

Eastern Sierra Focus

By CJ Webb

Fishing tip:

During the summer months on most lakes, a slump at some point will occur partly because trout have seen everything that anglers have thrown at them. Most spring insects have typically finished hatching and the water is too warm and trout become somewhat indifferent. Fishing can still be good when lakes cool and will hold more oxygen especially morning and evening when egg-laying chironomid adults and hatching pupae can be heavy. Shallows are definitely out and will be very warm. The last good hope during the doldrums will be to use a thermometer and locate what is called the "thermocline". This is the cool layer that lies directly beneath the oxygenation in a stratified summer lake. Usually it can be located around 15 to 20 feet down but can be much deeper. Trout may feed atop a thermocline even on hot summer days, or just lie there in wait for the evening feeding on insects that are around. Lastly, trout will always feed during a cooling spell when the weather turns up collars and drives anglers inside and they will feed at any time of the day.

Remember to be wary in and around desert brush and watch for rattlesnakes as they will be headed for moisture.

News:

In March 2013, two University of Redlands students under the direction of assistant chemistry Professor Rebecca Lyons were searching for a hidden killer; remnants of herbicides and pesticides and fertilizers and other industrial products called "endocrine disrupters"—trace elements that many scientists believe to be one of the gravest threats to life on the planet. These disrupters are the traces of various chemicals commonly found in pesticides, herbicides, detergents and other products. She came here with a group of graduate students hoping to get more information about how the disrupters move through the biological world. She states, "Over time, they have managed to make their way into tissue and water and soil and perhaps, even the air". Many scientists believe the problem is that these chemicals may pose a big risk to the very vitality of life on earth. Lyons needed a pristine lake to act as a control for her research into how endocrine disrupters affect lakes and other bodies of water, a local resident and former Redlands alumnus, Tony Taylor, suggested the Eastern Sierra and SNARL (Sierra Nevada Aquatic Research Lab). Their research was done up the Convict Lake canyon and many samples were taken during frustrating climbs to high elevation lakes in bitter weather to discover the poisonous chemicals in a lake most assumed would be clean. It raised more questions than answers where they found endocrine disruptors at measureable levels. The only lake they did not find them was in Lake Genevieve. The group will be returning many times over the next few years to continue their research and go on to work in a laboratory that creates brand new pharmaceuticals that will help save human lives.

Weather:

August has been a mix from very hot with occasional thunderstorms late afternoon with occasional hail. We had one very cold snap in late July which triggered the aspens to start their annual change. They are just starting to turn yellow, with a few patches of orange between the two 139 dispersed camping signs along the Virginia Lakes road. This is unusually early for them to start their annual change. This might be a spectacular fall color array.

Also, "Belding's" ground squirrels started their hibernation exactly on August 20 with only a few stragglers hanging around gorging themselves for their winter nap.

It's been a bit hazy with the smoke from the fires but nothing to be concerned about.

Remember to check the regulations prior to fishing unfamiliar water concerning limits, size, and other restrictions.

Note: Always check with local tackle stores for the waters you plan to fish, and I'm not on commission for this suggestion, it's just good

sense not to waste your time and "put-down" trout without the latest information.

ROCK CREEK LAKE has been a bit sporadic on the bite but catching seems to have improved. According to Jim King the evening bite has been terrific on small dries and something huge broke off one of his staff's Rock Creek Special. Upper stream is doing well on small dries after the air cools. The County will be planting their usual end of the month Enhancement Program. Flies working are black and gray dry patterns in the evening (small mosquitoes, Adams, black gnat, and the invincible Rock Creek Special). Think terrestrial!

CONVICT – Same as last report with streamers still doing great using dark green or brown Marvel Fly's (also known as a Pistol Pete), and Green Woolly Buggers. Other locations to try are the north shore, jetty, west shore near the outlet. Also try some standard dries around the southwest shore early and late.

HOT CREEK flow is at 6cfs and the Flume is at 38cfs and water is clear and weedy but doing alright. It's a stealth approach (as always) and Nymphing will be tough due to the low water and weeds. Very small size 20 will work best. Bring small midges and mayflies for the evening dry rise. Try cfo ant, baby boy hopper and fat Albert, cdc ant and elk hair caddis, e/c caddis missing link, Griffith's gnat and parachute ant. For nymphs try PT's, copper johns, wd40, western coachmen, rainbow warrior, rs2, micro may, Fox's poopah, sprout midge, and nitro caddis. Weeds are too high and water to low for streamers.

Please FISH from the BANK and NOT IN the stream and help prevent the spread of the New Zealand Mud Snail.

