



TALE WATERS

A Monthly Publication of
Mesilla Valley Flyfishers, Inc.

P.O. Box 2222
Las Cruces, NM 88004-2222

www.MVFF.org

August

2022

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Tale Waters Edited by Jim Hulsey — newsletter@mvff.org

Taylor's latest book, *Fly Fish Taos/Santa Fe, New Mexico*, is available for purchase in Las Cruces at COAS My Bookstore, and at the Mesilla Bookstore on the west side of the plaza.

Club News

The next meeting of the general membership will be on Monday, September 12. Unless something changes between now and then, it will be held at the usual location, the meeting room at the NMDGF facilities on Northrise Drive. Jeff Arterburn has arranged for Craig Springer to be our guest speaker. Craig works for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in Albuquerque, and he has written extensively about wild trout in New Mexico. More details will be provided in the September newsletter.

The next meeting of the MVFF Board of Directors will be on August 15, at 7pm, via Zoom. If you are not on the board but would like to sit in on the meeting to see how the Board functions, contact me so I can provide you with the meeting link. Among other things, we will discuss the possibility of resuming the Kid's Fishing Clinic this fall, so club members might give some thought to whether you can volunteer, and in what capacity.

Black Fire and Gila Trout

Although I can still smell wood smoke on the winds fairly often, the Forest Service reports that the Black Fire in the southeastern Gila National Forest was 70% contained as of July 27. Suppression of the remaining active burn areas is being assisted by monsoon storms that are producing ½ inches or more rain per day across much of the Gila.

Meetings

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President's Corner

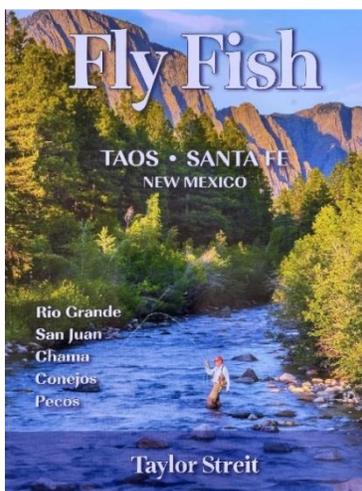
David Carmichael

Just a short column this month.



Club member and Fly-Fishing Hall of Fame fishing guide Taylor Streit contacted me recently

and offered to contribute some stories about his fly fishing adventures in order to give me a little break from writing. Sounded good to me, so I took him up on the offer. You will find his first piece, entitled "Bone Fishing by Bike," below in the newsletter. Thanks Taylor! And let's not forget that copies of



Unfortunately, those same monsoon rains are now contributing to runoff and erosion in the headwaters of many drainages. In addition to denuding the steeper slopes of topsoil, the runoff transports ash into the drainages, and if it is severe enough, the ash can suffocate the native trout that have been reestablished fairly recently. The Main and South Diamond drainages were both heavily affected by the fire, and trout populations in those areas are likely eliminated. Forest personnel were able to rescue 89 Gila trout from Main Diamond, and they have been moved to the hatchery in Mora, where they are doing well. Conditions in South Diamond, Black Canyon, and Mogollon have not yet been evaluated on the ground, so the level of impact is not known, but there is concern that if Mogollon was severely impacted, there will be a reduction in the distribution of the Diamond Creek lineages. [[Successful Salvage Evacuation of Gila Trout from Black Fire Burned Area – InciWeb the Incident Information System \(nwcg.gov\)](#)].

The Hermit's Creek/Calf Canyon fire in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains is 98% contained, but it has also adversely affected native trout populations. Several genetically pure populations of Rio Grande Cutthroat trout were affected in Rito Murphy, Santiago Creek, Rio Valdez, Rio Mora, and Alamito Creek. NMDFG and USFS crews were able to salvage 180 fish from the Rio Valdez, but no live fish were found in the Rio Mora. Although there continues to be a strong interagency commitment to habitat restoration and the reestablishment of native fish populations, the severity of these two large fires is such that they have left some long-term habitat degradation that will take years to mitigate.

