



Dinner Meeting for Thursday, May 21 **Fly Fishing the Spectacular San Juan** With Larry Johnson

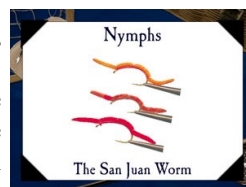


Not too far from southern California is a river that is world famous . . . world famous, that is, among fly fishers. In the northwest corner of New Mexico is where the San Juan River flows out of Navajo Dam, and there are very few fly fishing waters that can compete with this stream for numbers, size or the strength and fighting abilities of these trout.

The San Juan is a tributary of the Colorado River and became famous as a trout fishery after the Navajo Dam was built, which made the San Juan a tailwater. Construction began on this earthen dam in 1957 and was completed in 1962, originally designed for water storage in the newly created Navajo Lake. It is 402 feet high and more than 3,600 feet in length. Before the dam, the river was a relatively small one in the arid western foothills of the Rocky Mountains with not much to attract hordes of fly fishers.

But after the dam was in operation, with water flowing at a constant temperature of 42 to 44 degrees year-round, and the initial stocking of brown trout, the world began to take notice and for good reason. The trout average 17 to 19 inches, with many much larger. The fish took to the San Juan perfectly and the stocking of browns actually stopped 25 to 30 years ago so the browns are now considered wild. (These days some rainbows are stocked.) The pristine water below the dam runs for about 20 miles, with the fish numbering an incredible *nine to twelve thousand per mile*. This desert setting is indeed a unique one for a trout fishery, with the fish of the San Juan holding in pods, scattered in many of the riffles, as well as in back channels. The primary food source is midges, with the trout also taking mayflies, blue-wing olives, caddis, stoneflies, terrestrials like hoppers and ants and more meaty food such as worms, (yes, where did you think the San Juan worm got its name), leeches, snails and scuds.

You can drive to the river, or you can fly into Albuquerque, which then leaves you a little more than a three hour drive to the northwest, or you can fly into Durango, Colorado, which is one hour north of the river.



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RAFFLE ITEMS FOR MAY

First Prize — Orvis Clearwater 4 wt. 9' rod or Orvis Gale Force Boat Bag

Second Prize — Orvis Mid Arbor II 3-5 wt. reel

Third Prize — Orvis Wading Staff or Safe Passage Sling Pack

Big Barrel

**One dozen flies and box, Small Print Trout Related,
Book, Tippet Rolls, Hemostats**

PRESIDENT'S CORNER



A friend of mine once asked a Florida guide, "So, Frank, what do you do on vacation? For a complete break you can come to my office in a suit, answer angry customer calls, do paperwork all day and I can even get my boss to yell at you." Frank thought for a moment and said, "There are days when that doesn't sound too bad." April has been a month of intense fly fishing. I have fished the **Lower Provo** in Utah, the **Lower and Upper Owens**, **Ascension Bay** and **Isla Blanca in Mexico**. I have gone from delicate presentations of tiny soft hackles to hurling foot long green things (hard to call them flies) at barracuda on the flats. I have caught browns, rainbows, bonefish, tarpon, snook and permit – I am tired and

ready to come home. For those of you stuck behind a desk this may sound like whining but you can definitely have too much of a good thing. I speak as your President when I say it is possible to fish too much in one month. Luckily I am constantly reminded that in fly fishing the learning process never stops and you meet excellent people along the way. I just spent a wonderful week in Mexico with Club members **Paul Riegert**, **Bob Yokoi** and **Smoother Smyth** – look for the full story in next month's newsletter.

Last month I also came to appreciate the great people who run fly shops; the guys at the SPOT deserve a big round of applause for the amazing EXPO and art show. This show, along with the upcoming FFF Faire in Bishop, are essential meeting places for newcomers and old hands alike. Thanks should also go to the Trout Magnet in Bishop for the use of their shop for Charles Jardine's classes and lending me wading boots last week!

