



The Feather Thief

Presented by Kirk W. Johnson

The publication of Kirk Johnson's book *The Feather Thief: Beauty, Obsession, and the Natural History Heist of the Century* sent shockwaves through the international fly fishing community and especially the fly-tying world. The book, which reads more like crime fiction than history, reveals the lengths to which fanatics will go in search of authentic materials to tie classic salmon flies. Kirk will discuss Edwin Rist's transformation from a young fly-tying prodigy into the perpetrator of one of the largest natural history museum heists in a century. After a blow-by-blow of the heist, the police investigation, and the resulting sentencing, he will walk through his own descent into what he jokingly refers to as the "feather underground," in a years-long search for the missing birds. He'll also give a sense of how the community has reacted or changed in the wake of the book's publication, and what the future looks like for classic salmon fly-tiers. There will be plenty of time for questions. He will also be selling and signing books (cash or check only).



Kirk W. Johnson

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APRIL 2019 MONTHLY MEETING

Date: Tuesday, April 16th
 Wet Flies: 6:00 PM / Dinner: 7:00 PM / Program: 8:00 PM
 Place: St. Augustine By-the-Sea Episcopal Church
1227 4th Street, Santa Monica, CA 90401
 Cost: **\$30** per person with dinner or **\$10** per person program only
 Parking: City parking structure across the street is most convenient.
 Posted rates first 90 min. free, \$2 first add. ½ hour, \$1.50 -
 \$2 each add. ½ hr., \$20 daily max. Expect to pay \$5 to \$7.
1234 4th Street, Santa Monica, CA 90401

TO MAKE RESERVATIONS: RESERVE ONLINE
OR CALL THE HOT LINE 310 280-3459
OR MAIL IN THE FORM ON PAGE 15

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The Feather Thief

Here he sets the scene:

“On a cool June evening in 2009, after performing a concert at London’s Royal Academy of Music, twenty-year-old American flautist Edwin Rist boarded a train for a suburban outpost of the British Museum of Natural History. Home to one of the largest ornithological collections in the world, the Tring museum was full of rare bird specimens whose gorgeous feathers were worth staggering amounts of money to the men who shared Edwin’s obsession: the Victorian art of salmon fly-tying. Rist had been there before, months earlier, posing as a student photographer. He was granted access to the collection, and used his time to case the place, taking photographs of the layout of the museum, and making a mental map of the location of each species. After scaling a wall behind the museum and breaking out a window, the champion fly-tier climbed inside and set out to work. He grabbed hundreds of bird skins—some collected 150 years earlier by a contemporary of Darwin’s, Alfred Russel Wallace, who’d risked everything to gather them—and escaped into the darkness.

Not too long after that, I was waist-high in a frigid river in northern New Mexico, fly-fishing for trout, when the guide I’d hired for the day mentioned a recent museum heist, carried out to feed the insatiable demand for rare feathers in the salmon fly-tying community. The whole story was so strange as to be almost unbelievable. I had never written a book when I first heard about the Tring Heist, but thought it sounded like a whale of a story, and started poking around, not realizing how quickly I’d be dragged into the feather underground.

What followed was a sprawling, six-year investigation, taking me around the globe in search of Edwin, the missing skins, and some measure of justice. *The Feather Thief* is that account.”



The Tring Museum

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The Feather Thief

Kirk W. Johnson is the author of *The Feather Thief: Beauty, Obsession, and the Natural History Heist of the Century* and *To Be a Friend is Fatal: the Fight to Save the Iraqis America Left Behind*, which covers his work coordinating the reconstruction of Fallujah and his subsequent efforts on behalf of Iraqi refugees as the founder of The List Project to Resettle Iraqi Allies.