Bristol Bay Update

I couldn't resist passing along this bit of good news. For the second time in the past two years, a record number of sockeye salmon have returned to the Bristol Bay fishery. So far this year, 69.7 million sockeyes have returned to spawn, and the season isn't over yet. Alaska fisheries officials estimate that by the end of the season, the total count could be in the range of 75–90 million,

vastly exceeding last year's record of 67.7 million. This year has seen the largest commercial harvest of sockeye since the onset of commercial fishing in Bristol Bay in 1883. These numbers, and the management success they represent, underscore the need to protect the most productive sockeye fishery in the world from the polluting effects of mining in the Bristol Bay headwaters. [[Record Number of Salmon Return to Alaska's Bristol Bay | Outdoor Life](#)]. The EPA is considering implementing the watershed protections that were developed after extensive scientific studies and community outreach in both 2014 and 2021. The period for the public to comment on the proposed protections has been extended until September 6, 2022. I invite club members to make their voices heard, and the EPA has provided this link where you can submit comments. [[Public Comments and Hearings on the 2022 Proposed Determination | US EPA](#)]



Haida Gwaii (Native American) sockeye salmon totem



Bonefish by Bike

Taylor Streit

I cock my head off the pillow, and as I stretch my senses I try to figure out what is different about this morning; the mockingbird's splendidly complicated singing seems more cheerful than normal, and the light seems sharper. Then I realize the big change is that the crashing and bashing of the surf is gone, replaced by the gentle lapping of low waves. An easy breeze flutters the curtains gently and carries the hint of turquoise seas and blue skies. Naturally, the next picture appearing in my gloriously vacant mind is one of bonefish drifting over sun-drenched white sand.

The weeklong storm is over and it's time to fish! No flies to tie today. No cramped writing. It's out

of bed, quick to coffee, slap some peanut butter and jelly sandwiches together. I grab the machete on my way out the backdoor and hunt up a coconut to half. After I gouge out some of the meat, I throw the food in the pack, lash the rod onto the bike, and go, go, go—it's been a long storm.

I wave to Mrs. Rolle as she drags the endless coconut fronds from her yard and then proceed to pedal like a madman. But I'm a walker not a biker, and once I hit the least suggestion of a hill—yes, there are hills in the Bahamas—I lose steam. Fortunately, there are some mango trees halfway up the incline, and they present a suitable excuse to stop. I find only one small ripe fruit but add it to the lunch collection. I continue on, passing a tiny blue house with a thatched roof where a white-haired black man is sitting on his haunches patiently hammering coral. The scene is obscured by the smoke from a coconut husk fire that he tends for skeeters. There is a pile of big white chunks on one side of him and a pile of little chunks on the other. I assume that the bigger chunks turn into the smaller chunks and, having nothing more troublesome to concern me, I ponder as I pedal for the next half mile: What does he do with them? Who buys that stuff? Every time I come by he is hard at it (looks similar to commercial fly tying actually).

It's quiet in the neighborhood, and as there is no Rasta music, I know the smugglers are still sleeping. They always give me the stink-eye when I ride by. They know that I know what they are about. South Andros is an extremely big and remote island, and among the few inhabitants dope smuggling is not even hidden. One of the guides at the bonefish lodge once told a client, "If we see something fall out of the sky . . . would you bring a package to the states for me please?"

The road travels a bit inland, but I stop and walk over to a little hill that looks down on Deep Creek. That's the name of this saltwater river and it is indeed deep, as it drains miles of inland waterways. The tides are hard to figure out back here—a couple miles from the sea—but from this spot I can tell that the flood is coming strong up the creek. The setup for the flats looks perfect, with

blues skies, light winds, and a rising tide all converging midday. (Bone fishing is best done by sight, the best light is noonish, and the best wind is slow—no wind makes the fish easy to see but also makes them nervous.)

When I arrive at my destination by the Heavy house, I stash the bike in the bushes so nobody can "thief it" and start my long walk. I wade on a course that will keep me calf-deep and about one hundred feet from the bank. I ease up close on a blue crab. When it takes fright, I raise my foot. The crab finds the shaded territory underfoot appealing—not a wise move on its part, and the delicious morsel is put in a sack to later be added to the collection already in the freezer.