Now it's back to Club business and some good news. The Board agreed to waive the \$5 attendance fee for the Club meetings in December, March and September and make attendance free to all sixteen and younger. There is still concern over the low turnout for the monthly dinner meetings and this month we will be sending out an **email survey** asking how we can attract more members to our monthly meetings. Please take a few seconds to fill out this anonymous survey – it will really help us to chart the future of the Club. This month we can look forward to a wonderful presentation by Larry Johnson on the San Juan River.

In May we can look forward to Al Bundy's outing on the Lower Kern and the One Fly Surf event in San Diego. In Bishop flows on the Lower O are perfect with lots of fish and easy access. So get up there when you can. Just don't follow my example and overdo it.

Marshall Bissett

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MEMBERSHIP

PLEASE WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

By Jay Bushore, Membership Chair

The members of Sierra Pacific Flyfishers look forward to meeting you. We hope to get to know you better at the Monthly Dinner Meetings, in our educational programs and on the water. SPFF always welcomes new members.

Members, please introduce yourselves to new members at our monthly dinner meetings and make them feel welcome!

**Duane Erickson
Justin Hamilton
Eric Hamilton
Garrett Hamilton**

Board Members & Committees

(continued from page 1 Fly Fishing the San Juan)

Larry Johnson has been fishing the San Juan for years. He loved it when he first fished it in the mid-80s and that love has steadily increased during the last 14 years that he's been living on the banks of the river. The southwest was a new experience for Larry. He was born and raised in New Jersey where his family had a restaurant along the shore of Lake Lackawanna -- yes there is a Lake Lackawanna -- that has been a summer resort 50 miles outside of New York City since 1911. Larry is one of five children born to a man whose first job was a mathematician working on what would become a new invention -- called a computer -- for IBM. Then Larry's father went off to fight in World War II.



Larry learned to fish from a neighbor at the lake, a Catholic priest whom Larry describes as being a family friend and a good fishing teacher who was the person to first put a bamboo rod in Larry's hand. Larry describes Father John Dericks as a man his family loved so much that he married everyone in the family . . . and they weren't even Catholic.

Larry graduated from Nichols College of Business in Dudley, Massachusetts in 1975 with degrees in business administration and marketing. After graduating, he worked at a ski lodge in Vermont until his brother-in-law convinced him to come out west to California. After a few years of working in different sales positions, Larry was hired by Polaroid where he spent more than a decade working for that corporation in Europe. In 1991 he was on a fishing trip in Florida where he had dinner with a doctor when this doctor showed him a new-fangled invention -- a digital camera. Larry is a smart man and almost immediately realized that the Polaroid camera was doomed. He took early retirement and eventually wound up in New Mexico where, in 2000, he decided to become something of a trout bum on the San Juan. He actually took a job working behind the counter in a fly shop and, a year later, when Soaring Eagle Lodge came on the market, he bought it. He lived through some rough spots, like the actual day he took possession of the lodge. It was September 11, 2001 and by early afternoon, he was flooded with cancellations. But his skills at sales, marketing and publicity have proven invaluable and his investment paid off. He loves the San Juan, he loves guiding on the San Juan and he loves all the people who come there to fish.

To see and learn more about the San Juan, Larry Johnson and Soaring Eagle Lodge, go to: www.soaringeaglelodge.net

Order of Jassid Award Winner

By Marshall Bissett



Past President Bill O'Kelly and current President Marshall Bissett took the opportunity to present English angler Charles Jardine with the prestigious Order of the Jassid for services to fly fishing conservation. Charles was awarded the title in 2014 but was unable to collect it until the Expo at the Fishermen's Spot. No stranger to SPFF, Charles was awarded the Jassid in recognition of his work for Fishing for Schools in the UK and his long history of supporting angling causes in the UK and the US. Charles was, in his words, "honored and overwhelmed."

Hot Creek Ranch

By Kevin Peterson

Greetings everyone,
I am sure that most of you have been hearing the grim reports on the snowpack here in the Eastern Sierra and on the water outlook for the entire state of California. I have heard that the main topic of conversation at club meetings etc. has been frantic about the upcoming fishing season and that many folks are in a panic over it and even thinking of hanging it up until we get some water.

