

DECEMBER 2001

# Desert Fly Casters Forward Casts



DESERT FLY CASTERS A BARBLESS CLUB



## DECEMBER MEETING:

Wednesday • December 12, 2001  
Dinner- 5:30-6:30 PM  
Banquet Meeting- 7:00 PM  
Knights of Columbus Hall  
644 E. Chandler Blvd.  
in Chandler

"There is no use in your walking five miles to fish when you can depend on being just as unsuccessful near home."

Mark Twain, 1885



## President's Report-December 2001

**Bob Harrison**

**W**ell have you made a list or turned down a few pages on a couple of fly fishing catalogues and left them in an inconspicuous place? It is that time of year. If you haven't then there is an alternative. Join us at the Christmas banquet on December 12th at the Knight's of Columbus hall in Chandler. It is located on Chandler Boulevard between Arizona Avenue and McQueen - North side of the road a little east of the railroad tracks. The doors will be open at 6 pm and we should start dinner between 6:30 and 7:00. Bring your spouse to show what kinds of things might be appreciated in your stocking. Better yet, bring some money for the raffle and you are likely to take some home with you. Elsewhere in the newsletter should give an idea of what Gloria has been able to gather up. Seems like a rod or two, maybe a reel, and a 'handful' of other items. There are some that can't count on the conveniently marked catalogue and do their shopping at the banquet. So you have to keep feeding raffle tickets into the buckets to keep the odds in your favor.

We have a new board for 2002. The offices will be announced at the banquet. There are a lot of familiar faces but we managed to add a few new ones to the mix. Only one wasn't pre-warned to attend the board meeting. As tradition goes, that person now has a lot of duties to fulfill. We have also looked back through the membership lists for those that checked off interest in being part of the board. Those names will be passed along to the various committee chairs to tap you on the shoulder for helping with classes and outings and other activities.

Last but not least, it has been an enjoyable year for me. It has been great to meet the new faces, tell a small story or two, and help promote the past time of fly fishing. Just keep in mind for the future that I have taught several about cowboy camp cook rules. When the round up starts all the cowboys take turns at cooking until one of them complains. The complainer gets to cook for the rest of the round up. That is why you will hear "There's sand in my eggs. Boy do I like them that way". I am looking forward to another year of spending Wednesday nights talking about the past time I enjoy. I hope you all do as well.

## DESERT FLY CASTERS • ANNUAL BANQUET WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2001

The big day is coming! Mark your calendars...Wednesday, December 12, 2001, 5:30-6:30 pm, with Raffle and Prizes to follow around 7:00 pm and will be held at the Knights of Columbus Hall, 644 E. Chandler Blvd., Chandler, AZ.

*For all you who have promised to donate something to the raffle...Please call Gloria at 480/507-8995, to arrange for delivery or pickup of your items. Those donating \$150 or more in cash or wholesale cost of merchandise will get free printing of their business card in the DFC Newsletter for a year.*

This is a "Pot Luck" Dinner. Ham, turkey & gravy will be provided, but the rest is up to us. Those of you whose last names start with letters A - J, please bring side dishes, those whose names start with letters K - Z, please bring desserts. If you are to bring a side dish but won't be arriving until AFTER 6:15 pm, please bring a dessert.

**SEE SPECIAL BANQUET INSERT IN THIS NEWSLETTER FOR DETAILS!**

LEAVE ONLY FOOTPRINTS BEHIND WHEN WALKING THE PATHWAYS OF OUR ARIZONA ENVIRONMENT

## ROGUE RIVER STEELHEADING

by Chris Herbert

I learned to fly fish at the feet of my uncle in West Michigan years ago. But when I moved to Arizona at the age of 18 and lost my main fishing buddy, I gave up the sport... for about 30 years! Now that I'm back, I've been trying to make up for lost time.

In late October, a professional conference took me to Chicago; so I took an extra week and drove to Michigan to visit "the dear old Unk." While in one of my favorite fly shops – Great Lakes Fly Fishing Company in Rockford – I heard tales of some great steelhead fishing on the Rouge River that runs through town. Although the Rogue isn't one of Michigan's "holy waters," it has garnered a bit of respect. Bob Linsenman & Steve Nevala in the introduction to Great Lakes Steelhead: A Guided Tour for Fly-Anglers, say of the Rogue: "This little stream is only 3 miles from its mouth to a blocking dam, but a few years ago more steelhead were taken in it during a 3-week period than were taken in all the rivers of the entire West Coast combined – during that year!"