Soon I see the first bone of the day—it's heading away. I start to wade after it but realize that I'll spook the animal before I get in range because I'll make too much commotion if I try to overtake it from behind. So, I wade over to the shore and jog down through the mangroves to sneak ahead of him. When I'm well in front, I ease around back to the shore. He's moved in very close to the bank and is wallowing through water barely deep enough to cover his back. His field of vision is limited in such thin water, and the fly will have to be very close for him to see it. A regular bonefish fly has way too much splash for such a situation, so I decide to switch to a Pflueger deer hair fly that will land softly and swim shallow. But I've got to do it quickly. And so I don't lose sight of the fish, I tie on the fly by holding it in front of me—thus putting the fish in the background. It makes me go cross-eyed, what with one eye on the fly up close and the other trying to focus on the fish out yonder. When I finish, I realize that the line has wound itself around my feet. I can't very well put one eye on the fish out in front of me and one on my foot, so I have to look down. Sure enough, when I get untangled and look back the rascal has disappeared, and although I look all over for him, he has simply vanished. He must have swum away faster than I expected, so I decide to walk the bank and see if I can find him again. Before I take half a step there is a big explosion of water about fifteen feet away as the motionless fish blasts off.

If they don't move it is easy to miss them—as the “ghost of the flats” coloration changes to match the shade of the bottom, making them magically disappear.

But a glance down the bank lifts my spirits because there is a silver fin flashing in the sun about one hundred yards away. And I'm ready for the shallow water with the right fly on now. So as not to frighten him by casting too close, I go for the conservative approach and drop the fly several feet away—hoping his rambling will send him in that direction. I wait impatiently while he swims one way and then the other. He dips down and “tails” again but heads away from the fly. I retrieve it in slowly and gently lift it out of the water. He's moving away now, so I have to get more aggressive, and this time I put the fly closer to the quarry. Just an instant before the fly lands, the fish changes course and the fly smacks down on his head—sending him off toward the deep blue sea. Oh well, such is life. “I was going to throw it back anyway” is what I've told my guiding clients a million times. It doesn't really work for them either, I've noticed.

I've walked these flats many times, as it's the closest place for bike-fishing, and, as is the case in any body of water, you learn what places the fish prefer. It all looked the same to my untrained eye at first, but the subtle differences in character have revealed themselves over time. The tides confuse the issue further because the bones like certain places only under certain tides (there are far fewer low tide spots than high).

The next place I come to is often preferred by large, single bonefish—when the tide is starting to flood, like now. It is a sheltered bay with a pewter-colored muddy bottom—another great place because fish can be seen from far off. Sure enough, when I arrive there is a goodsized bone patrolling—actually two of them—one at either end of the bay. Adios bad luck when the first fish eats my brown Shit Fly (actually all shit flies—including trout shit flies—are brown). When I hook him, he makes the wild, high-speed run that bones are famous for. But I've been sloppy with my fly line again and have a loop between my feet.

The line is going out real fast and I try to jump out of the loop, but the line is quickly headed up the inside of my leg. It is on a course toward the family jewels, and just before the string is about to castrate me, I snub down on the line with my hand and it breaks. This all happens very fast, and my brain thanks my hand for such quick thinking. (I should say that the brain thanks the hand on behalf of the family jewels—which have proven to have little or no thinking power.)

Believe it or not, I actually land several bonefish that day. But bone fishing is more than catching: It's eventful and exciting and top shelf for a real fisherman because you get to see the fish actually eat the fly. The take is everything. The fight is OK, but after you have landed a bunch of them, that event is predictable and anticlimactic.

The best fishing of the day happens late in the afternoon at a flat called “White Bank.” The fish like it on a falling tide. And it's a lovely place because the white sand turns to green and then blue as it fades off into deep water. It's especially lovely when the sun is over your shoulder and the fish are then visible from far off. I see two different schools coming my way, and I take one from the first school and another from the second.

