

Eastern Sierra Focus

By CJ Webb

Greetings All,

Call for volunteers to help stock 12,000 fish for Hot Creek Wild Trout area.

The CDFW has completed their electro-shocking survey of Hot Creek for the second year in a row following up on drought impacts from the last few years. The results were favorable (increased numbers) but some size classes are missing and we have elected to continue with our three-year plan developed last fall. This plan involves an annual shocking survey in 2016, 2017 and 2018 followed by the stocking of subcatchable Rainbow and Brown trout to supplement the limited successful reproduction experienced during the drought. Thanks to all the volunteers who helped with the electro-shocking and fin clipping. Now it is time to stock these fish.

We will be stocking trout by hand/bucket (as was done last year) and would like to request your assistance in this effort. No experience is necessary and you may participate for as little or as much time as you would like or are available for. We will be stocking the fish we clipped fins last week to aid in distinguishing hatchery fish from those naturally produced in the stream.

We are planning to stock these fish on Friday, November 3 from 0900 to 4:00 P.M. Please join us if you can. Please RSVP to james.erdman@wildlife.ca.gov (or call 760-873-6071) and I will put you on the list of folks assisting. We will meet at the Hot Creek Interpretive Site at 0900. We will be passing five-gallon buckets with fish up a line/chain of people to plant the fish at appropriate locations on the stream. Please invite anyone you would like or that I have missed in this email. We need as many folks as possible to assist.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope to see you at Hot Creek next Friday.

Sierrally, Jim

Fall 2017 Fishing Tip:

Learning the flies for the consistent bugs of the Eastern Sierra waters is probably the best way to get into fish all summer, which I previously mentioned.

Currently waters above 9000 foot elevation are experiencing a reoccurrence of bugs and many anglers are enjoying this time of year without the summer pressure.

While picking up trash at Big Virginia this afternoon I noticed an abundance of Midges, and caddis, two of the 8 major orders that apply to fly fishing and fly selection. The four that you should focus on are midges, mayflies, caddis and stoneflies. Each has stages that represent their life cycle. Midges, mayfly's and caddisflies all have 3 stages, nymph, emerger, and adult/dry. Stonefly's only have 2 stages, nymphs, and adults. Memorize these 4 as they make up at least 80% plus of the trout's diet. You can Google each bug and their stages and when they are available in the type water you prefer to fish, i.e., midges are active in all 4 seasons and are a dominant morsel of a trout's diet, but when larger bugs get active in the river, midges lose their appeal. So get to your PC and put some mileage on those fingers and pencil out a chart and what fly's represent each stage of the 4 lifecycles above. You'll be surprised how much this will improve your success rate.

Watch for Wildlife - Still in Effect as Bear season is in affect until the end of December. Caltrans and the CA Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) are telling drivers they can improve their own safety by slowing down and remaining alert while driving. "Between now and December, deer, bear and other wildlife are more susceptible than usual to vehicle collisions," said Marc Kenyon, CDFW's Human-Wildlife Conflict Program Manager. Being particularly alert during the morning and evening, as wildlife are most active during these times. Also, if you see an animal cross the road, know that others may be following. Lastly, please don't litter, as the odors attract animals to cruise the roadways.

Fall Color Change has been a mixing of where they are and how fast they have changed. It was 2 weeks late and the color off Conway Summit is long gone. Virginia Lakes was done October 1st due to the cold temperatures. Some color is still around through the June Lake loop and around Mono county but it's sporadic. The aspens started late, peaked quickly and blew off at elevations above 8000 feet. All due to the wet winter, several cold snaps, and a couple light snow storms. Conway Summit was spectacular for about 4 days only then left in a flurry.

Legislation

12-MONTH FISHING LICENSE Update - No report!

Another bill (AB 986) is making its way through the process and may be acted on in January 2018. The legislation, sponsored by State Assemblyman James Gallagher, R-Sacramento, also aims to increase fishing license sales and revenue by making annual fishing license sales valid for a full 12-months from the date of purchase and also discounts annual fishing license for American veterans by 25 percent, and by 50 percent for veterans who have a 50 percent or greater service-connected disability.