Steelhead, I learned, are rainbows that imitate their salmon cousins, traveling out to the big lakes and coming back to the rivers to spawn (although unlike salmon, steelhead don't die after spawning). They were introduced from west coast streams to the Great Lakes a number of years ago and have taken hold admirably.

On a sunny Friday morning, I met guide Ben Hunting at the shop about 7 a.m. for a day's fishing. Ben set me up with a 9.5 foot Sage RPL 7-weight and a Ross Gunnison (Ben's on Ross's pro staff) and tied on a scud and a salmon egg dropper. A few casts into the day, I began feeding line downstream as I'd been taught at Lee's Ferry (thanks Gary Walsh and guide Rocky Lovett!). "Hey," Ben said, "where'd you learn to turn a short cast into 70-feet of drift?" Having passed a test with him, I now needed to pass one with the steelhead that were supposedly holding in all that water. With no luck at the first hole, we moved upstream, where I finally hooked and landed a 15-inch "jack" (a young steelhead). As Ben said, "Now that you've caught your first 'steelie,' let's go after his mama."

For the next five hours, I perfected my roll cast and Ben wore out his fingers tying on new flies as he tried to find something our prey would find of interest. We moved to the "Powerline Hole," where Ben said he'd never been skunked...until he fished with me, that is.

Finally, we moved downstream to the spot at which Ben said he'd caught his first steelhead years before. I quickly caught a small sucker, then a 10-inch brown, but no steelhead. About 4:30, Ben said, "This is your last cast. Make it count." The gods were with me. Something grabbed the fly, I managed to set the hook as I should, and soon a flash of silver leaped from the surface... a big flash. Ten minutes later, we had a 31-inch, approximately 11-pounder in the net. Eleven pounds! That's ten times the size of the biggest fish I've probably ever caught. (People there tell me that I'm still about 4 pounds short of a really bragging-size steelhead out of the Rouge... but let's ignore them for the time being.)

Luckily, Ben's a pro, and so I've got a picture of him with my fish. When I tried to hold her for a shot with me, she slipped out of my hands in a flash. (Hey you guys, why don't we have some lessons on holding fish for us newbies?!?)

When we got back to the shop and were comparing notes on the day with other fishermen, one noted that he'd caught a nice steelhead in the Powerline Hole on his very first cast that morning, the same place we'd left after two hours of being skunked. As Glen Blackwood, owner of the shop, quickly noted, "That's steelhead fishing for you, Chris."

But I'm hooked. And I hear the spring run on the Rogue is even better than in the fall! You can bet that Ben will be getting a call the next time I get back to my home state.

You can find more information about fishing the Rogue and other streams in West Michigan at the Great Lakes Fly Fishing Company's website: [www.troutmoor.com](http://www.troutmoor.com). Tell them that "Last Cast" Herbert sent you!

**EDITORS NOTES:** Referencing to "holy waters" in Chris's article draws from local nomenclature. The "holy waters" is where the National TU organization was born on the banks of the AuSable River in the northern regions of lower Michigan. And, has been considered by many a trout fisherman from around the world as a pristine trout river. (One should not confuse this habitat with the Ausable in New York- both are pronounced very differently!)

The Rogue River is about 30 minutes north of Grand Rapids, and empties into the Grand River which feeds into Lake Michigan. Both the Rogue and Grand have established themselves in high esteem by fishermen during the annual steelhead run.

Robert McKeon, DFC Editor

## HIGH 'PLANES' DRIFTER

by Jim Harris

On October 19th-21th, the fourth annual Great Western Rodmakers Gathering was held at Chuck Irwin's rod shop in Bishop, California. The key word here is rodmakers, as opposed to rodbuilders, for this is a gathering for those who love rods made from hand planed Tonkin bamboo. The only such gathering in the southwest, it attracts a variety of rod makers, refurbishers, collectors and aficionados from across the country.

