

# Eastern Sierra Focus

By CJ Webb

## Fall - 2016

Early October provided the most magnificent display of fall colors along southbound US395 one mile before Conway Summit. The entire area west from the highway to the base of Dunderberg/Castle peaks had about 8 different groves in various stages of color. Aspens peaked the 30 of Sept. through the 2nd of October at Virginia Lakes down to about 9300 feet along the Virginia Lakes road with wind shaking the aspens clean.

Predictions as to the type of winter are starting to firm up with the latest information from NOAA's Chris Smallcomb who is based out of Reno in a lecture about local weather systems hosted by Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association.

He explained a few basic principles of physics in understanding Mammoth's weather. "First, when you have two fluid masses next to each other (like air and water), and one is warmer than the other, the warmer one is going to rise and move, and the cooler one is going to get pushed out of the way. Second, air masses of different temperatures and chemical composition usually don't mix readily. When one gets pushed up against the other by, for example, the Sierra Crest, it causes the rising air mass to accelerate, like water through a hose when you put your finger over the open end." Smallcomb also said that Mammoth Mountain is situated at the mouth of the San Joaquin River Valley, a convenient wet weather funnel through the Sierra from the coast. Mammoth's unique location allows us to get snow when the Tahoe resorts are left in the rain shadow of the Sierra Crest, with high winds and no precipitation.

Much of the moisture that reaches the Eastern Sierra is carried by the Jet Stream, a channel of air that is forced to accelerate because it is warmer than the Pacific Ocean, over which it flows from west to east.

According to Smallcomb, about 55 percent of the precipitation that reaches the Eastern Sierra is carried by events called Atmospheric Rivers (AR). AR occur when storms from the south pacific get picked up by the Jet Stream and accelerated across the Pacific Ocean, until they are either carried nor to the Gulf of Alaska, or make landfall and travel across the central valley of California and smack into the Sierra Crest.

Towards the end of summer, the Jet Stream creeps south (with the sunlight), toward the equator and the South Pacific. In the fall, large swirling hurricanes called typhoons get snatched up by the Jet Stream, along with all the water they carry as vapor. These storms accumulate to create a river of moisture flying above the ocean, which Smallcomb said can contain 10 to 20 times as much water as the Mississippi River.

The number of Atmospheric Rivers that make landfall is the most important factor in determining how much snow the Sierra will receive in a given year. Typically, between 1 and 11 of these storm cycles make it to eastern California between September and April but he stated there is no way for NOAA to predict the storms' behavior in advance and can start as far away as the Philippines.

The most dubious contributor to this is "The Blob," a mass of low pressure, warm air observed in the Gulf of Alaska over the last few winters that Smallcomb said generates a ridge of high pressure in the Western Pacific Ocean. This high pressure ridge has been observed to deflect Atmospheric Rivers, preventing them from reaching the Sierra. The two AR's that brought wind, rain, and snow to the Eastern Sierra so far this Fall, including the one that struck last weekend, blasted right through The Blob. He said that if enough storms break through The Blob and high pressure ridge, the phenomenon could disperse and allow more moisture to reach Mammoth.

"This fall yielded the strongest cyclone and typhoon cycle we've seen in years...There's a 55 percent chance it will be a La Nina year, and 100 percent chance I don't know what will happen...but 6 of our 8 models show a normal or above normal year for precipitation."

News –

## Southwest IFF Council's Fly Fishing Faire October 15/16

(Bishop Tri-county Fairgrounds) This weekend saw the first major storm of the season hit the central Sierra. With a northerly in character the front kept Bishop warm and rather pleasant rain shadowed and down-slope winds which kept day time temps up in the low 80's. A trip north along 395 up Sherwin Grade a different story with the weather rather nasty at times. However in Bishop it was wonderful with fall colors and pleasant weather setting a mellow mood. Alas it was fall and familiar faces abounded once again and about 450 folks gathered for the 5<sup>th</sup> annual Faire, a good reason to be there with a little fishing thrown in.

It gets easier for organizers as years go by and the Southwest Council is experiencing this as one would expect. This is the second year at the Bishop Fair Grounds with a lot of space for vendors and organizers to have their booths. Distinctively this event attracts a certain level of vendors that maybe one would not see at bigger shows and allows them to be more in the limelight. Both governmental and non- governmental organizations were on hand as well. The size of the event had ample time for dialogue between attendees which in its own right foster some positive networking for the fly fishing community and its allies in our state.

