

September 2017

# Headwaters

NEWSLETTER OF THE  
STANISLAUS FLY FISHERS

Stanislaus  
Fly Fishers

A CHARTER CLUB  
OF FLY FISHERS  
INTERNATIONAL

MEMBER OF THE  
NORTHERN  
CALIFORNIA  
COUNCIL OF FLY  
FISHERS  
INTERNATIONAL

September 2017  
General Meeting

Tuesday  
September 12, 2017  
5:00 pm Tying/Casting  
6:15 Dinner  
6:45 Program

**New Location!**

Grace Lutheran Church  
617 W. Orangeburg  
Modesto, CA

Fall is my favorite time of the year. Daytime temps are cooler and nights are crisp. Leaves are changing colors and for fly fishermen rivers are fishable again. You can go out and find rivers to yourselves especially if you can fish during the week. Harvest is done and the need for irrigation water is reduced.

There was a time when Labor Day represented the start in the reduction of water being transferred from the Merced River into Lake Yosemite and the wading pathway across the Merced River at Merced Falls was open. Onto the fisherman's trail allowed you to reach the areas of the river that wasn't easily accessible most of the year. Yes, we were chasing planted rainbows & some year brookies, the fishing was fun, and for a dad that was in search of water that I knew my young son could catch fish, it was available.

But like most good things, PG&E found a way to put a halt to it. Going there and finding a chain link fence blocking our parking area and access said all good things do come to an end.

This year waiting for the Stanislaus & Tuolumne Rivers to fall down to fishable levels has been a wait and see effort. With Don Pedro Reservoir at 86% capacity right now and seasonally below 60%, and New Melones in a similar position, more water will be coming downriver so it's become a daily exercise to check the flows and see if it will be fishable. It's amazing how we have gone from no water to a lot of water in one year.

That said I know fishing on the lower Sacramento River is heating up with the "egg drop". Truckee and Little Truckee Rivers are fishing well at times I read. The East Walker is sounding like a possible destination, and now that it is September, Heenan Lake is open Friday-Sunday for catch and release fishing of the brood stock. Also, West Fork of the Carson river is just a few miles away from Heenan Lake so you can pursue lake and stream fishing on the same trip.

Many opportunities are out there - you just have to look and give it a shot. Remember you can't catch fish without a line in the water!

- Jim

# Stanislaus Fly Fishers Membership Information

Membership dues are \$36 per year for members.

Members must also join Fly Fishers International. Dues vary, but do not exceed \$35 for a single, one-year membership.

## SPONSOR



## WE SUPPORT



Like us on [Facebook](#) 

## We're on the Web!



## Club News

### *September Program: Bud Heintz "FFI Conclave Report & Fishing the East Walker"*



Long time Stanislaus Fly Fishermen/Fly Fishers member and fly tier extraordinaire, Bud Heintz will present the September program recounting his experiences at the 2017 Fly Fishers International Conclave in Livingston, Montana.

Bud, as we all know, is a frequent demonstration tier at conclaves and outdoor/fly fishing shows, and can usually be found sharing his experience, knowledge and expertise at our monthly meetings. This month we're putting Bud front and center for our main program to share his recent Montana trip with us.

In addition to his conclave report, Bud will provide tips for fishing the East Walker River. You'll definitely want to pay attention to his discussion of and recommendation for flies to have on hand when you go.

## Stanislaus Fly Fishers 2017 Board of Directors

President – Jim Goodwin  
Vice-President – Jeff Bakker  
Secretary – Michael Hewitt  
Treasurer – Bob Ramos  
Outings – Volker Kropp  
Membership – Lonnie Moore  
                    – Rick Allen  
Past-President – Jim Bowen  
At-Large – Bud Heintz  
At-Large – Pat Roe  
At-Large – Bob Nakagawa

*Board Meetings are held  
on the fourth Tuesday of the  
month at 5:00 p.m. at Me & Ed's  
Pizza on Pelandale Ave. in  
Modesto. All members are  
welcome to attend.*

## Club News (cont.)

### Dinner

Dinner available at the club meetings for the first 25 members. **Suggested \$7.00 donation!**

### Raffle News

#### SMALL RAFFLE

When held, the small item raffle is \$5 per ticket or 3/\$10 and only for members in attendance the night of the meeting. The items will be on display and the raffle tickets sold prior to the meeting. The raffle will be held at the end of the meeting time.