When I head back toward shore I see what looks like a very large fish cruising some coral outcroppings near shore. Its half above water, and the yellowish color and dot on its back make me think that it is a mutton snapper. This is a highly prized fish of the flats—or anywhere—and a rare catch. But they are ultra-wary, so I plan a stalk that will keep me on shore. That way I can move around without making a disturbance and present the fly with my line lying on the land. I crouch down low to approach the fish. When I get a really good look, I'm stunned. It must be over ten pounds. I'm very close to it now, and the big snapper is hunting along the edge of the coral. I carefully drop the fly ten feet in front of the fish. The instant the fly touches down, the fish makes a mad dash for deep water. I haven't a clue how I could have played it any better.

While on the last leg of my journey, I find a quarry that is much easier to catch: conch. I didn't see them on the way out in the morning, though I swear I passed by this same place. Could these big pink snails have crawled here in the meantime? And a school of them no less. I punch a little hole in the shell of each one, run a cord through the holes, and strap the cargo around my neck. I could buy 'em cheap enough, but I like being a part of the whole process—collect it, pound it, and eat it. Now that's a full life. (For those uneducated in the processing of conch, there is a bit more to the preparation, because you have to get it out of its shell and then "tenderize it" with a hammer—a real chore for a landlubber.)

I'm not looking forward to the long bike ride home after wading for miles. Dragging the clunking conch over the brief stretch of pavement, I reflect that I could have been riding in a nice new skiff instead of doing all this hoofing and pedaling—on an old borrowed bike no less. Managing a bonefish lodge instead of tying flies for a living. But my big mouth blew that one.

I had spent my adult life in Taos, New Mexico, and was a classic holdover from the counterculture. Why couldn't I just be "nice"? Like a normal American. I guess I just wasn't trained for that. I was managing the bonefish lodge, but the lodge owner and I had a parting of the ways. He was the kind of white man who is easy to find in the Caribbean: brash and boastful to cover up the fact that he is essentially boring. When that type of cat realizes that you're on to him, the fur is gonna fly, and ole big mouth is out of a job.

This guy went by his initials but as I think it wise to keep his identity quiet, let's call him P.U. P.U. (stands for Pretty Uppity) and I got on reasonably well enough—until the clients arrived. It was not until then that I realized financial gain was secondary compared to P.U.'s ego's need for gratification. And fellows like P.U. always have a following—thrill seekers from Wall Street who hang on every word their robust hero utters. With P.U. enthroned at the head of the dinner table, conversation went something like this: "How did you

get out of that one alive, P.U.?" Or "What did you do with that beautiful woman after she did that for you, P.U.?"

But a week in fishing camp—especially with several weather days—is a long time, and even the devout got bored after several days of the same sermon. By the end of the week the guests—who uniformly seemed to not be interested in their own, or each other's lives—turned to inquire about little ole me. I had been sitting at the dinner table as quiet as a church mouse so as not to challenge the boss. When I started talking, P.U.'s demeanor changed, and he used his clout from the head of the table to order me to fetch something from the kitchen. When I came back, the folks ignored P.U. and continued to query me. I feigned shyness, but this seemed to only charm the crowd, who were apparently in need of a new hero. The boss sank lower and lower in his throne while I regaled the crowd with the action-packed adventures of a trout bum.

And unfortunately, I had started to see the way that P.U. accomplished his "goals" here in the Bahamas: the bribes, the scheming, and other such dirty business. I knew too much. Admittedly, my motivation went to hell and I became a lousy hand. I got fired shortly thereafter.

I ran into one of the clients from the dinner table—the most thoughtful of the group—on the beach, and he suggested that I just hadn't compromised enough. I told him I got too low a dose of compromise when I was put together, and that misfortune has kept me improvising all my life.

I had to find my own place and make my way in this foreign country with just a few hundred dollars in hand. I got a little yellow house next to some wonderful neighbors and borrowed some household gear—and the bike in question. Only a few days before, I had been driving the wealthy clients, nattily draped in pastel fishing attire, by this same neighborhood. And these local folks didn't know what to make of me—having been so quickly demoted from upper class to no class. But I fit so comfortably into the latter classification that the regular folks quickly accepted me as the

token white man of the neighborhood. It was nice to be alone again and unencumbered. I remember walking down the road and seeing a “trusher” (Mrs. Rolle’s pronunciation: “That ole trusher been hailing me all day,” she’d say.) fly up in front of me. I could just feel the little fellow’s wingbeats as if they were my own. “Free as a bird” was I, in my little yellow house, freezer slowly filling with crabs, borrowed bike at the ready for the next blue day.



