



Reading the Water

July 2003

MEETING

Wednesday

July 16

Welcome: 6:00 P
Program: 7:15 P

Tony's Jacal
Restaurant

621 Valley Ave.
Solana Beach

(Map—Back Page)

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Wednesday, July 16 program—Ed Engle on secrets of nymphing

Note the special location and time for this dinner meeting in the sidebar at left—See p. 9 for details.

Tailwater, small fly and nymphing expert **Ed Engle** will present his tactics, tips, strategies and secrets of the art, science and mythology of catching trout under the water's surface at our July meeting. As fish do about 90 percent of their feeding below the surface, this is good information to know, and help you become part of the 10 percent of fly fishers that catch 90 percent of the fish!

Ed's presentation delivers a comprehensive look at the sometimes confusing game of catching trout on subsurface fly imitations. The program begins by defining what nymphing is, and gives a short history of the art of nymphing. We will then be introduced to the elements of modern dead drift nymphing practice, including strike indicators, weighting, lines, rods and dead drift nymphing rigs.

Short line and long line dead drift nymphing will be shown in detail, including how to mend line and tricks of

the trade for more productive nymphing. Suspension nymph rigs and how to fish them in moving water and stillwaters will be demonstrated. "All natural" nymphing tactics where only a weighted nymph imitation is used without additional weight on the leader and a strike indicator will also be covered.

We'll see how to fish a nymph imitation to a visually spotted trout and how to nymph fish various types of water.

Last but not least, we will be given "Nymphing No-Nos"—situations where dead drift nymphing tactics are not appropriate.

Ed Engle is the perfect person to present this program. He has been an

enthusiastic fly fisherman for the past 30 years, with a special emphasis on trout. Ed is especially interested in small fly tactics and techniques. His small fly fishing research has taken him to a many of the West's famous tailwaters and to spring creeks across the country. He is also dedicated to fly fishing small streams and high country lakes for wild trout. Ed lives west of Colorado Springs,

(See **Engle**, 3)



President's message

The June meeting and casting clinic was presented by Charles Jardine. Voted by FFF as one of the "Legends of Fly Fishing," Charles lived up to his advanced billing, and



more. His program traced the beginnings of fly fishing, including the early equipment and flies, and concluded with a discussion of some of the renown fish-



eries in the UK, as well as our West. After his planned program, Charles treated us with an impromptu lesson on fishing wet flies—good thing we have a big meeting room!

As you know, we cannot meet at the school for the July meeting. Therefore, to wrap up the first half of the year before our August recess, we are going to have a dinner meeting at Tony's Jacal restaurant in Solana Beach Solana (621 Valley Ave, off Stevens Ave, (858) 755-2274).

What we will get is a good Mexican din-

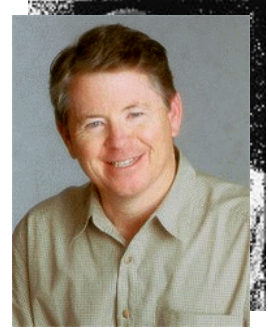
ner for \$13. You will get two entrée choices from a special menu of seven traditional dishes, plus rice and beans. Plus the opportunity to have a cerveza or margarita (booze is an additional cost, of course).

Our speaker for the evening will be **Ed Engle**. Ed is renown for his mastery of nymphing and tailwater fishing—which I'm sure we all partake of at least once in the course of a year—making him a particularly appropriate speaker right before heading off for some trout fishing this summer.

Those of you that read John Gierach will also recognize Ed as one of "Three Musketeers of Fly Fishing," which includes Gierach and A.K. Best. So this is not only a chance to learn more about nymphing from one of the best, but learn something about the elusive John Gierach, and maybe hear a fishing story or two.

As a reminder, there is no meeting in August. The September program will be a fun evening of our members presenting their experiences of the season. The date of the September program has been set for the 22nd to allow an extra week for speakers coming back from fishing in Alaska that month.