Notably this year the California Department of Fish and Wildlife had personnel at their booth all weekend long and where most informative on a number of current issues just for the asking. Along these lines Phil Pister the former fisheries biologist for District was officially awarded his Aldo Leopold Award from the IFFF at a reception Friday afternoon. As well Dawn Emery received an award from the SWC for her work on Silver Creek (west walker drainage) and the Lahontan cutthroat recovery there as well as her dogged efforts to complete the relocation of the other native cutthroat in California, the Paiute cut, back into its native range up in the Carson Drainage at Silver King Creek. The dinner Saturday night at the Bishop Elks Hall was well attended. The catering was spot on and the mood followed suit. Recognition to those fly fishers in the SWC who made a difference this year. Charles Jardine entertained the group with his English wit and flair fishing being the featured guest. Of the evening is never complete without a raffle and some live auctioning.

The classes and fly tying this year were not as well attended in the past. After 5 years maybe some of the content has become too familiar but also the weather being so nice outside with the colors the way they were it was maybe just too nice to be inside a hall and time to play hooky some. None the less for distraction the content was there and all who attended seemed to enjoy the layout of what Southern California Fly Fishers have to offer. You are welcome and next year will be pretty much the same time and place and plans are already conspiring. One is never a face in the crowd at this faire and you are going to be welcomed in the circle of kindred folks who gather for this fest. It's all about being familiar. Update courtesy of Lew Riffle of Santa Barbara Fly Fishers.

**CDFW stocking** for Virginia Lakes - Last stock was October 10, 2016 and a lot of other waters in the County.

#### **HOT CREEK -**

Early October CADFW. introduced over 6,000 diploid (ability to reproduce) fish to Hot Creek this year and 12,000 per year over the next few years until we reach 6,000 fish per mile while doing an electroshock survey each year to see how the spawn is doing. The goal is to get this once incredible fishery back to what it once was.

**CALTRANS REMINDER** - The "Rock-fall Project" that on US395 along Mono Lake continues until the stabilization of the area (hillside) due to lack of ground cover to prevent mudslides when rain hits this area.

**CONWAY RANCH** - No update.

**FISHING REPORT** - *If it was easy, they'd call it catching!*

**ROCK CREEK LAKE** - Reports are fair to good on the lake but I'd work the stream using small dries even with skinny water. Flies working are black and gray dry patterns in the evening (small mosquitoes, Adams, black gnat, and their Rock Creek Special).

**CROWLEY** - This is the last weekend for Crowley Lake Fish Camp. The marina will be closing on Monday at noon. If you enter before that, you can fish as long as you want, as the gate will allow you to exit only after 12:00. They are calling for a little rain on Friday, and possibly on Sunday, Saturday and Monday should be nice. For the most part, the fishing has shifted from the North Arm, over to Big Hilton. Most of the fish being caught are coming from 11 to 12 feet of water. Get some kind of small woolly bugger, or leach pattern as your top fly. Purple, Black, or Burgundy are usually pretty good in the fall. On the bottom, I would be using a Copper Tiger Remember to keep twitching these flies, you want those leach patterns to keep moving. There are a few fish showing up behind the tires, more should be coming in as the water temps continue to drop. Other good places in the late fall are Sandy Point, and Crooked Creek, they are worth a look. Once again, there is no reason to get out first thing in the morning, this time of year, things don't get going till 10:00.

**UPPER OWENS** - Water conditions are fair. Flows are at 38cfs as of 9/27 and water is clear above the confluence, and stained below. **DRIES:** Elk Hair Caddis #16, Kaufman Stimulator #16, EC Caddis #16, Foam Hoppers, Chernobyl Ants, and Fat Albert's. **NYMPHS:** #18-20 Psycho Prince Nymph (purple), #16-18 Pheasant Tail, Flashback Hares Ear #14-16, Western Coachmen, #16 Sparkle Caddis Pupa Tan #16-18, San Juan Worms (red), Fox's Poopah Olive #16, Zebra Midge #18. **STREAMERS:** Doc's Twin Lake Special,

Woolly Buggers Olive #10-14. There are a few nice rainbows hanging around that are best fooled by attractor patterns like the "Drifters Crawler" and crystal eggs. A strange thing this season is the migration of Sacramento Perch moving up the river.

**NOTE:** This section upstream from the Benton Bridge is open year round; down from the bridge is now closed to ALL angling. Special regulations are in place here year-around.