I would like to give you a few facts. Hot Creek is a spring creek. 85% of our summer water comes from the upstream springs. While the main springs are 30% down, we still have 70% of our water, which puts us in **much** better shape than most fisheries in the state! The water situation is not at its best but fishing can still be pretty darn good and FUN if you are willing to work a little more than you might be used to. I have been walking the creek every day and there are plenty of fish in the system! They are all not in the usual places which will mean you may have to figure it out a bit but that is the fun of it!! We have all seen those banner years when fishing was really easy! Well, there is a balance to everything in life and this probably won't be one of those years, however, it can still be fun!

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Applegate River, Medford Oregon

By Mike Rupp

It's Monday morning as I sit down to type this and share my experience after a 3 day fly fishing bender on the Applegate River, a tributary of the Rogue, in southern Oregon just above the California border. I'm a wreck physically. The swelling in my right knee, showing signs of the surgery 2 years ago, is recovering from hours and miles of walking up and down canyon trails to get to spots along with balancing and sliding on moss covered rocks. The small of my back is recovering from hours of standing and walking on said rocks. The tendonitis in my right elbow, from years of throwing the ball back to the pitcher and guys out at second base, is recovering from countless 40 foot roll casts with a single handed 8 weight, countless giant upstream and downstream mends and holding and steering trout the size of carp.

I love this, when do we go again?

Last year was my first attempt at catching steelhead. Due to low water flows and no fish coming up, I was shut out although I did end up with a nice 17" rainbow. This year conditions were the same. Oregon is suffering from the same drought and since flows and water levels are low fish are not moving up and are few and far between.

To access the Applegate I took a flight on Allegiant Air for around \$100.00 round trip to Medford. I got up Thursday night with my buddy Jerry and I stayed with an old friend. Friday we fished all day and couldn't find any fish in the river. In the evening I finally hooked one, my first one ever. It was a big chromer and I had it on about 10 – 15 minutes, up, down, all around, 3 jumps 2 – 3 feet out of the water. I finally got the fish in to the shore but no one had a net and the fish wouldn't have fit in it anyway. Sometimes I get that feeling that my time is up with a fish and I was correct. The fish finally pulled off and when I retrieved the flies he had broken off the hook of my #12 caddis, not the line, not bent the hook out straight..... broke the hook clean off. I was really bummed as this fish was a good 26 – 27" and was 5 – 7lbs I estimate, maybe bigger.

Saturday we started around 10 and went upstream to about 5 great spots with no strikes. We spoke to other fishers along the way and no one was having any luck. We returned to home base around 5 and walked downstream. After an hour with no hits, Jerry went back and I was on my own. I was fishing a deep pool in front of a cobble bar and a big fish jumped a little behind my drift. I went right after him and the second drift he took. 10 minutes later I had him close to shore and tried to get his head in my little net. When I stabbed at him I missed my chance and he spit the hook. The trailing fly stuck him in the back by his dorsal fin so I still had a chance. I played him a little more and got him close but when he saw me come down again he said he was done and burned out, no exaggeration about 40 feet of line across and downstream in a second and the hook pulled out. 0 for 2. Same size fish as the previous evening, a little smaller, big silver one fresh from the ocean 25 – 26", 5 – 7 lbs. I had learned from the previous experience to try and find

a beach to pull them up but as I was fighting the fish I did not see an adequate location as there was about a foot of bank all along the stretch. I figured I had blown my chance again and was really bummed. I looked at my watch and it was 6:04. I went back to the same drift and spot. Second drift over another fish hit. This was smaller and was not a chrome, like my previous 2, but a resident steelhead which had the telltale color of a typical rainbow. I led the fish upstream after several minutes of playing to a cobble bar I had picked out to land him. After a few harrowing minutes in the shallows ("Please God! Let me just get one!") I was able to back up and pull him up on the beach and stick him in my net. Finally!



I left him in the water, propped my camera up on a rock, took a picture of myself in frame pretending to hold the fish, checked it out and it looked good.



Set the timer again, ran down and grabbed the fish, held it up and whammo, a selfie with my first steelhead, 23".