These are always fun programs, and I know we have a number of members who will be bringing stories of fishing adventure home this summer. Give me a call at 858-774-0022 if you are interested in putting together a 10 to 15 minute slide show or PowerPoint presentation of a trip for the September program.



Patrick Case, President

"As a reminder, there is no meeting in August."

(Engle)

Colorado, within 40 miles of the South Platte River, one of Colorado's premier tailwaters, where he guides and instructs fly fishers.

Ed is the Southwest Field Editor for "Fly Fisherman" magazine, Small Flies Columnist for "Fly Tyer" Magazine, and Outdoor Writer for the "Boulder Daily Camera." Ed has also contributed to

"Fly Rod & Reel," "American Angler," "Trout," "Warmwater Fly Fishing," "Sports Afield" and "Gray's Sporting Journal."

His books include *Fly Fishing the Tailwaters, Seasonal: A Life Outside*, and *Splitting Cane: Conversations with Bamboo Rod Makers*.

This will be a great nuts-and-bolts presentation you do not want to miss!

Food for thought...

A highly religious fly fisherman named John badly wanted to catch the next world-record brown trout.. A man of great faith, he began to pray, "Oh, God, please let me catch the next world-record brown trout. It would mean so much to my family and me. It would mean fame and riches and glory. Oh, God, please, please, please let this faithful son catch the next world-record brown trout."

Every night the fisherman prayed for an hour. Over and over and over again he pleaded with God to let him catch a huge trout.

A month passed. Two months passed. John kept praying. After six months, he increased his supplications to two hours a night. Then three hours. Then four. Adding to his evening vespers, John began to pray after breakfast for an hour. Then two hours. A year passed. John prayed on.

At the end of the second year, John was praying most of the day and half the night. He barely took time to eat. His wife threatened to leave and take the

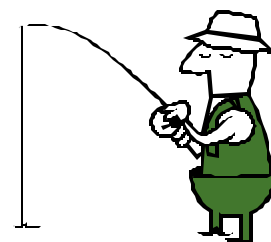
children. His pastor scolded him. But still he persisted.

With his life in tatters at the end of the third year, John was awakened in the night by a booming voice, a voice with a touch of irritation in it. "John, this is God. Do you hear me?!" John nodded. "Yes, God, I hear you." "John, meet me half way. Go fishing."

This version of this often told tale, of which there are, of course, numerous variations, was taken from Paul Quinnett's book *Fishing Lessons*. Quinnett—whose books also include *Darwin's Bass* and *Pavlov's Trout*—is one of the most brilliant, witty essayists writing today, and I strongly recommend all of his books for a good summer read.

So, as we head into our summer recess, I urge you to...well...go fish. And for those times when the fishing is slow, consider packing one of Paul Quinnett books, or perhaps one by John Gierach, in your gear bag.

Patrick Case



Where the trout leap in main street

Looking for great “blue ribbon” trout fishing near a small town with lots of charm and western hospitality? Then look no further than my hometown of Saratoga, Wyoming, a hidden gem with the fabulous fishery, people and places of the Platte Valley.

Just four hours North of Denver, or one hour North of Steamboat Springs, Colorado, this sleepy little cow town, population 2000, was named one of the “best small towns in America” by National Geographic, and most recently named one of the “10 best small towns” by Travelholiday.com’s magazine. Check out Saratoga’s website.

Saratoga is a down to earth, low-key kinda place where billionaire ranch owners, golf enthusiasts, celebrities, CEO’s, and even a few US presidents and vice presidents have been known to jet into, and check out the watering hole at the world class Old Baldy Club, where membership requirements, of all things, include, loving golf *and* fly fishing.

Not far from Saratoga, outside of Encampment, another friendly, little fishing town, is the famous A Bar A



Ranch, where aviation industry leaders sneak off incognito for guest ranch activities, including fly fishing, during the annual Conquistador’s membership initiation, held the first week in September.