News

Nimbus Hatchery Fish Ladder Opened October 9th

The Nimbus Hatchery Fish Ladder on the American River opened at 10:45am. The ladder is opening unusually early in the season to accommodate the arrival of returning adult fall-run Chinook salmon that hatched in the Coldman National Fish Hatchery (CNFH) in Battle Creek in 2014. Eggs from fall-run Chinook salmon that stray to Nimbus Hatchery will be returned to CNFH to ensure a healthy population of these fish for commercial, recreational and ecological purposes. Visit the CDFW website for more information about spawning schedules and educational opportunities at www.wildlife.ca.gov/fishing/hatcheries/nimbus

Marijuana Water Demands

Fish-and-wildlife officials are documenting the enormous impact of illegal marijuana growing sites on trout, steelhead, and salmon streams. "In California, between 2001 and 2015, more than 8,000 grow sites were detected and eradicated," states an article written by Jane Hendron, public affairs office of the CDFW's Carlsbad office. She noted that most of these eradicated sites were located on federal land. "Grow sites are especially common in the 'Emerald Triangle' -- an area encompassing Humboldt, Mendocino, and Trinity Counties. They have been found on the BLM's Beauty Mt. Wilderness Study Area in Riverside County, in Shasta-Trinity National Forest, and in a designed wilderness area of Sequoia National Park."

The impact of these grow sites on rivers is nothing short of staggering. In the article, Hendron quotes Mike Higley, a biologist for the Hoopa tribe, saying: "There were more than 26,000 plants spread among six different patches along a mile of stream. To grow that many plants, they need enough water to fill about 27 Olympic-size swimming pools. And that's just one site." Scientists estimate a single marijuana plant requires up to six gallons of water per day.

Officials working to restore the grow sites find large amounts of trash and toxic chemicals. "While there is no research to quantify how these chemicals are affecting the aquatic environment," said Darren Mierau, North Coast director for CalTrout, "the illegal marijuana cultivation sites are adding to the already serious issue. It's nearly impossible to track impacts from these illegal sites on native fish populations, but we are currently at 5 to 10 percent of historic population levels."

October 12, 2017 - The CA Department of Fish and Wildlife has confirmed the presence of the New Zealand mudsnails in Monterey County's Carmel River which was detected by the Monterey Peninsula Water Mgmt. District at multiple locations in the lower river, including near the Highway 1 crossing, the Valley Greens Drive bridge, and Mid Valley nearly 8 miles upstream from the mouth of the river at the Carmel River State Beach along the Pacific Ocean. No mudsnails were found in locations upriver from Red Rock to the base of Los Padres Dam.

Despite their small size, New Zealand mudsnails (<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Invasives/Species/NZmudsnail>) are a problematic aquatic species, sometimes by consuming up to half the food resources in a waterway. The snails have been linked to reduced populations of aquatic insects, including mayflies, stoneflies, caddisflies, chironomids and other insect groups upon which trout and steelhead populations depend. An informational flier on the

"clean, drain and dry" directive is available for download at <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=3866&inline>

BIG BEAR LAKE to Build Hatchery

Responding to a drop in CDFW-raised planter trout, the Big Bear Municipal Water District approved building a fish hatchery. The \$3.5 million hatchery will produce 150,000 pounds of rainbow trout per year, according to the district, and also house educational programs and projects devoted to rearing rare and endangered fish and host tours of the facility. "We plan to be making fish within a year," Mike Stephenson, the district's lake manager, told the *Los Angeles Times*. Big Bear is a popular lake and resort area in the San Bernardino Mountains.

SMALL TIDBIT – Trout Unlimited Teen Summit

This event is to encourage teens to lay their foundation for becoming a national youth ambassador for TU. A group of TU's rising leaders traveled from all over the country to attend this 5-day leadership event and this year 17 states were represented by 30 teens. The group canoed fabled trout waters; learned from local industry leader Scientific Anglers; built bank structures on the Au Sable to create cover for spawning trout; chatted with local legend and author Josh Greenberg of Gates Au Sable Lodge; listened to firsthand stories about TU heroes like Art Neumann and George Griffith from local grassroots leaders; and they ensured that there is indeed a bright future for TU. The Teen Summit is all about the youth voice where they work through issues together and talk about what impacts them most on their home waters. They brainstorm ideas and develop concrete plans that set the trajectory for the Young Leadership Council, or YLC. The YLC become ambassadors for TU among their peers and continue their work until the next year's Summit. This crucial step in TU's Headwaters Stream of Engagement builds the TU leaders of tomorrow. Visit www.tu.org/tomorrowfund to see how groups and individuals are making a difference by supporting TU's Headwaters Youth Program.