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I revived him about 5 minutes and off he swam. I went back to the same drift, felt a tug and missed it. Went back again and bam, another one. This guy was a big fatty, a big football probably close to 8 lbs. He took me across the current, way down deep, up down and all around. It was during this time my reel came off! Apparently during all my excitement of getting the previous fish in, the rings had loosened and the reel came off. So here I am with this giant silver fish jumping in and out and I am trying to get the reel on. Needless to say by the time I had the reel back on too much slack had been given and he jumped and was gone. Oh well. I went back to the same drift and grabbed another one shortly after. I never saw this fish as a short time after setting, everything came out of his mouth. It was only after I got home that night and showed the fly I was using did I notice that the hook on the same #12 caddis pattern was broken like the one the previous day. As a side note, these were flies I bought and did not tie. The last time I looked at my watch it was around 6:35 so in that 30 – 40 minute span I had hooked 4 steelhead with 2 of them getting off, 1 landed, 1 miss and 1 broken hook. In between all of this I caught a little 10" pike minnow in the same hole which flew out of the water when I set. It was like being in the Sierra's, fishing all day, getting shut out and then all of a sudden it turns on at dusk. This was the same thing only all the fish were the size of carp. It was tiring, roll cast, drift, mend, set, fight 10 minutes, and lose the fish on the shore. When sharing my story with a local he reminded me that everyone should have my problems

Sunday we had a little time in the morning so I took Jerry down to the hole, showed them where they sat and coached him with the drift. He hooked up and after a 5 – 10 minute fight the fish broke off. I moved in to the spot and got hit, played the fish 10 – 15 minutes. Same thing, up with jumps, down deep, across current and he ended up running about 50 yards downstream. We followed him down until he ran out of juice. I was able to get him in the shallow water and since I had a buddy, Jerry grabbed my tiny 24" trout net and was able to get him in.



This fish also appeared to be a resident steelhead as it had the classic rainbow coloring. This guy was 22" in the net.

This was my first experience dealing with these fish. I have caught lots of big carp on a fly rod so understand a little of how to land a big fish. There is debate amongst people who live there that the resident steelhead, that "look like rainbow trout on steroids" (according to Katy, my 17 year old daughter) may actually be just that and not steelhead. Others argue they are steelhead who reside in the Applegate year round and have changed to their natural colors. The ones that are silver are allegedly just in from the ocean. I don't know, I'm new at it. I did experience this however. I found the resident steelhead (rainbow color), although really feisty, seemed to be easier to net once they are close to shore, they kind of give up. Those big fat silver things after spending time running from sharks and seals all year would rather die than come to the net. Now I know why I see guys with enormous nets and 6 foot handles! Anyway, it was a great trip, the first steelhead I have caught and I will be better prepared next time.

The Applegate Valley is a really neat place. It is full of wineries, hippies, professionals, and all things earthy and organic. The country is beautiful farmland and a great bird watching spot with lots of small, inexpensive great places to eat where most people grow their own..... food. It's not crowded and most places we fished we had to ourselves.



The two local guides we know were unavailable due to personal reasons but both were extremely helpful in pulling out maps and giving detailed instructions of where to go. If you are up there please look up the Rogue Fly Shop in Grants Pass, 541.476.0522. Josh White is the owner and has a nice shop connected to a shop where they make amazing furniture. If Josh is unavailable to go out, you would be in good hands with Teresa Kasza, 541.324.0485.

In summary I learned a couple things. Don't bring a knife (24" measure net) to a gunfight (trout the size of carp) and it's helpful if you have a buddy. With a big net and a buddy I would have had at least two more fish. Landing a 5 – 10lb fish, by myself, with a single handed 8 weight and a trout net is above my pay grade at this point. If you're serious, tie all your own flies. The hooks that broke were old flies I had from somewhere else. Speaking of flies, the hot ones were 6 – 8 black classic stonefly patterns as the river was full of them. The #12 caddis I spoke of which were olive with bead heads and brown biots for tails on a curved shank and the other one I caught my last fish on was a black rubber legged copper john variation on a curved shank with soft hen hackle wrapped at the top and ribbed with silver wire.

That's my experience. Have to go ice now. Tight lines. Bye.



Volunteer Opportunity!

Become an SPFF Project Healing Waters Volunteer.