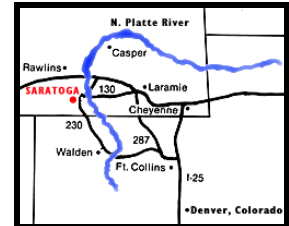
Originally called Saratoga Hot Springs, this town is known for its mineral hot springs at the hobo pool, free to the public. There’s not even a stop light in this one-horse town, where city slickers escape for R & R by golfing, fishing, or watching bald eagles or the resident, elusive Bighorn sheep herd graze nearby. For that spa treatment, try a

mineral bath for pure meditation at the Saratoga Inn @ www.saratogainn.com.

When May rolls around, so does the early run-off water. The Platte begins in neighboring Colorado’s Mount Zirkel Wilderness, where white water rafting or kayaking at Northgate is thrilling

during a good water year. The Platte, meaning “flat water,” based on the Otos Indian word, is a 140-mile freestone fishery with over 2,000 fish per mile, and is “blue ribbon” designated by the Wyoming Game and Fish. Check out their publication, Wyoming Wildlife, for more on Wyoming’s great outdoors.

Although the Platte is not now stocked, Saratoga has a great, US Fish and Wild-



“The Platte...is a 140-mile freestone fishery with over 2,000 fish per mile, and is “blue ribbon” designated by the Wyoming Game and Fish.”

life hatchery dating back to 1915. Just 5 miles North, the hatchery raises Colorado and Snake River cutthroats, brooks and rainbows for transplanting, and brown and lake trout for breeding. The hatchery is open for tours, if you're curious about where those fingerlings come from used to stock our streams and rivers.



Northward and downstream of Saratoga, are two renowned tailwater fisheries, Miracle Mile and Gray Reef, noted for prime stretches of fishing. The Platte then meanders past the Glendo Reservoir towards Nebraska, joining the South Platte at North Platte, Nebraska, before flowing into the mighty Missouri River.

Three years of severe drought have curbed in the west for now, as runoff looks promising for ranchers, fishing enthusiasts and municipalities like Cheyenne and Casper, who all try to share the water in balance with nature.

So for a great place to visit, fish or come home to, drop a line or two in Saratoga's North Platte River.

Helen Condict

The fishing... The species will be about 60% browns and 40% rainbows.

When to go... Best times are (1) from the last week of June to mid-July, because of the heavy feeding right after runoff, and (2) the second week of August to mid-October, because the water starts to cool, accompanied by more hatches and heavy feeding. If the fishing is slow on the N. Platte, a good alternative is the Encampment River, a cooler water tributary of the N. Platte. Or try Turpin Reservoir, a State stocked lake in the Gold Hill Mining District, where they still pan for gold!

What to bring... 4 to 6 wt. rods. Fly fishers employ a wide variety of dry fly, nymphing, and streamer fishing. About 35 varieties of caddis are used on the river, plus PMD, golden stones, salmon flies, tricos, and BWO, and others. A good source of flies and hatches is http://www.discountflies.com/states/wyoming/rivers/north_platte_river.htm. As even the summer weather can be quite varied, bring a range of clothing.

Where to stay... River Cottages (307-326-8750), (historic) Wolf Hotel (307-326-5525), Saratoga Inn (307-326-5261), Rivera Lodge (307-326-5651), and Hacienda Hotel (307-326-5751).

Fly shops... Orvis endorsed Great Rocky Mountain Outfitters @ (307-326-8750; www.GRMO.com). They carry a full and unique line of clothing, equipment and flies. Their guide fees are \$375 per boat, including lunch; and \$325 for a wade guide. And there's also Hack's Tackle and Outfitters for guiding services.



Helen Condict

Casting madness at Hot Creek

Ed. Note—There is a species of fly fisher who relishes the challenge, “technical” quality, humiliation, and suffering Hot Creek can readily hand out—you know, masochists. However, in recognition that many of us will be compelled to fish this so-called Blue Ribbon stream again this year—whether for noble or perverse reasons—here are some casting tips that may contribute to your success. This is an excerpt from an article of the same title by Jim Soloman, Wilderness Fly Fishers Casting Chairman, originally published in the WFF newsletter, Mending the Line.