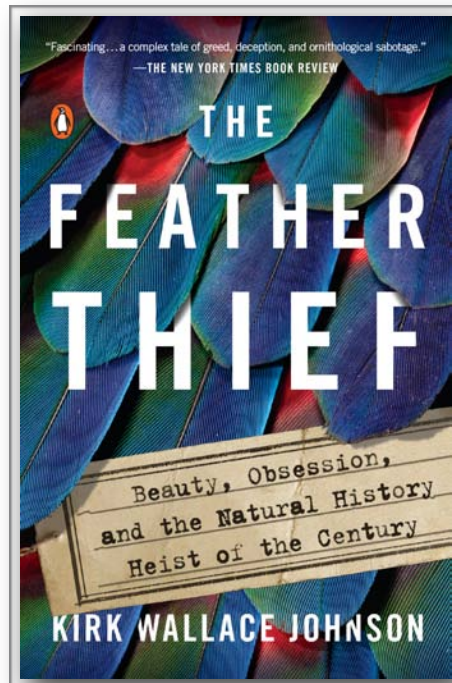
His writings have appeared in *The New Yorker*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Washington Post Magazine*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *Foreign Policy*, among others.

Johnson previously served in Iraq with the U.S. Agency for International Development in Baghdad and then Fallujah as the Agency's first coordinator for reconstruction in the war-torn city.

He is a Senior Fellow at the USC Annenberg Center on Communication Leadership and Policy, and the recipient of fellowships from the American Academy in Berlin, Yaddo, MacDowell, and the Wurlitzer Foundation. Prior to his work in Iraq, he conducted research on political Islamism as a Fulbright Scholar in Egypt. Johnson received his BA from the University of Chicago in 2002. A resident of Studio City, Kirk is an avid fly fisherman.



A salmon fly



Cover of the Feather Thief



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Fly Tying Classes	Peter Haight
Trout in the Classroom	Celia Carroll
SW Council - FFI Rep.	Celia Carroll

©Mending the Line is published monthly except in August & December by the Wilderness Fly Fishers of Santa Monica, California. Submit inquiries regarding articles for publication to Wilderness Fly Fishers, P.O. Box 3358, Santa Monica, California 90408-3358. All articles should be emailed in RTF or MS Word format to:

Wildernessflyfishers@gmail.com

To join WFF, Visit our website

www.wildernessflyfishers.org

Monthly Board of Directors Meeting

The monthly Board Meeting, held the Tuesday, one week before the monthly dinner meeting, will be held at 2311 30th Street, Santa Monica, Ca 90405. Parking permits provided by hosts. Meetings start promptly at 7:30 P.M. All members are welcome. New members are especially encouraged to attend. Come and see how your club runs and you might pick up some fishing tips, too.

Minutes of Board Meetings are available to members on the website's [Document Library](#)

COMING EVENTS

For more information go to the WFF website [CALENDAR](#)

WFF Kelsey Outing Fri. - Tue. Apr. 26 - 30

WFF Fly Tying

The classes are from 9 am to about 12 noon on the 4th Saturday of the month at St Augustine Church, 1227 4th Street, Santa Monica, CA 90401. Park across the street in the city parking structure. See page 1 for parking rates and address.

This month there will be no fly tying as our instructor, Peter Height, will be at the WFF Kelsey Lake outing. If you are interested in joining us, check out the info on our website at this link: [Kelsey Lake](#)



Isla Holbox, Mexico

Northern Yucatan Peninsula

By Rich Peters

[WARNING: The following article is not primarily about fly fishing. Rather, it will describe a destination that can be combined with several fly fishing opportunities and numerous other activities, the combination of which will provide the visitor with the experience of Old Mexico at its best.]

A 4-hour flight from Los Angeles to Cancun, followed by a 2-hour drive north and west to the small town of Chiquila, and then a 45 minute ferry ride across a large lagoon takes you to the quaint Mexican resort village of Holbox. Isla Holbox (pronounced: hole-bosh) is an island off the northern tip of the Yucatan Peninsula, about 30 miles long from west to east, and about a mile or so wide (north to south). The town of Holbox is located on the northwestern shore of the island and is home to about 2000 locals, a good number of modern hotels (low rise only), and several dozen reasonably priced local restaurants. The island has no cars, so once you disembark at the ferry dock you either walk on the dirt roads (not recommended with suitcases) or take a readily available golf cart taxi to your hotel. The town is small so to get from one end to the other only takes 10-15 minutes by taxi.