**CONVICT** - DFW planted both the lake and creek 10 days ago. Their standard list of recommended Dry Flies: Adams #14, Female Adams #16, Cutter's Caddis #14-16, Elk Hair Caddis #16-18, Stimulators #12-16, Black/Red Ants, Sierra Bright Dot, Royal Coachman and Hoppers. Streamers: Woolly Buggers (black, brown, olive, or green), Matuka (olive, or black), Olive or Rainbow Hornberg #12, and Muddler Minnows. Wet Flies (Nymphs): Prince Nymph, Flashback Pheasant Tail, Hare's Ear, Zebra Midge (red and black), Red Copper John and San Juan Worm (brown or red). If you have fished Convict you know your best choice in flies so try them first. The Ambush at the Lake fall fishing derby started September 5th and will run until the end of the 2016 fishing season. Don't miss out on the chance to win \$6,000 in Resort prizes! The Morrison Bonus will be on the weekend of October 28-30 - \$2,200 in cash prizes.

**HOT CREEK** flume is at 35cfs as of 9/27 DFW has planted several thousand fish all in the sub catchable size range into hot creek from the lower parking lot all the way up throughout the ranch. These are not sterile fish and will be able to reproduce once they reach a certain size. A lot of people are on the fence about whether or not this was appropriate for a "wild zero limit" fishery. Keep in mind that the fish that were in hot creek were only there because they were planted a long time ago. Overall, this should help but it's going to take some time for these recently planted fish to shore up the numbers. Water temps are on the decline and running clear. Fishing conditions and hatches are fair. If you can get a fly through the weeds then you deserve any fish you catch because it's not easy! **DRIES:** Taylor's Fat Albert, Chernobyl Ant, Foam Hopper, Parachute Caddis #18, Mercer's Missing Link #18, Elk Hair Caddis #18, Brook's Hot Creek Caddis #18, and Clownshoe Caddis #18. **NYMPHS:** Flashback Scud #16, Tungsten Zebra Midge #20, Old School Caddis Emerger #18, Brook's Hot Creek Caddis #18, LaFontaine's Sparkle Pupa #18 Olive, Nitro Caddis Olive #18, Buckskin Caddis #18, Fox's Caddis Poopah Olive #18, Nori's Caddis Pupa Olive #18. **STREAMERS:** Water is back down, so streamer fishing is a bit challenging. (Note flows include water from the springs, not just the gauging station at the highway so this is what is really flowing through the canyon).

**NOTE:** Year around fishery with special regulations. Please DO NOT WADE in Hot Creek to avoid spreading the New Zealand Mud-snail to other waters. Please protect this resource!

**MAMMOTH BASIN** - This is a great place to fish right now because the water is cold and clear and there are plenty of fish up here. Some stockers being caught in the basin and an occasional bruiser planted by Mono County from up in Oregon. Plenty of planted fish to keep everybody happy with the occasional wild brookie. **DRIES:** Callibaetis Dries, Parachute Adams, Stimulators. **NYMPHS:** Zebra Midge,

Copper John, Prince Nymph. **STREAMERS:** Docs Twin Lake Special in Black or Olive, Crystal Bugger Black **SAN JOAQUIN** and Reds Meadow Valley Closed due to two mudslides which occurred during last weekend's storm according to the US Forest Service but has reopened. Several visitors needed to be assisted out of the area after the area's first significant rain caused the slides. Visitors to the Reds Meadow Valley and Devils Postpile National Monument should take care as there may be debris and rock on the road. As a reminder, there is no overnight parking or camping in the Reds Meadow Valley after October 15th. There is no potable water in the valley and vault toilets only are available at Devils Postpile National Monument and at Agnew Meadows as the park and the forest prepare for the winter season. Visitors should expect delays along the road while crews complete necessary culvert clearing and hazard tree removal. Visitors should also plan that the road may close with significant rain or snow.

**JUNE LAKE** has been quiet since the boat accident last week with 3 people drowning (private boat with 5 people).

**GULL LAKE** - No report.

**SILVER LAKE** has been stocked by DFW the week of the 10th and large rainbows from Desert Springs. The water temperatures are starting to cool and my suggestion is to hit the inlet and outlet for browns cruising. Their consistent fly recommendations are: Dry Flies: Adams, Female Adams, Cutter's EC Caddis, and Elk Hair Caddis. Fishing was good overall. Streamers: Woolly Bugger (black, brown, olive, or green), Matuka (black, brown, olive, or green), Hornberg, and Muddler Minnows. Nymphs: Prince, Flashback Pheasant Tail, Hare's Ear, Zebra Midge (red and black), red Copper John and red or brown San Juan Worm. Dries starting to hit are California Mosquito, Yellow Sally or a Sierra Brite Dot. Even throw on a dropper of a midge to help allure the fish up to the surface. Fishing has continued to be rewarding with the few light storms that hit the Sierra pumping up the water levels just enough to help.