Tight loops and straight line presentations rarely work on the ranch. Upwelling currents, weed beds, wind, and multiple current speeds between your rod tip and fly create instant drag, so the trick is to pile your leader and tippet so that you can at least enjoy a two-to-three foot drag-free drift. Your leader should be around nine feet long with a four to five foot tippet. These fish are also spooky, so lower your profile. That means you may want to fish on your knees, if you can.

Probably the most important cast is the reach mend-pile combination quartering downstream. This is especially good if the wind is at your back. Be careful that when you mend your line you do not drag your fly—the fish pick up on this instantly.

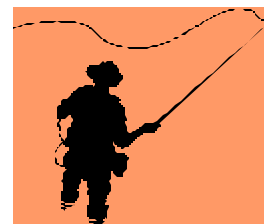
There is another type of cast that was used by the late Bill Lawrence, and is still used by Larry Brown. I call this cast a slap pile cast to the opposite bank, and it can be extremely effective. If

there is no wind, you use a very long leader-tippet combination—close to 20 feet. The fly line is slapped into the water, which forces the leader to collapse straight down into a pile. The fly will float drag free for quite awhile. You must manage your slack quickly or you will never make the connection between your fly and the fish’s mouth. Of course, if the wind picks up, you can forget this cast!

You can also use what is called the Fall River downstream approach, where you dump-cast downstream and then mend a large quantity of fly line as the fly floats downstream. Sometimes you mend as much as 50 to 90 feet of fly line. Again, you must not move the fly when you mend, and you have to manage your fly line. With this cast, the hooking ration is not great.

I still feel the most effective way to fish for trout is the upstream method. If you time the rise of a trout and then present the fly close to his nose on his feeding side, you will catch this fish. Upstream casting still requires that you pile your cast. Gary Borger fished the ranch this way years ago and I was told he was like a vacuum, casting upstream, putting the fly right in the fishes’ mouths and cleaning up.

Bob Brooks, who managed the ranch for years, fished this way: he would quarter downstream and hook cast to keep the leader from landing on the fish. His casts were extremely accurate and he could put the fly right in the feeding lane.



“...the trick is to pile your leader and tippet so that you can at least enjoy a two-to-three foot drag-free drift...”

Reading the (salt) water

The first time I went down to the beach to fly fish I found the irregularity of the shoreline and the wave action awfully confusing. Lucky for me, I had another GSF member, Ted Reinert, along to help me sort things out. The ocean is dynamic, and the shorelines and fishing conditions change often. You need to take tidal movement and sky conditions, among others, into consideration.

Let's start at the beach. The best time to check out the prevailing conditions is at

low tide. There are usually two high tides and two low tides every 24 hours. If you consult a tide chart (available for free or modestly priced at your local tackle shop, or free on-line at <http://scilib.ucsd.edu/sio/tide/piertide.html>), you will notice that sometimes there are "minus" tides (usually marked in red). Go down to the beach at one of these low tides because that's when more of your local beach will be exposed to your view.

Reading salt water is somewhat similar to fresh water. You look for depressions and obstacles such as rocks and sandbars. Fish use deeper (than surrounding) water or obstacles to hide in or around, and you need to fish these places in order to catch them. It's just like real estate—the three most important things are location, location, location! Smaller

fish seek refuge in these deeper areas and bigger fish seek them in the same spots. Fish such as halibut will congregate in deeper water that is next to shallow water in order to ambush their prey.

Another thing to look for (similar to a stream) is a current line. Predator fish often sit in calmer water next to a

current seam and ambush bait (smaller fish) as they swim past. Some fish, such as surf perch, will actually swim in with the waves, and be almost at your feet, as they seek to snatch up



food that is disturbed by the crashing waves. Still other fish—say, corbina—will literally ride a wave up the beach to get at small crabs that lay buried just below the sand. They can sometimes be seen struggling to get back to deep water as a wave recedes from the shoreline.