People come here from all over the world, but in our experience the island is very popular with Europeans. In early March, we shared restaurant tables and interesting conversations with folks from Germany, Finland, Sweden, Holland, the UK, and also Canada and India, to name a few. From your hotel in Holbox, you can walk everywhere – in sandals. Holbox is reputed to be Mexico's best walking beach and in our experience it well deserves that reputation. From early morning until night visitors and locals walk the beach or preferably



Welcome to Holbox



Sue on a typical "city" street



People walking the beach

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Isla Holbox, Mexico

use the miles long sandbar that parallels the beach anywhere from 20 to 100 yards offshore which is covered by only one foot or less of water. No one is in a hurry and most really have no walking destination in mind.

There are numerous outdoor activities available, ranging from whale shark tours, eco tours, flamingo tours, renting a bike, kayaking (either self-guided or with a small tour group through the mangroves), sailing, stand-up paddle boarding, snorkeling, and even fishing (more on that one in a moment), in addition to the usual hotel amenities. There are virtually no waves along the north shore and the warm water is shallow a long ways from shore so water activities are very safe. After an activity filled day, or a day spent just sitting under a palm tree reading a book, walk a short distance into town for an enjoyable casual dinner. There is a wide selection of restaurants, all casual and ranging from low priced to medium priced. There are a few local specialties (ceviche is very popular) and fresh fish, shrimp and octopus will be found on most menus.

About that fishing – yes, there is fishing in Holbox. In fact, later in the season, Holbox is renown for *sabalo grande*, migratory tarpon ranging from 50 to 100 lbs. In winter and spring fishing is much more modest, but there is a solid year-round population of “juvenile” tarpon anywhere from 5 to 30 lbs. which are ideal for an 8 weight fly rod. Fly fishing is done almost entirely out of pangas, with a few limited walk-and-wade areas, and ranges from open water to mangrove lined flats and channels. We were there in early March which is not prime time for tarpon, and fishing was purely incidental to our visit, but I did get out one day with a guide and once on my own. The tarpon seemed to have lock-jaw on the day I was guided, but there were a number of other species available such as tripletail (pictured), sheepshead, “jacks” which here refers to amber jack not jack crevalle, barracuda,



Friendly seagulls



Hotel grounds



My guide Alberto with a tripletail

Isla Holbox, Mexico

snappers and grouper, etc., that kept things interesting. DIY fishing from shore is, unfortunately, very limited but not non-existent if you consult the locals. There are a few places that you can hike to or take a taxi to fish on your own, and although there are fish to be caught from shore there are better ways to spend your time here.

I highly recommend a visit to Holbox to experience and enjoy the charm of Old Mexico in a safe and laid back environment. Definitely bring your fly gear and plan on a couple days out with a guide or a few hours on your own. To arrange a fly fishing guide, contact Alejandro Vega aka Mr. Sandflea, mrsandfleaolbox1@hotmail.com. While there may be more productive areas to visit if flats fishing is your primary objective, I don't think there is a better all-around example of all that Mexico has to offer than Isla Holbox.



Numero uno fly fishing guide



Alberto retrieving our panga



Sue relaxing on the sandbar



Holbox hammocks



Fresh mangoes



Typical beach scene



2019 Trout in the Classroom – Wrap Up

By Celia Carroll, TIC Coordinator

WFF volunteers concluded another wholly successful Trout in the Classroom (TIC) program for 2019! Five teachers raised rainbow trout from eggs to fry with minimum loss of young fish during the period of January to March, and WFF members assisted the teachers with educational support in the field.

At Culver City Middle School, students studied the life cycles of trout and the insects they eat as they raised their fish. They contributed their fish for the two field trips (trout fry releases) held for elementary age students.