This year was my first pilgrimage to this gathering but not my first to the Bishop area, which is among the most popular fishing destinations in the west. Highway 395 is the main thoroughfare between Carson City and Mojave, north to south, along the Eastern Sierra Nevada. This access to paradise provides daunting possibilities for the angler. Many good fishing spots go untouched however, due in part to the deceptive scale of this magnificent land-



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scape. Its vastness is belied by exaggerated topographic relief. Lakes and streams can easily be overlooked, hidden in the shadow of the 14,000 ft. peaks John Muir collectively called, "The Range of Light." Hundreds of creeks cascade out of precipitous canyons carved through this tectonically up-lifted granitic batholith, to then flow in 'Bee-lines' through the steep alluvial fans below. What appears to be a vegetated fence line often conceals glacier cold water, which soon finds the Owens River and the summer home of a sustained trout population. Every creek north of Olancho Creek, near Lone Pine, is stocked with Browns and Bows.

I left Phoenix two weeks before the gathering to take advantage of what the locals call the "fall brown bag." Late September through October is prime time for a few off-season anglers to find spawning browns in the rivers connecting the various lakes. With my Vintage '59 Airstream in tow, the next eleven days were spent creek, river, and lake-hopping as far north as the June Lake Loop



near Mammoth. Virtually every stop produced fish. One of my favorites was Mcgee Creek which flows into Crowley Lake. The campgrounds were closed for the season and the fishing, in the electric yellow hue of the Fall Aspens, was nothing but magic. The days and nights went by quickly and it was soon time to start making my way back south to Bishop and the gathering.

Thursday evening before the gathering was spent setting up camp on Horton Creek just a few miles northwest of Bishop. Chuck's shop is just across the Owens Valley below. I could actually see the shop through my binoculars. The shop is located behind Chucks home. It's ~ 25'X40' and custom built for rod making. Complete with dust collecting system, heated dip tank, drying tower and dedicated work stations, it's the envy of all who visit. It's also the perfect venue for this gathering.

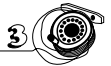
Finally the time to meet the other rod makers had come. There was no set agenda. A kind of free-for-all information exchange ensued that continued for three days. It was remarkably informative. Topics of interest popped up and anyone with an opinion could debate an issue. Some of the most experienced rod makers in the world were on hand and more than willing to share information. Various demonstrations would spontaneously erupt, such as Jerry Wall's (J.W.'s) prototype finish taper mill which successfully mills a rough beveled strip to finished size, in one pass, ready to glue-up. This is nothing new to the production rod companies of the past but it's revolutionary to the small custom rod maker.



Chuck Irwin revealed a remarkably viable and natural alternative to Portuguese cork. John Zimny showed one of his beautiful 5wt. quads... an absolute cannon. Don Burns showed some of the most rare and pristine vintage rods I've seen. That high-end Monty is a real gem. The large rod rack outside the shop was filled with rods for all to cast. What an opportunity to compare tapers and design. Hearing the old timers critique the various rods while casting them was especially enlightening. Saturday night we all took a rest during the barbeque to listen to one of the local guides talk about local fishing. Too much fun.

Perhaps the best thing that happened to me during the entire trip was the pleasure of meeting James (Jim) Reams of Fall River Mills, California. Jim was Walton Powell's lone time fishing partner and next-door neighbor. He's been making bamboo rods forever and is an absolute master. His rods fetch multiple thousands of dollars. His 5ft., 1wt. 1 piece rod with silk line was like nothing I've seen, let alone cast. The individual splines of this rod are 16 thousandths across at the tip. Yes- you're right and James will admit it, it's not a practical fishing tool, but it is a tangible demonstration of technical expertise. I've heard that Hiram Leonard and others made similar rods for this reason. Jim and I spent several hours talking about his somewhat unconventional methods while casting various rods. I felt like Luke Skywalker in the presence of Obi-wan Kenobi. Near the end of the gathering Jim graciously invited me to visit his shop to see first hand how he does it. I can't wait.

Sunday arrived too soon with its long drive home. Most of the attendees were nearby, on the Lower Owens River, making the last few casts before heading home. A few guys were sitting together outside Chuck's shop, drinking coffee, soaking in the morning sun. I sat with them, slowly eating a donut, and feeling a little sad this trip was over. After heartfelt goodbyes, I headed for Phoenix, longing to get back to my family and friends, and anxious to get back in my shop.