Gila/Rio Grande Chapter of Trout Unlimited

Gila/Rio Grande Chapter (780) of Trout Unlimited



Jeff Arterburn, President

GRG-TU for MVFF – August

Contact Jeff Arterburn for more info and to sign up for the next volunteer event or be more involved in our conservation efforts: jeffgilatu@aol.com.

GRG-TU Logo T-shirts to support local trout restoration and conservation efforts.



Green logo on ivory



Peanut butter logo on black

Our beautiful T-shirts with the GRG-TU logo in colors: green-on-ivory, and peanut-butter-on-black are sold as part of our fund-raising for trout restoration and conservation efforts. These are great looking, well-made shirts for a great cause at only \$20 each. Please include \$5 for shipping if you want the shirt(s) mailed. Contact Jeff Arterburn to get yours, and to sign up for the next volunteer event: <mailto:jeffgilatu@aol.com>.

If you are a current or former TU member looking to renew your membership please use the standard renewal form on the TU website: <https://www.tu.org/trout-unlimited-3/> or call 1-800-834-2419.

MVFF Library

MVFF has a considerable library which is now in the custody of Club member Mark Dankel. Mark would like to make these books available to members. If you wish to borrow any of these books let Mark know and he will bring them to the next membership meeting. Mark can be contacted at mpdankel@msn.com.

A list of the books can be found in the November 2019 issue of *Tale Waters*.



Quick Look Contact Information

2022 Officers of the Club	
Officers	
• President:	David Carmichael (915) 204-7558
• V-Pres.:	Vacant
• Secretary:	Jeff Arterburn (575) 649-9729
• Treasurer:	Chuck Mueller (575) 647-4045
Board Members	
• Position 1:	David Carmichael (915) 204-7558
• Position 2:	Helen Zagona (575) 532-5668
• Position 3:	Jeff Arterburn (575) 649-9729
• Position 4:	Jim Hulsey (575) 524-1880
• Position 5:	Robert Ardovino (575) 589-0653
• Position 6:	Chuck Mueller (575) 647-4045
• Position 7:	George Sanders (575) 527-5536
• Position 8:	Jeremiah Blount
• Position 9	Robert Kopczyk
Newsletter & Web Page Editor	
• Jim Hulsey (575) 524-1880	newsletter@mvff.org
Membership Committee Chairman	
• Bob Silver (575) 642-5865	membership@mvff.org

Current Email Addresses Needed

Many of the email addresses in our files are not current as members change to other internet providers. These addresses will not be distributed, but will only be used to relay club information or reminders for club meetings and other club events. Please send your address changes to membership@mvff.org.

Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout Print

Help support the MVFF Habitat Restoration Projects and purchase a limited edition "Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout" print. This beautiful printing of an original watercolor of our native state fish is a limited series of 150 high quality 12 x 18 prints that are numbered and signed by New Mexico artist Michelle Arterburn. The cost of each individual print is \$25.00, with the proceeds dedicated towards habitat restoration projects. If you live out of town and wish the print mailed to you please add \$5 for postage. See the MVFF website for purchase.

Mabie Legacy Scholarship Fund

The Mabie Legacy Scholarship Fund is an endowed fund at New Mexico State University which is funded by MVFF member donations. Earnings from the fund are used to provide scholarships for students at NMSU majoring in fisheries or related fields.

The scholarship recipient is selected each April by the faculty members of the NMSU Department of Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Ecology.

Even though the fund is endowed additions can be made to it at any time. The larger the fund, the more earnings are available for award. If you are interested in contributing please make checks out to the **NMSU Foundation** and on the "for" line of the check, identify "Mabie Legacy Scholarship Fund, for deposit only." All contributions are tax deductible. For any questions please contact one of the MVFF Officers or Board members. If you have not made a donation to the fund please give it consideration and help honor Norm and Donna Mabie.