#### DOOR PRIZE

The monthly door prize is for members only. When you arrive and sign in at the meeting, you will receive a ticket for the door prize raffle of a half-dozen flies tied by one of our members. ***Members who donate flies for the door-prize drawing, will receive two regular raffle tickets.***

#### LARGE RAFFLE (52 Playing Cards + 2 Jokers)

The current large raffle features a ½ day guided trip with Fish Habit Outfitters, a fly reel, a chest pack, and a tying tools kit, plus others.. \$10 per chance. Raffle held when all cards are sold.

### Membership Information

Membership Dues (\$36) for 2017 are due. For your convenience, we can now accept a credit card for your dues, but there will be an additional fee of \$1.00 to cover the cost of the transaction.

All memberships are “Family Membership” status. Spouses, significant others and children are now all included in every membership.

**Reminder: These are the club dues and DO NOT include FFI dues.** FFI dues are paid directly to the FFI and must be maintained regularly since the SFF is an FFI Charter Club. If you are not an FFI Life Member, or do not pay for three years at a time, **you must renew your membership yearly!** Also, remember to list the Stanislaus Fly Fishers as your **Affiliated Club**. This is important due to our Charter Club status. The online application for FFI membership is linked below.

FFI Membership [Application](#)

## Upcoming Outings and Events

**STANISLAUS RIVER SALMON FESTIVAL 2017** – November 11, 2017

10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Knight's Ferry Recreation Area

**ANNUAL HOLIDAY DINNER – TBA**

## A Cast From the Past ...

*As a new feature, we will be reprinting articles from the original newsletters of the Stanislaus Fly Fishermen, courtesy of the archives of Ed Crosby.*

*From the November 11, 1967 newsletter of the Stanislaus Fly Fishermen*

**Hynes and Van Valin Score on the Trinity ...** Don Hynes and Doctor Earl Van Valin have just returned from a four-day trek to the Trinity. Those two members left last Thursday afternoon, fished the great Trinity between Junction City and Hoopa, returned Sunday enthusiastic over the steelhead fishery on that water. "We didn't get any action the first two days," Don reported, "but the first two steelies I took Sunday morning made the whole trip worthwhile. First steely I struck proved to be a 4-1/2 pounder and it took 35 minutes to land it. Second was a near-twin to the first, weighing an even four pounds."

The boys made their best catches in the vicinity of Big Bear. Don used a weighted #6 Brindlebug which produced the best results by being fished just under the surface. The fly is tied with a combination olive and black chenille body over which is wrapped silver tinsel. Brown hackle wings are tied so as to stick out, instead of being swept back in the usual wet fly pattern. A brown hackle tip is tied on for the tail, and it is angled upwards at about a 45 degree angle. Anyone who wants to examine this fly, and would like to like to learn how to tie it, see Don Hynes or Earl Van Valin.

---

"Scholars have long known that fishing eventually turns men into philosophers. Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to buy decent tackle on a philosopher's salary."

~ Patrick F. McManus



## Conservation

### California: the State of Salmon

**Even if the levees are torn down, chinook restoration faces walls.**

by Alastair Bland - Published August 23, 2017

Reprinted from: <https://www.hakaimagazine.com/article-short/california-state-salmon>

California, land of almonds, avocados, and Arnold. But beyond its famous edibles and a celebrity governor, California, like its Pacific Northwest neighbors, is also a salmon state. At least, it will be again if salmon advocates have their way. (continued on next page)

In the state's Central Valley, researchers Jacob Katz and Carson Jeffres have spent the past seven winters along the Sacramento River. They have slogged through muddy fields and marshes, netted fish, tagged some with tracking devices, and released them into the water. Katz is a biologist with the nonprofit organization California Trout, and Jeffres is an ecologist with the University of California, Davis. The duo has been gathering evidence to rationalize making a fundamental change to California cropland.

They believe that by carving notches into several key levees and allowing the Sacramento River to routinely flood the surrounding farmland, they can re-create essential natural habitat for the river's wild chinook salmon, which have plunged from historical levels. Biologists believe between one and two million adult chinook once spawned every year in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers, which merge several kilometers inland of San Francisco. Dams and levees, which channel rivers and prevent natural flooding cycles, and diversion of rivers into farmland, have drastically reduced the chinook population. Today's spawning returns number several hundred thousand at best. But Katz and Jeffres believe restoring the Central Valley's floodplains will bring back the fish.

Through several years of research, the pair has found that cropland inundated for just a few weeks with river water becomes ideal habitat for juvenile salmon. As Katz describes it, large areas covered with shallow water function like a solar panel: sunlight hits the water, which then explodes with phytoplankton and invertebrate life. Finger-sized fish migrating toward the sea feast and grow fat on such floodplains. They also find refuge from predators, and their odds of reaching salt water improve, Katz says. "We lose this when we confine rivers between levees."