When you look at waves and the color of the water, you can deduce a few things. First, know that beach profiles continually change. Where there is an uneven shore, there will be an uneven bottom and thus depressions for fish to hold in. Darker water denotes deeper water and often you can see troughs close to a beach as the tide starts to come in. Similarly, waves that travel roughly sideways to the beach will diminish when they run into a depression of the beach. Also, in those areas that have "counter" waves,

"Reading salt water is somewhat similar to fresh water. You look for depressions and obstacles such as rocks and sandbars."

you will often get an offshore rip (or current). Another way to recognize this is to look for distinctive foam lines and/or the change in the water's surface. Fishing the seam between calmer and rougher water is just like fishing a trout stream.....it's productive!

I prefer to fish the transition of low-to-incoming high tide as I see the likely holding spots for fish and I think that an incoming tide brings in food and fish. An outgoing tide, especially near an estuary, offers similar conditions, but can concentrate the effect because fish come back to deeper water at a single point. This makes it easy for predators... sometimes! Feeding saltwater fish are in a somewhat different challenge than fresh water fish, in that few are big enough to hold in one place and attack prey at their leisure. It's basically eat and run...or be eaten. As a result, the halibut that inhales your fly can be (and often is) eaten by a yet bigger fish if it runs out into deeper water.

Light plays a very important part in when to fish, as does water temperature. Spring and summer are more productive off San Diego as far as water temperature goes. And, just like on a trout stream, fish are usually less wary in conditions of low light. Similarly, low light levels in the early morning and late evening afford fish a margin of safety from predatory aerial attacks. Thus, if you can combine a low-light time with a low-to-

high tide transition, then you may well have made your chances of catching fish that much the better.

Fishing *on* the ocean is slightly different again, in that you're interested in current seams.

Look for changes in water color or of the water's surface. Look for kelp paddies, foam or debris as fish will often hide beneath the smallest object floating on the surface. Use your sense of smell and if you detect an "oily" smell, bait

fish are nearby. Birds are another clue; watch for circling or diving birds as they have a much better aerial view than you do. Follow them and also follow dolphin that seem to be going a specific direction. As high-energy creatures, they both need to feed often. Of course a fish finder is invaluable.....but that's another story.



There are other things to note, which will come with experience, but these basics will provide you a solid foundation to build on, and greater success in fishing the salt. Good luck and good fishing!

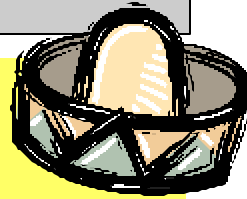
Tom Lucas

Tom is a member of GSF and SDF, and is an avid surf and ocean fly fisher, and has been stalking the shores of San Diego County for years.

“Thus, if you can combine a low-light time with a low-to-high tide transition, then you may well have made your chances of catching fish that much the better.”

July meeting to have a Mexican flavor!

When:	Wednesday, July 16th
Where:	Tony's Jacal
Address:	621 Valley Ave, Solana Beach (see map on page 8)
Time:	Wet Flies, 6 p: Program, 7:15 P
Cost:	\$13 (booze extra)
Menu:	Choice of two from the following: Taco (turkey or beef), Taquitos (2) (turkey or beef), Flautas (2) (turkey or beef), Tamale (turkey or pork), Enchilada (turkey, beef, or cheese), Chile Relleno, and Tostada (bean); including rice and beans.



Tom Loe fishing tips—Strike indicators

When choosing a floating type strike indicator we suggest you select as small an indicator as possible to suspend your fly or nymph imitations and secondly, one that can be visible to YOUR eyes. An indicator that does not cast like a steak bone should be a consideration also.

Whenever possible choose an indicator that can hook a fish! Large terrestrial or attractor patterns like Stimulators,

Humpies, grasshoppers, and parachute type patterns are well suited for suspending an-

other fly or nymph and acting as a target fly that can be seen easily in the event you have a smaller dry fly or subsurface imitation tied directly underneath.