RATTLESNAKE SEASON - Is done for another year.

It will be a different situation at lower elevations as they start to go into hibernation in late October, but it always pays to be observant. For more information go to www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CWHR/Life-History-and-Range

CALTRANS REMINDER - The Lee Vining "Rock-fall Project is airlifting material inside large white bags to disperse over the hillside with growth covering so be prepared for a 20-25 minute wait period for each series of loads. The fencing and cables are at a standstill until stability is ensured and then the fencing and barricades will be removed. You can phone CalTrans for their airlift schedule but it probably not take more than a couple days, as today was the first day (October 26, 2017).

CALTRANS NEWS

Road work is in progress throughout Inyo and Mono Counties as they are making hay while the sun shines. Storms are not predicted for the next 7 to 9 days. Beautiful clear blue skies with a slight breeze.

RUSH CREEK SCE - go to the following link to see the work that was done on the dam. It appears they are using a fairly sophisticated drone to shoot such nice photos.

www.insideedison.com/stories/sces-dams-weather-a-near-record-snowmelt

CONWAY RANCH - The Board discussed the possible plans for using the ranch, but I was unable to get any information as to the status other than they are interested in grazing cattle on the ranch. I will contact the person most involved with this and report any significant news.

AT THE BENCH: Innovative fly tying products.

Dyed peacock herl has been around for some time but now it's in the UV arena and getting a lot of attention due to the fact that trout see it differently at certain water depths. I've used it in a few back country lakes without too much depth and notice only a slight change in the action as I'm sure it's fairly new to population in shallower waters. I'll be tying more X-Caddis with it this winter once my splits heal and I can hold a bobbin.

IN THE VISE: A bit tardy in getting together the results of the 5 patterns I have been testing as I had intended to provide for your tying pleasure this winter.

OCTOBER TYING TIPS - The majority of large bugs are done as the weather is too cold, so you'll have to refocus on midges, baetis and stonefly nymphs. Trout have seen everything you can tie and toss at them and as the season changes your tying should follow. Tying small is my suggestion as the weather has been great and the bugs and trout are still plentiful. The range to shoot for is 16 to 24; ok let's be realistic, a size 20 is about the smallest I tie and that will probably be easier on the eyes and your patience. Every wrap should count and not add bulk or extra material to the finished bug. The key is the tie-off the area at the eye or head, it should end proportionately so there is room for a head. Also, the remainder of the fly should have the ability to pulsate correctly when it hits the water. Try it out in the sink with a piece of leader and see how it moves. Don't give up, they are fast and easy to tie, just get a 20X magnifier, a floor lamp with a 200 watt bulb and you'll do just fine. Remember, you have all winter to tie up a few. Seriously, just relax, breathe and enjoy a Vodka Gimlet with Grey Goose and Rose's Lime Juice, it does wonders for your confidence.

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

ROCK CREEK LAKE - Stream flow has started to decrease greatly on the upper stream so try some very small dries along the edges where the brookies like to hang. Also look for slow water curves using a higher-visibility dry fly that sits low in the water, emerger type preferred. Reports are fairly good on the lake so haul out the tube and hit it for some nice size Desert Springs trout. This late in the season has been producing a lot of nice size fish that have been holding out most of the summer waiting for the perfect surface temperature which is going on NOW!