Employing agricultural land as habitat represents a critical conservation challenge of the 21st century. "Integrating the human footprint with functioning ecosystems is how we have to move forward," Jeffres says.

It sounds like a progressive, ecologically sound habitat restoration story, backed by organizations that can make it happen.

But there is a fundamental flaw in the plan: hatchery fish. A half-dozen Central Valley hatcheries capture adult chinook that have returned to the river system to spawn and manually combine their eggs and sperm in trays. Each year, these facilities release about 30 million young salmon into the wild, often trucking them to the ocean to boost their odds of survival.

It's been a lifeline for California's salmon fishery. But while hatcheries seem to be a fix in the short run, biologists warn they're affecting the entire salmon population in profound ways. The underlying problem with hatcheries is that they have genetically altered salmon by rearing them, if only briefly, in an environment lacking natural selection forces.

"This basically creates a domesticated animal adapted to living in artificial environments, but not in the wild," says fish biologist Peter Moyle at the University of California, Davis.

Because hatchery fish that reach adulthood pair up with wild salmon at spawning time, they compromise the genetics and fitness levels of the entire population, Moyle explains.

Hatcheries also tend to genetically homogenize salmon runs into populations of clone-like individuals with limited behavioral diversity—a direct result of low genetic diversity. This makes them more vulnerable to adverse environmental conditions. For example, a few months after birth, hatchery fish tend to migrate out to sea all at once, rather than across a larger timespan as wild fish do.

This had serious consequences about a decade ago, when a period of weakened ocean upwelling meant a shortage of phytoplankton and krill—food for baby salmon. So, when millions of hatchery-born chinook smolts reached the sea more or less in unison, they starved, and virtually the entire population was lost several years in a row. The runs crashed, bottoming out in 2009 and causing the first-ever emergency fishing moratorium that lasted for two years.

(Continued on next page)

The Central Valley's chinook have rebounded thanks to better ocean conditions in recent years. However, degraded habitat remains a problem. So do hatchery fish, which far outnumber naturally born salmon and continue to threaten the viability of wild populations.

Hatcheries can cause other problems, too. Recently published research describes how hatchery salmon have overwhelmed small coastal streams in southeastern Alaska, depleting oxygen in the water and increasing the risk of death.

Moyle says survival rates of Central Valley hatchery chinook are declining. Eventually, so few fish will reach spawning age that hatcheries that rely on their sperm and eggs will be unable to continue operating.

But not all hatcheries are the same. So-called "conservation hatcheries" focus on carefully selecting broodstock and, through sophisticated systems, attempt to mimic natural selection processes on the juveniles. Brett Galyean, manager of northern California's Livingston Stone National Fish Hatchery, says his facility's staff go to great lengths to avoid inbreeding the Sacramento River's winter-run chinook, which are nearly extinct.

"We get a genetic ID on every fish, and as we spawn them we can look at the spreadsheet and make sure we aren't spawning related salmon," Galyean says, describing a meticulous process meant to maintain this distinct population of chinook that has nearly vanished at least twice in recent history.

Moyle says it will take a combination of sophisticated hatchery programs, like Livingston Stone's, and habitat restoration efforts, like that of Katz and Jeffres, to maintain salmon runs in California's future.

Katz also believes in the two-pronged approach to preserving the state's red gold, but he maintains faith in the power of wild rivers and remains optimistic. "We can have many more fish, more consistently and for less money, if we restore natural phenomena and natural processes," he says.

Jeffres is convinced that having chinook salmon in one of the most populous regions in North America is possible and mostly a matter of social priorities. If cold water is allowed to flow freely on its way to the sea, the fish, he insists, will come back.

"It's basically a question of whether we want salmon or not," he says. "California is a salmon state. People are starting to forget that." And that, he says, may be the greatest long-term threat the fish face.

---

## 3rd Annual Tuolumne River Film Festival

Sunday, September 17, 2017 6:30 p.m.

Film • Music • Art • Auction

Menlo Atherton Performing Arts Center

555 Middlefield Road, Atherton, CA 94027I

Featuring live music and films from the Wild and Scenic Film Festival on Tour  
Ice Cream Social to follow, courtesy of Three Twins Ice Cream

Tickets \$10 online \$15 at the door

[www.tuolumne.org/events/filmfestival](http://www.tuolumne.org/events/filmfestival)

All proceeds to benefit Tuolumne River Trust



# Photos