Commercially available indicators come in many styles and sizes. The best all around and durable as well as functional indicator we have used is a simple clump of polypropylene yarn. They can be made to fit your needs easily and in-

expensively. Many pre-made types or the raw material is available at your fly shop or crafts store. You can purchase colored yarns that are easy for you to see and provide just the right amount of floatation for your piece of water. Yarn indicators do not have a defined shape when viewed from below the surface and this will not spook a weary trout. A drawback to yarn is that it traps water easily and may sink out if not properly dressed with

floatant. Get an aerosol silicone spray like the type that you would use

to waterproof boots and pre-spray your yarn indicator the day prior to you using it. Comb the hairs out first. The dried silicone keeps the water from saturating the yarn and it lasts for several days before a re-application may be needed. This simple trick will sit the strike indicator high in the water and be visible when you get that light "take" from Mr. Big Brown!



"The best all around and durable as well as functional indicator we have used is a simple clump of polypropylene yarn."

For Tom's latest fish report go to <http://www.sierradrifters.com/fish.html>

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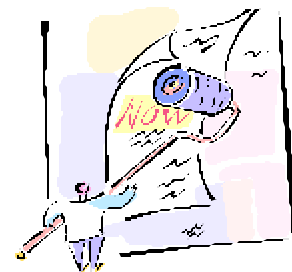
Deliver your message by advertising in *Reading the Water*. As the voice of fly fishing in North San Diego County, *Reading the Water* can provide you a direct hit to this affluent market. Copy must be in JPEG format.

The **annual rates** are as follows...

Full page.....\$300

Half page.....\$200

Please call Helen Condict at 858-523-1017 to discuss your needs. GSF reserves the right to refuse publication of any ad for any reason.



Call for speaker hosts

We still have openings for hosts for our speakers in 2003. Have a guest bedroom? Don't miss a rare opportunity to spend personal time with the best in our sport...teachers, guides and outfitters, writers, photographers, and other professionals. Think about it...fireside chats with Charles Jardine, personal tips from Ed Engle.

All you need to do is get the speaker from the airport to the meeting, put 'em up for the night, be a gracious host, and get 'em back to the airport or train station the next day.

Here's what to do...go to the website—www.goldenstateflycasters.org—note the dates of the meetings and speakers, and call Patrick Case at 858-523-1017.



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www.goldenstateflycasters.org

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Welcome to the Golden State Flycasters

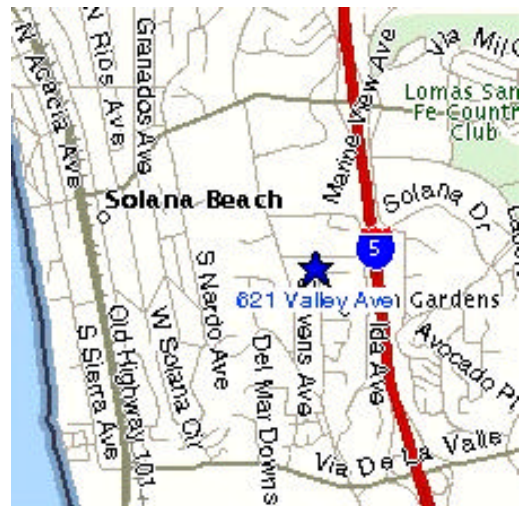
The GSF was formed in 2002 to serve the interests of fly fishers in North San Diego County, South Orange County, and Camp Pendleton.

Mission Statement

Promote national and international amateur fly casting competition; conservation and restoration of fisheries; and knowledge, support, ethics and social relations in the sport and art of fishing.

Map to meeting location

Tony's Jacal Restaurant
621 Valley Ave., SB



Submissions to newsletter

Hey, you frustrated Hemingways and Steinbecks out there...we are looking for articles for Reading the Water. The best are personal stories that are entertaining, or provide information not found elsewhere. Have you fished an out-of-the-way place recently?...Come across a killer fly for a favorite river?...Have a hot newsflash about a fishery?...Send it in for publishing!



Most importantly, we want the newsletter to address the topics *you* are interested in. So please contact us to let us know your feelings. What do you want to see in the newsletter?

Please limit your article to a couple of pages, submit it in Microsoft Word, and *include photos or relevant images*. E-mail your submissions to: hrcondict@msn.com.