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Newsletter Editor

*Robert McKeon*



**2002 Desert Fly Casters Proposed Events**

The following "tentative" 2002 DFC Events Calendar proposal is just a way to get some input from you the members of DFC. Some events have dates attached, some events have coordinators, some do not. If you want to make sure an event happens, volunteer to host that outing. A host should have a date set, have maps for club members, suggest fly patterns, equipment and generally coordinate the group for that outing. If you have suggestions, would like to volunteer, or see a problem with the proposed calendar please call me Vince Deadmond at 480-982-7461 B or 480-984-4698

Jan- Rocky Point, Mexico

Feb- Sportsman's Show Feb 27-Mar 3

Ladies Day Outing (breakfast served by the guys)

Fishing at Saguaro Lake

Pyramid Lake, East Walker River, Reno

Feb 20,21,22,23 Vince Deadmond

Mar- Salt River or Apache Lake  
 Apr- Chevron Gulf Coast-Red Fish Trip  
 Apache Lake

April 4,5,6,7 Bob Harrison

May- White Mountain Extravaganza

June- Woods Canyon Lake and Small Stream Outing

Jul- White Mountains?

Aug- Open as of this newsletter issue date

Sept- Chevron Lake...to be announced

Oct- Lee's Ferry...to be announced

Nov- Rocky Point...to be announced

Dec- Banquet...to be announced

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 Sincerely, Your Hostess and Host,  
 Wink and Gerald

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# DESERT FLY CASTERS CHRISTMAS BANQUET / RAFFLE NEWS

Wednesday, December 12, 2001

By Gloria Mack

**The big day is coming!** Mark your calendars...Wednesday, December 12, 2001, 5:30-6:30 pm, with Raffles and Prizes to follow around 7:00 pm and will be held at the Knights of Columbus Hall, 644 E. Chandler Blvd., Chandler, AZ.

**See Map (reverse side)**...Chandler Blvd. is 4 miles south of the Superstition Freeway (Rt. 60). The Knights of Columbus Hall is east of Country Club Road / Arizona Avenue, and west of Mesa Drive / McQueen Road, in Chandler.

**What to wear:** This is a holiday celebration put on by a fishing club, so just about any attire is appropriate...Fancy holiday, business suit-just come from the office, waders-just come from the stream, and anything in between.

**For all you who have promised to donate something to the raffle...**Please call Gloria at 480/507-8995, to arrange for delivery or pickup of your items. Those donating \$150 or more in cash or wholesale cost of merchandise will get free printing of their business card in the DFC Newsletter for a year.

**This is a "Pot Luck" Dinner.** Ham, turkey & gravy will be provided, but the rest is up to us. Those of you whose last names start with letters A – J, please bring side dishes, those whose names start with letters K – Z, please bring desserts. If you are to bring a side dish but won't be arriving until AFTER 6:15 pm, please bring a dessert.

***Volunteers for clean-up afterwards would be greatly appreciated.***

**For newcomers, and those who have forgotten how the raffle works, here's the scoop:**

1. Most prizes are valued at \$25 or more, and are raffled as "Bucket Prizes". There are containers located next to the prizes. Place your ticket or as many tickets as you wish into the "Bucket" for the prize you'd like to win. The winner for that prize will be drawn from those tickets in that corresponding "Bucket". Ticket cost: \$1 each.
2. Bonus Prizes are of equal or higher value and are also raffled in this manner. (see explanation below for Bonus Prizes)
3. Deck of Cards Raffle, prize valued at \$625, utilizes playing cards. A maximum of 52 (+maybe jokers) chances will be sold for this prize. Purchasers will receive one playing card for each chance purchased. Winner will be drawn from a corresponding deck. Ticket cost: \$10 each.
4. Multi-Prize Table. These are prizes of lesser value. Drawings are made from one "Bucket". Choose your prize as your number or name is called. Ticket cost: \$1 each.
5. Silent Auction items are of substantial but undetermined value. Write your name and the amount you bid on the pad provided. Highest bidder by a certain time gets the prize for the amount bid.
6. Live Auction. Usual vocal auction.

Tickets are sold as follows: Bucket Prize tickets are sold for \$1 each. For every \$25 in \$1 tickets purchased, a \$25 Bonus Prize ticket is issued. For every \$50 in \$1 tickets purchased, one \$50 Bonus Prize ticket and two \$25 Bonus Prize tickets are issued. For \$100 in \$1 tickets purchased, one \$100 Bonus Prize ticket, two \$50 Bonus Prize tickets and four \$25 Bonus Prize tickets are issued. You can use address labels or a return address stamp to help identify the ticket stubs you deposit in the "Buckets".

***Bent or otherwise mutilated tickets deposited in the buckets will be disqualified!!!***