******* REMEMBER *******
MVFF MEMBERSHIPS & NM FISHING
LICENSES EXPIRE ON 31 MARCH

Membership Information

Membership is open to anyone who supports the activities of the club. Membership fees are shown below. Members are provided with the opportunity to attend informational monthly meetings, to purchase fishing access permits to the MVFF leased waters on the Rio Peñasco and to participate in other Club activities such as an annual awards banquet, casting clinics, fly tying classes, and Club sponsored fishing trips.

There are several options for the payment of dues. A family is defined as a club member, their spouse and all children 17 years of age or under.

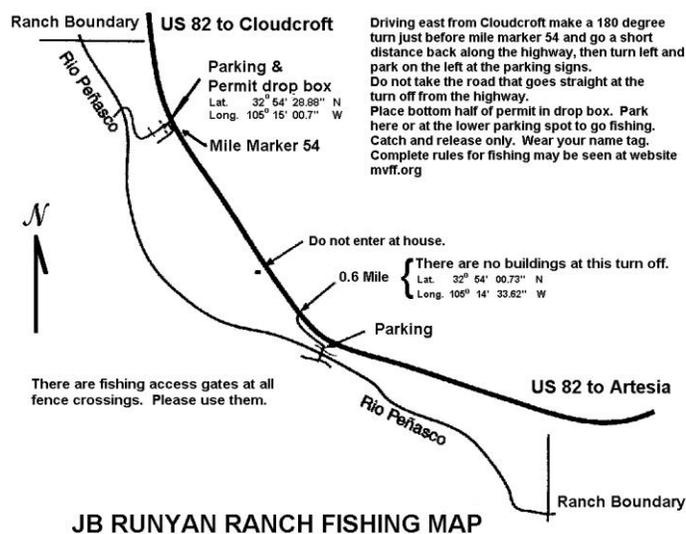
1 Year	\$20	Individual
	\$25	Family
3 Years	\$50	Individual
	\$60	Family
Life	\$400	Individual
	\$500	Family

Lease Information

Permits to fish the Club leased waters on the Rio Peñasco can be obtained from Jim Hulsey (575-524-1880) or Bob Silver (575-522-6325) in Las Cruces. Permits can be obtained from the land owner, but you should phone (575-687-3362) the night before to ensure someone will be there to sell them to you. Permits can be ordered through the club web page (mvff.org) by filling out the form and mailing as directed or, if you had rather, you may pay through PayPal. Cost is \$25.00 per day. Kids under 18 fish free but must be accompanied by an adult club member with a permit. You must be a current member (current dues have been paid) of MVFF to fish the lease. Please wear your MVFF identification badge while on the property. New or replacement badges can be obtained by contacting Bob Silver. In addition, members may purchase 1-day, 1-time permits for up to 2 guests per trip. Each guest must have a permit. One-time means a person can go as a guest one time only and must be a member to ever go again.

Directions to the Lease:

Follow NM 82 east from Cloudcroft, NM or west from Artesia, NM. The turn off to the lease is located on the right side of the road about 100 yards before mile marker 54 coming from Cloudcroft or 100 yards on the left past mile marker 54 coming from Artesia.



MESILLA VALLEY FLYFISHERS, INC.

PO Box 2222

Las Cruces, NM 88004-2222

Membership and/or Permit Application

(Please Print Clearly)

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Work/Cell Phone: _____ Home Phone: _____ email: _____

Are you a current member? _____ Yes _____ No

Do you need a name badge? _____ Yes _____ No

New Membership _____ or renewal _____?

Membership Categories: Individual Family Circle the one desired.

1 Year \$20 \$25

3 Years \$50 \$60

Life \$400 \$500

For family membership: Name of spouse _____ No. of children _____

Note: All memberships expire on 31 March. New memberships received on or after 1 January will expire on 31 March of the following year.

Membership fee if applicable \$_____

_____ Adult Permits @ \$25 per permit = \$_____

Total =\$_____

Send remittance with this form to the address shown at top of page.