Here are this year's participants and their schools:

- Culver City Middle School, 7th Grade Science Program:
 - Tom Kim, Crystal Neuhaus, Phyllis Yarbrough
- Linwood E. Howe Elementary School:
 - Lisa Schnauss
- El Marino Language School:
 - Mitsuko Omuro, Teacher and Michael Nabours, Classroom Volunteer.

We organized two field trips this year at which the students released their fish at Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area. The following WFF volunteers taught students about casting, entomology, fly tying and how to release young trout gently into a stream:

Celia Carroll, Larry Carroll, Greg Dahlem, Mary Jo Dalton, Jim Drummond, Peter Haight, Kathy Later, Charlie Motley, Norman Nelson, Marcelo Reynoso, Leslie Riley and Art Siegel. Thanks to all the volunteers and if you couldn't participate this year, stay tuned for 2020 TIC.

Photographs feature Linwood E. Howe third graders at Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area.

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2019 TIC



Art Siegel helps third graders release trout fry into the Hahn Lake feeder stream.



Former WFF member Jim Drummond, timekeeper, assures that all kids rotate on time to the four stations for insects, casting instruction, fly tying, and fish release.



Celia Carroll presenting the bugology portion of the program.



Member Corner

We are sad to report the passing of one of the original members of Wilderness Fly Fishers, LAIRD STABLER. Very few of our current WFF members will have known or even heard his name, but Laird was raised in Mar Vista and Venice and back in the 1960s, together with a few other adventuresome outdoor enthusiasts, they decided that the Westside needed a fly fishing club for likeminded individuals who shared a passion for fishing with a fly. Our club has continued without interruption ever since. We all owe him and his colleagues a debt of gratitude. May he rest in peace.

To see Laird's full obituary please go to:

<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/latimes/obituary-print.aspx?n=laird-alexander-stabler&pid=191862456>



Spring is a good time to target So Cal bays and harbors with a 6 or 7 wt. rod



Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Recovery in Silver and Wolf Creeks!

by Celia Carroll

Southwest Council Conservation Chair, Debbie Sharpton reports that the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout restoration project in Silver Creek (LCT project) offers volunteer opportunities as well as the chance to catch one of our State's heritage trout. With the view toward planning your trout-fishing outings, keep in mind a trip to the Bridgeport area, August – November.

From August 1 until November, there is a window when Silver Creek can be waded by volunteers electro-shocking and removing non-native brook trout from the stream. After volunteering for conservation operations along the stream, anglers are welcomed by California Department of Fish and Wildlife staff to fish in nearby Wolf Creek for Lahontan Cutthroat Trout! Overnight camping in the beautiful forests around the streams is offered.

If the stream work is not possible for some of our more physically-challenged members, this project is in need of donations to meet its \$20,000 goal to fund stream work for the 2019 season.

For information, contact Debbie Sharpton: debbie.sharpton@gmail.com

Donation checks should be made out to SWCFFI with special instructions to restrict the monies for the LCT project, and mail to:

Treasurer, Southwest Council FFI, 1213 Sunset Place, Ojai, Ca 93023



2018 Lahontan Cutthroat Trout



Notices

Subject: Artifishal Film Launch

Hello everyone,

I hope you are all doing well. I wanted to let you all know that we will be having a fishing related event on April 19th. We will be screening Artifishal, a film about the dangers of fish farming and fish stocking on wild rivers. We will have the filmmaker, Josh Murphy, in store to do a Q & A after the film. Cal Trout will also be joining us for the evening. If you have questions about the event or the context of the film just let me know. We would love any help with promotion and are excited to see everyone on the 19th.