CROWLEY LAKE - Water is clear and temps on the bottom are fluctuating around 50 degrees mid-day. Algae are bad in some places. Lake is down about 2-3 feet. Fish are in pre-spawn mode so change flies often for better action. October regulations through November 15th are 2 fish only 18 inches total length using only artificial lures with barbless hooks. Some anglers are fishing the north arm and some are still fishing McGee. Everyday the bite is different due to the weather. The cold days are pretty slow, no hatch, with the warm days being really good. lot of fish are still out deep,

20+ft, but there are some fish in 7ft-15ft. lot of adolescent Browns(16"-18") are being caught along with the Rainbows as they are in pre-spawn mode. The strip bite should start picking up as the fish get more aggressive. The weather has been fairly nice for over 7 days and should hold for about 5 or 6 from what NOAA currently reported. Dries: Don't bother. Nymphs: All in size 18, BH Black Optimidge, Copper Tiger, Red Baron, Albino, and small Shaft emerger. Streamers: Punk perch olive, Hare's ear, and Damselfly. Check in with the Troutfitter/Troutfly in Mammoth before you hit the water, or a reliable source in Bishop for the best information. Crowley Lake Fish Camp is closed for the season. NOTE: The moving water on Crooked Creek BELOW 395 is ALWAYS closed to all fishing.

UPPER OWENS flow is at 49.1cfs above the confluence and water is clear above the confluence and dirty below. Conditions and hatches are fair. There are some fish taking caddis and hoppers on the surface above the confluence. I'm still seeing lots of hoppers. There is always a light breeze in the afternoons DRIES: Little elk hair caddis, Mercer's missing link caddis #16, EC Caddis Emerger #16, Stimulator #16. NYMPHS: #12-16 Bead Head Prince Nymph, #16-18 Pheasant Tail, Flashback Hares Ear #14-16, Red Copper John #12-14, Western Coachmen #12-16, San Juan Worms #12, Egg patterns any size, Zebra Midge #18, Copper Tiger Midge. STREAMERS: Double Bunny, Ruby Eye Leech, Goat Leech and Marabou Leech. 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 year around.

CONVICT LAKE "Ambush at the Lake" Derby started Sept. 4 and runs through Nov. There will be some nice prizes so hop over to their web-site and see if you can squeeze in one more trip to the Sierra before the season ends. The afternoons are probably doing better from around 11am until an hour before the sun leaves the canyon when the temperature changes. Flies that have been working beside the standard recommended are their Marvel Fly (has a tiny propeller), Prince nymph BH, Hares Ear, Copper Johns, Ants and black Beetles. Bring assorted sizes of all.

HOT CREEK flume is at 60.8cfs and water clarity is good and cold. Flows include water from the springs, not just the gauging station at the highway so this is what is really flowing through the canyon. Angler action has reduced and it's a whole "bunch of" fun and similar to the time before iPhone's. Caddis are still consistent when the afternoon temperature is a comfy degree for munching a tasty fat bug. Choose from the suggested bugs: Black BH Dock's Twin Lakes, Slump Busters Conehead double bunny white/olive, Dirty Hippy Rainbow. Nymphs: Drifting Little Weedy #18, Nitro Caddis \$14, Zebra Midge #20-22. Nori's Caddis Pupa Olive #16, fox's Caddis Poopah Olive #16-18. Dries: Olive Elk Hair Caddis #18, Brook's Hot Creek Caddis #18, and Parachute Caddis #18. You'll still have to clean a few flies, oh well!

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 - Fairly open due to lack of pressure so pick your time wisely and watch for any cruisers along

shallow sandy areas near shore. Water temp has fluctuated a bit with the occasional storm. Go-to flies: Doc's Twin Lake Special in olive or black #12 or 12, and Crystal Bugger in black or olive #10. Nymphs: Copper John #14, Prince Nymph #14, Zebra Midge #18, and Hare's Ear #14. Always check in at Rick's Sports Center for the best information on what to use and how.

SAN JOAQUIN – 14.3 as of 10/26 and hard to believe it was 676cfs in late June. You can plan your trip a little better with your own vehicle that can handle 2 tons of rods and flies. Water temp is a down and running clear but wait until the sun is on the water which is about 11am or after. Didn't fish it in the last 2 weeks, but it's typical fun this time of year you just have to look for better pockets, and go above the small Visitor building and look for the 2 sets of small falls, there is a nice pool above the top one. Afternoon temp holds fairly well until the sun starts it's daily decline over the ridge. You can use an indicator rig but surface "bugs are always more fun. Play around with some dries like Elk Hair Caddis 16-18, and Kauffman's stimulator #16. Nymphs: BH Copper John #16, Prince #16, Micro mayfly #16 and Flashback Hare's Ear #16.