Spend time with a Veteran and share the wonderful world of Fly Fishing.

We teach fly casting, fly tying, show a fishing video from time to time, share fishing trip stories, go fishing occasionally, and always have a FUN TIME!

Many of the Veterans have become SPFF club members and are enjoying attending SPFF monthly dinner meetings, learning to fly cast and tie flies, and are making new fly fishing friends.

So Come Join the Fun!
1st and 3rd Thursday
4:00 PM to 5:45 PM
Sepulveda Vet Center
9739 Haskell Avenue
Sepulveda / Mission Hills, CA 91343
Send an email to David Hoffberg,
Project Healing Waters Program
Lead dhoffberg@aol.com



Outing Opportunities

Tuna Fishing off the San Diego Coast

By Michael Schweit



Michael Schweit Photo

Want to see your backing? Join us for tuna fishing off the San Diego Coast. We have all the rods and reels you need so we just need you to come along. Conventional anglers are welcome as we fish with both.

Date – September 29-30 (leaves the evening of the 28th from San Diego)

Cost – 670.00, includes all meals and fishing permits. Extras are drinks, fishing cleaning and crew tip

Location – Sportfisher Fortune out of Fishermen's Landing

Species targeted – tuna, dorado, yellowtail

Reservations or questions – Michael Schweit,
msangler@earthlink.net,
[818.7573474](tel:818.7573474)

MISSOURI RIVER MONTANA 2015 OUTING

By Jack Jonathan



Richard Asher Photo

24" Brown on the Missouri River

Missouri River trip **October 4 - 10**, 7 days, 6 nights lodging, 5 days guided drift boats, meals and airport shuttle. Not included is airfare to & from Great Falls Mt. & tips. \$1680.

For more information please contact Jack Johnathan at 818.516.7958 or jackjona@aol.com.

I will be in Montana from about mid June to early October. I will be available to show you around if any one is interested in coming up early. For more information please contact Jack Johnathan.

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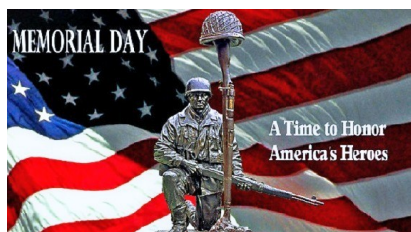
Maybe instead of telling your friends about how MANY fish you caught, you can tell them about how you hooked those tough fish that you worked on for a while and finally got them to eat. I guess what I am trying to say is that Fly Fishing isn't always about numbers but about the experience. If you have to catch a ton of fish to have a good day on the water, there may be better places to fish this year, but if you are out for an incredible Fly Fishing experience in one of the most beautiful places on earth, then come to Hot Creek Ranch! We hope to see you here, Kevin and Lisa

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Casting Clinic at Balboa Lake

1st & 3rd Saturday each month unless otherwise noted.

Instructors are usually available most Saturday mornings 9-11AM, schedules permitting.



Frank Vargus Sr. scores his first steelhead while floating the Trinity with Peter Santley of Tahoe Fly Fishing Outfitters.

Next Dinner Meeting

Thursday May 21st

Monterey At Encino
16821 Burbank Blvd
Encino, CA 91436

Menu

Caesar Salad

Chicken Piccata
with Rice Pilaf &
Grilled Vegetables
or

Broiled Salmon
with Rice Pilaf &
Grilled Vegetables

Hot Fudge Sundae

Coffee—Tea—Iced Tea

Cocktails at 6:00 PM / Dinner 7:00
Call 818.789.1919 **Ext 10** (Michelle) or
email

MontereyatEncino@Gmail.com

Reserve by Monday May 18th

\$32.00 Cash or Check, No Cards
Non-dining guests \$5

SUPPORT OUR SPONSORS

The Board of Directors and membership of the Sierra Pacific Flyfishers wish to express their appreciation to the following retailers. Their promotion of our club and its activities throughout the year, and their contributions of products and services help us to continue the various public services that we offer.

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Real Cheap Sports

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Ventura, CA 93001
805.648.3803

Orvis

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Pasadena, CA 91101
626.356.8000

The Trout Fitter & Trout Fly

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