CROWLEY water temp has reached 70°F on the bottom across the lake and algae is almost gone. Get there early as the bite is NOT as good when it's this warm. The lake is much lower than previous years so watch out for Pelican Point which sticks way out into the lake. Watch for white buoys and past to the east. Also, the islands just north are popping out so watch carefully if there is a good chop it covers the buoys. Fishing has been excellent with some good hatches. Lots of fish are holding in McGee Bay in about 8-13 feet of water. Trout are chasing perch fry (3/4-1") creating a lot of problems for the tubers not being able to get their fly to the bottom. The trouble is the fry are either up on the surface or tight to the bottom so 18" off won't cut it. And, slow down, just a twitch-twitch-strip with a very occasional speed strip for 3 seconds, stop for a second or two to get back on the bottom, and then back to the twitch-twitch. Try bright red larvae patterns before 9am, red/black BH Optimidge with or without flash after then to a Shaft Emerger during high sun. Better big fish producer has been a large copper zebra and reports are that you will catch larger fish but not as many as the brighter copper tiger's would produce. Also, strip punk or perfection Perch smallest size in both colors of the Punk. NOTE: the high water temps and low oxygen are making for exhausted fish that should NOT be taken out of the water even for a photo; both small and large fish so if you need a pix of your beauty take it while it's in the net.

MAMMOTH BASIN is a bit low and fishing conditions have improved for catching Alpers. Great dry fly fishing with the DFW rainbows near the shore early am and late evenings but mid-day has also come up on the scale in poundage due to the cooler day temperature. Try everything but tugging streamers is best early and late as the air cools. Dries: Parachute Adams, royal wulffs, stimulators, callibaetis, humpy, Griffith's gnat, skittering midge and Sierra Brite Dot. Nymphs: rainbow warrior, glo bug, copper johns, birds nest, hares ear, AP emerger in olive, pheasant tail, wd40 and San Juan's. Streamers: crystal bugger, punk perch, Doc's Twin Lake specials, Hornbergs, and belly ache minnows. Basin has seen a lot of anglers.

SAN JOAQUIN is low but has risen due to the recent storms bringing the flows up allowing the fish to find better feeding areas, but if you are willing to hike down-stream to the deeper pools you will find great dry fly action.

JUNE LAKE has been fishing fairly well at the west end of the lake toward the north corner away from the marina and along the north shore. Single or two fly rigs are both showing some action, but change patterns if they don't produce. If no takes drop your line deeper as the temperature is more comfortable for trout to feed in cooler water. Standard streamers like woolly's, Hornberg's, Light Spruce fly, leech patterns and damsels.

GULL LAKE is doing well near the reeds with damsel's, Rickard's AP Nymphs, and Black BH woolies, dries working are Humpy's and black furry ants and hoppers. Fish early and late for a better action.

SILVER LAKE is still producing well with the DFW stocking and County Enhancement program plus their Alpers plants. Try stripping near the south side of the lake toward the grassy area with olive BH buggers, Green Guinea Hornberg, Matuka's, Spruceabou's, and crystal leeches.

LUNDY water is holding but the ponds in the back have a good amount of water. Some areas are buggy so you just have to fish nearby to see what they have been taking. Normal flies for this time of year for the lake are Olive/black wooly buggers, and the Pistol Pete in olive and grizzly. Some dries are working on the south side near the inlet where the browns are enjoying the deli that cruises the lake every couple hours and wander into their area.

VIRGINIA LAKES catching improved even with the recent thunderstorm/lightning events and the Perseid Meteor Shower on the 12th (hope you got to see it). DFW continues to stock weekly along with Alpers. Trout have been taken on wooly worms, olive wooly bugger, and Rickard's emergers, olive guinea Hornberg and green eyed damsels. But the best evening entertainment has been with a grey hackle yellow. Day-tuggers have been using black woolly buggers size 8, Hornbergs as a single fly or dropping a size 16 hare's Ear, a bead head pheasant tail flashback or a zug bug. Don't leave home without an assortment of standard dries as the cooler air and water has pumped their appetites, so if you're looking for a hot date on the lake then don't forget your fluffy bugs. Small grey hackle yellows, small dark midges and my favorite X-Caddis are working in the upper lakes to the Summit.

EAST WALKER flow is at 49cfs and dropped from 112cfs on the 22nd of July, and making it difficult to fish except for the holes if you can find any. Fish early morning then quit by noon if you care about the resource. Cooler night temps are keeping the trout more comfortable early, so try hoppers, beetles, humpies, stimulators, zebra midge, wd40, top secret midge, mercury midge, bucks skin caddis, rainbow warrior, 3-wire caddis, parachute Adams and e/c caddis. Remember should you catch the "fish of a lifetime" revive it slowly and take CARE, this river does not get restocked.

BRIDGEPORT RESERVOIR is very low and fish are concentrated in the bathtub which is deeper and cooler. Fly anglers are finding it difficult so paddle around to look for clear water where trout are holding but be sure and check with Ken's in Bridgeport prior to hitting the river for daily conditions and the fly of the hour. They know the heartbeat of the river.

WEST WALKER flow is 38cfs. Fish the first north curve just past the bridge, but be sure and watch for snakes, it will be a dry year for the high country and they will be seeking cooler areas and have been spotted crossing the river. Also look for pools where trout will hold to keep cool and get a better menu choice. Try some two-fly rigs with bushy indicators using a wd40, bucks skin, Fox's poopah, rainbow warrior, lightning bug and rubber leg copper johns.