strong. He graciously roasted a monster amount of lamb perfectly and with baked potatoes and corn the 7 of us feasted at that windy campsite. Libation and conversations galore. Thank you all for bringing your game to one of the 'ugliest' campsites I ever stayed for so long. Too bad the fishing/catching wasn't on fire in our part of the lake.

Remember that we do this again the first Thursday next month. Let me know your intentions before then. Peace, Stosh

[Reel News](#)

[Smith River now has a Fishery Monitoring Program](#)

by Dr. Mark Rockwell, D.C. - President Northern Cal Fly Fishing Council



It is with great pride I report to you that after 4 years of effort we have achieved what once seemed to be impossible – a continuously run fishery monitoring plan for the Smith River, with a focus on sonar counting both Chinook salmon & Steelhead. As most know, the Smith is the last remaining anadromous fish river in California that is free flowing from source to sea. It is also the crown jewel of steelhead, with the California State record for size. It measured 42” X 23”, which calculates to somewhere between 29 & 32 pounds. At record weighting it topped the scale at more than 27 pounds.

Here’s a shortened version of the story. Ben Taylor, Chuck Bucaria, Lowell Ashbaugh and I began working on the Smith more than 10 years ago. We achieved a change in leader length to stop the “flossing-type” snagging of Chinook, and we worked with the Fish & Game Commission to stop the take of wild Steelhead. Both of these changes were necessary to preserve both species. Then, more than 6 years ago we began a dialogue with CDFW on how they monitor the runs of anadromous fish. As it turned out, they had no credible data other than to say

“we know the Smith has healthy runs of Chinook & Steelhead”. Well, we thought that simply was unacceptable.

After a year talking with the CDFW Fisheries Branch Chief, we secured a meeting with Chuck Bonham, CDFW Director, shortly after his appointment under Governor Brown. We made a plea to he and the Fishery Chief that we’d write a Fisheries Management Plan for the Smith as a draft and work with their fishery biologist on the North Coast to make it an acceptable document to implement on the river. We offered to write the draft plan, pay costs to get it into a reviewable draft (\$35,000), and get it into implementation. That started a nearly 3 year process but finished in 2019 with an approved Fisheries Monitoring Plan, which is where we are today.

Following that effort we worked with CDFW to obtain 3 DIDSON sonar monitoring devices, which CDFW said they had, but weren’t sure if they could authorize them for the Smith. As it turned out, more than 18 months went by without CDFW making the devices available. They said the equipment was not available and they had no funding for personnel to manage the program. They had no idea when it could be started.