Event Details:

What: Artifishal

Where: Patagonia Santa Monica

When: Friday, April 19th

Time: Doors @ 7pm and Film @ 7:30

Notes: Snack and Drinks will be provided

Best,

Judson

Judson Heard | Store Manager | Patagonia Santa Monica

1344 4th Street | Santa Monica, CA 90401 | 310.395.6895



Notices



Subject: Pasadena - Int'l Flyfishing Film Festival

Hi Wilderness Flyfishers,

CalTrout invites you to a screening of the International Fly Fishing Film Festival in Pasadena, CA at the **Laemmle Playhouse 7 Theater on Wednesday April 24 at 7:30 pm.**

Tickets can be purchased at <https://caltrout.z2systems.com/event.jsp?event=659&> and previews of the films can be seen at www.flyfilmfest.com.

We'd like to extend a **\$5 discount** on the ticket price to the Wilderness Flyfishers. Enter code **FLYCLUB19** at checkout.

We hope you can promote this event to your members via newsletters or announcements. I can also provide you with any images or other information needed to promote the offer to your members.

Thanks and hope some of you will be able to join us! Feel free to give me a call if you have any questions.

Best,

Megan Nguyen

Communications Associate



415-392-8887 x101 **Office**

916-947-7893 **Cell**

Read about CalTrout's work in

thecurrent
CalTrout's e-magazine



Notices

Fly Fishing Faire 2019 Save the Date



The Fly Fishing Faire is BACK in 2019! Many details to come but mark your calendars for the LARGEST and ONLY Fly Fishing Event in Southern California!!

Where – Glendale Civic Auditorium, Glendale, CA

When – October 05-06, 2019

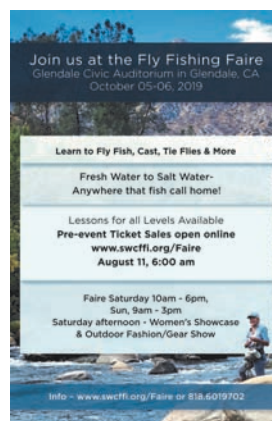
Hours – Saturday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Admission - \$15.00 per person, good for both days
\$20.00 per family of up to 4, good for both days
\$5.00 per person, introductory price for those that have NEVER fly fished.
Includes free introductory casting and tying classes

Who – Presented by the Southwest Council, Fly Fishers International

Information – 818.6019702, specialprojects@swcffi.org

Classes, presentations and vendors will be announced in the coming months



Print & Mail Coupons

If you prefer not to use our website, mail in a coupon with your check.



Wilderness Fly Fishers Membership Application

_____ New Member _____ Renewal

Name: _____

Home Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Annual Dues:

- ☐ \$50 Single - Regular
☐ \$70 Single - Golden Trout
☐ \$60 Family - Regular
☐ \$80 Family - Golden Trout

_____ Additional Donation

_____ TOTAL enclosed

Mail Check With This Form To:

Wilderness Fly Fishers
P.O. Box 3358
Santa Monica, CA 90408-3358

Monthly Meeting Reservations

Please make your dinner [reservations online](#) or send in this coupon.

Your check must be in the club mailbox by the Wednesday, the week before the meeting.

Names _____

_____ Dinner(s) and Program(s) x \$30 per person

_____ Program(s) only x \$10 per person

Total \$ _____

Please make check payable to W.F.F.

Mail to:

Wilderness Fly Fishers
P.O. Box 3358
Santa Monica, CA 90408-3358

Join us online, Visit our website www.wildernessflyfishers.org



April 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31 Fred Hall Show San Diego	1 April Fools' Day	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9 WFF Board Meeting	10	11	12	13
14 Palm Sunday	15	16 WFF Monthly Meeting Kirk Johnson: "The Feather Thief"	17	18	19 Good Friday	20 Passover (1st Day) WFF Deadline for Newsletter Articles
21 Easter Sunday	22 Earth Day	23	24	25	26 Arbor Day Kelsey Lake	27 Kelsey Lake
28 Pascha (Orthodox) Kelsey Lake	29 Kelsey Lake	30 Kelsey Lake	1 May Day	2	3	4
5 Cinco de Maya Ramadan begins at sundown	6	7	8	9	10	11