**RUSH CREEK:** No report.

**GRANT LAKE** is low but some additional water from the last thunderstorm put some water in the lake, **ALWAYS** try the south shore or the inlet (park and walk) or the rock jetty's where you can park and walk to the water and cast to trophy's cruising for smaller fish. Fishing conditions have been good overall and fish in the area were mainly taken on the south shore once the air temp rises to meet any hatches. Check with Ernie's or the Grant Lake Marina for current info.

**LUNDY LAKE** - Has been fishing ok but try different flies subsurface with olive woolly buggers, black flashy bead head woolly buggers for the lake and small dries for the back ponds i.e., Griffith's Gnat, small midges, Bi-visible, or my naked blue wing olive parachute with an ultra thin wool body and calf tail post size 16 or 18. Callibaetis are abundant throughout the Sierra this season probably due to the mild weather. They are large dirty straw colored tan/rust with two antennae and quite amazing looking. Several reports also said that dries have been working in the southwest corner of the lake.

**BIG VIRGINIA** is still producing but you're going to spend some time finding the best spot. Weather has been up and down with temperatures dropping then rising with the wind which has been fairly constant. We had about 3 warm days

and the anglers were here but mostly bait due to the wind. Always fish between the areas near the inlet from Red Lake to the outlet of Big V. Most hatches have occurred around 9 to 10am and again around 3pm off the southwest edge and up near the inlet. Surface water is cooling after the recent storm. Day temps are running in the low 60's. Big Virginia seems to be getting more pressure than I've seen in a couple decades.

**LITTLE VIRGINIA** has had consistent stocking from DFW as the other two roadside waters. Anything goes right now, as all the roadside waters are being hit by every type of bait in the world. Just bring **EVERYTHING** but always try midge clusters in black, caddis size 14-16, and flashy black bead head streamers, Olive woolly buggers size 10 not weighted, Stillwater nymph size 12 or dirty doc. Some action has been reported on a weighted nymph under a streamer. Copper red Zebra's, Prince Nymphs, hare's ear and soft hackles are also working. Also, spider trails are hitting the north edge of the lake so use your soft hackles when there is a light breeze from that side of the lake. Remember that the need to get your offering to where the fish are feeding is the most important aspect of fly selection and this time of year will be the hardest to determine as there is only 17 more days until the season ends unless you fish the year-round catch and release special regulation waters. Presentation, presentation, and presentation.

**EAST WALKER** The East is still running at about **100cfs** right now. The fishing has been tough but there are some anglers getting into some nice fish here and there. Patterns to try are: **DRIES:** Baetis Dries - #14-16  
**NYMPHS:** Zebra midges #16-18, Pocket Water Baetis #16, Hogan's S&M Nymph #16, Tungsten Psycho #16  
**STREAMERS:** Ditch the sink tip and stick to flies with some big bead heads.

**WEST WALKER flow is 125cfs.** The West is still one of the best bets around right now, most reports we've been getting are very good, both fly fishing and spin fishing. The water is low and clear so you'll still need to search out the deeper pools in both the Pickle Meadows area as well as the canyon area. Bait anglers are using salmon eggs and crawlers, lure anglers are going with Panther Martins, Mepps, rooster tails and Buoyant's. Fly anglers are using small woolly buggers, prince nymphs, hare's ears and pheasant tails. The "new winter" season begins on November 16th and runs through the last Friday of April 2017 with catch and release regs starting at the confluence of the WWR and Little Walker at the bridge on Highway 395 and runs down river or north to Topaz Lake. Note: Topaz Lake is not included and has its own regulations.

**BRIDGEPORT RESERVOIR** - Jeffrey Wenger at Bridgeport Reservoir reported that the lake received 700 smaller brown trout from the Desert Springs Hatchery in Oregon. The fish were purchased by Mono County Tourism. These are spawners, not the sterile triploids being planted by DFW. This means browns will continue to proliferate. The Bridgeport Reservoir is closed for the season.

**KIRMAN LAKE** - Kirman has still been producing a few cutts here and there but not much for brookies. It seems the lure anglers have been doing the best with Phoebe and Thomas Bouyant lures. Most of the successful anglers have been getting into only 1 or 2 fish per day with the majority of anglers reporting no fish at all. We have talked to a couple

anglers who had portable fish finders up there and they say they are metering lots of fish but are mostly unable to get them to bite. Apparently the water is pretty low again this year and there's a lot of suspended algae that is making visibility very poor.

**SCEIRINE RANCH** - The Sceirine is still fishing pretty well with most anglers reporting lots of nice rainbows and browns up to around 22 inches. It seems like darker flies are having the most success like dark lords, black tube midges, black rainbow warriors and the like. There are some open dates down there if you're interested in having some prime East Walker water to yourself!

See you on the water smokin' reels, CJ (16.10)