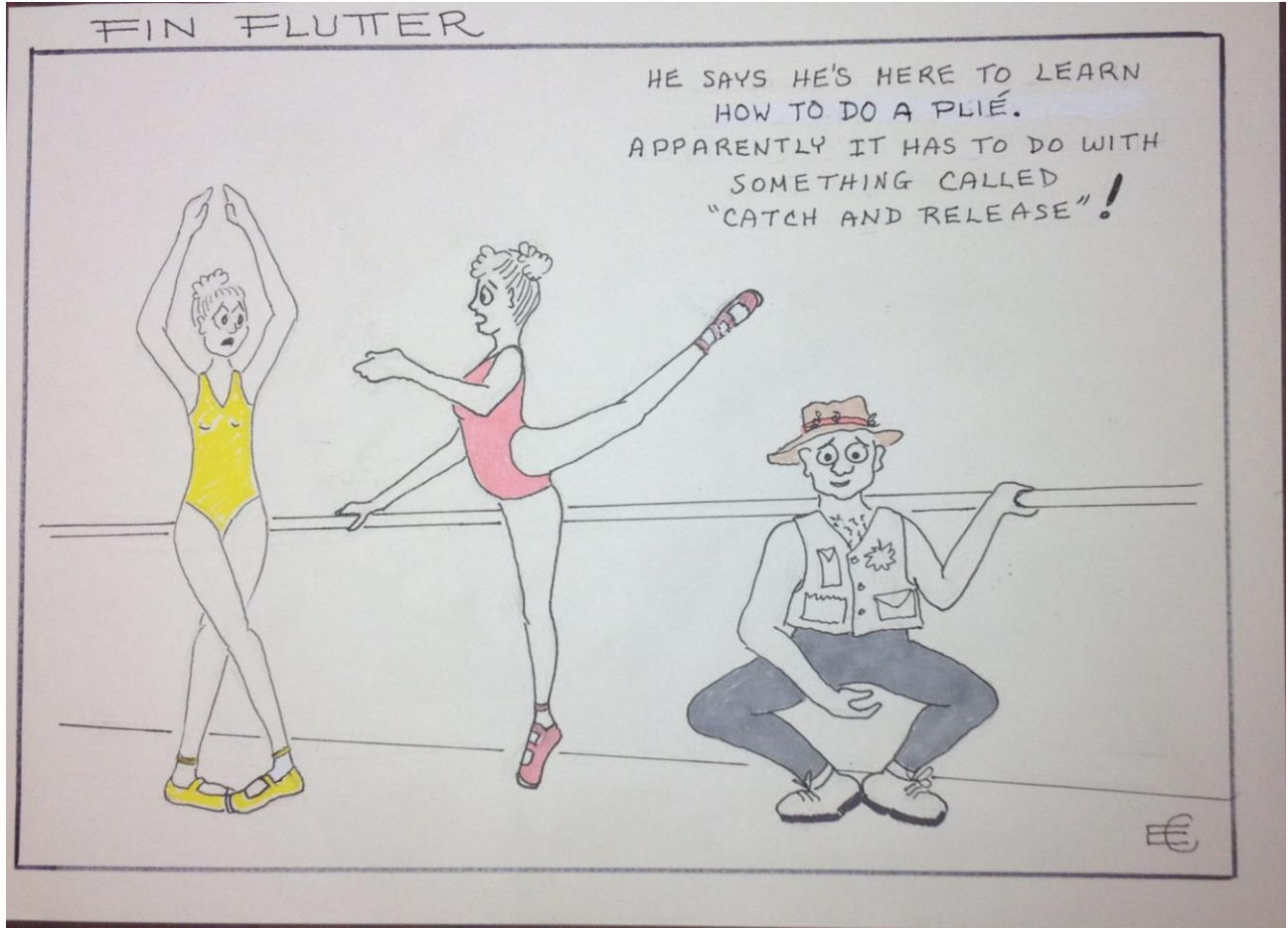
We then decided to work with NOAA fisheries and the Tolowa Dee ni’ (TDN) Tribe which lives on the estuary of the river, and runs a small hatchery there. TDN applied for and received a grant from the **Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)** for staffing the project for 2 years, but was promised by CDFW that it would provide the DIDSON equipment. After nearly a year CDFW was not able to come up with the sonar equipment. TDN then applied to BIA again, this time for 2 sonar units, at a cost of \$170,000. I also communicated to Director Bonham that CDFW was losing face and reputation with us and the Tribe. To his credit he pushed the state and regional Tribal Liaisons to work with the Tribe and the regional director to get the equipment to the Tribe. They then worked out a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to loan 2 DIDSON units to the Tribe.

Today, October 2021 we’ll have 2 DIDSON sonar counting units in the water for the migration seasons of both Chinook and Steelhead. The Tribe also has 2 additional units as spares in case of a failure. This program will be run totally by Tolowa Dee ni’ for both installation & maintenance of the sonar as well as staffing to do the monitoring and reporting to CDFW. This program will be run annually into the future. We need 2 life cycles of Chinook to have scientifically credible information that will be used to manage that fishery. This is a huge win for the fish and for those of us who love Chinook & Steelhead, and the Smith.

For those of you who have not fished the Smith, a most historic river in fly fishing lore, you should consider it. I’ve fished it only once, in February, and was able to land 2 bright Smith River Steelhead in the 12-15 pound range. I saw several others rolling that were larger. They are magnificent fish, and the Smith is one of our most beautiful rivers. Zack Larson, who I fished with, does guide, and Zack helped us write some of the fishery plan. Give him a call: 707-954-1085. BTW, the Smith receives significant rain in the winter, and flows can be very high. The day before I fished it was running at 16,000 cfs, but clarity as fishable. The next day the flows were down to 7,000 cfs, and the day I landed the 2 fish it was at 5,000 cfs. Hence, though it gets lots of water, it drops and clears quickly. **If you love Steelhead or Chinook, this is California’s best place.**

Cartoon
Fin Flutter

by Elaine - cartoonist



ho Ho