JUNE LOOP - June Lake marina/Ramp and Big Rock Resort/Ramp plan on staying open through the last weekend of October. Fish dries late morning when lakes are calm and warmer with elk hair caddis, stimulators, Adams, flying ants, para-gnats and light Hoppers. As temps warm with a good chop go deeper to 20 feet with full sink or weighted line dragging streamers and buggers with a scud or hare's ear dropper. He also suggests work your roll casts so you're not limited by trees and bushes.

JUNE LAKE reported good action on Woolly Buggers with some fish in the 1.5 to 2lb range and a few larger. Surface action has been good if you know the water, stop in to see Jeremy or Knot at Ernie's, or talk to Abby at June Lake Marina. Try standard streamers and toss a midge near the "boats". Olive and black bugs have taken over the Sierra, so tie on your favorite and chuck it. Water temp has been a bit up and down so wait until the sun hits the water to provide that wonderful ripple.

GULL LAKE is still producing full limits and stringers with bows up to 6lbs since it has started to warm in the loop so your imagination and skill is your best weapon. Patterns to try are woollies in black/olive, Loberg's mallard and olive and even an Aggravator size 14, a great nymph. They will remain open through November 15th depending on the weather.

SILVER LAKE - Despite DFW stocking Silver Lake twice the week of the 11th, a stringer full of fish took some effort. A few guys struck it rich using float tubes tossing an Olive Matuka, a Rainbow Hornberg or a Green Woolly Bugger. They closed out their 100th year in business and the Jones family celebrated their 40th year at the resort.

RUSH CREEK: Flows are stable and afternoon temp will turn up more fish that are starting to migrate out of Grant Lake. Standard recommended Flies: Purple Prince Nymph #14-18, Red Copper John #14-18 and Woolly Buggers in black or olive sizes #10-16. Also try a San Juan worm with an egg pattern dropper. Check with Jeremy or Knot at Ernie's for their daily fly choice.

GRANT LAKE is really down. If you go, try the south shore or the inlet where Rush comes into the lake. Check with Ernie's for current info. There is a guide from the area that has all the tricks, it might be worth your time to stop in and talk to Knot or Jeremy at Ernie's and get on his list. His method is a bit different, but it still is great fun. Slow trolling for browns with a large ugly fly, mouse or even a flesh fly might get you into some nice fish! The marina and ramp are closed for the season.

LUNDY LAKE is releasing water over the spillway to continue the current level until they meet their water requirements, and allows shore anglers easier access around the lake. Work the area near the dam toward the inlet on the south west side of the lake with flash olive or black woolly buggers, Spruce Flies (light), Twin Lakes Special in darker muted colors like deep purple or burgundy. This is the perfect time to get your "Big" bugs on and try a bit of Spey action to get farther into the deeper water. DFW has stopped stocking for the season but there are still lots of nice fish waiting to tear up your flies. Warmer days might produce a few hatches since the lake sits at 7800 foot elevation and a few caddis might be hanging around so an Elk Hair Caddis #18 would be my first choice then an olive woolly bugger size 12 with a Prince nymph as a dropper.

BIG VIRGINIA has produced some really nice trout this summer thanks to the County Enhancement Program and the fish are holding deeper than expected most of the summer. The water temperature hit the "spot" and the trout hit anything that came their way. It was very stable in producing really nice size trout from Desert Springs. Flies that worked most of the summer were Hornberg's, olive woolly buggers, red throat Olive Matuka's, light spruce flies tied a bit more sparse than usual, seal buggers and Zug bugs, Stillwater nymphs and pheasant tails. Weather has been holding for over 8 days and looks good for another week or so.

LITTLE VIRGINIA water temperature cooled again due to the snow which put down the trout for a few days, but that changed and stabilized for the feeding trout. Today's hatch was a tent wing caddis and also huge spider trails have been coming off the trees for over 2 weeks, so try some small yellow or orange BH soft hackles size 16. Sierra Caddis #16, Hemmingway Caddis or a partridge and orange soft hackle. Hope your sinking or intermediate line is cleaned and ready for some great fall action starting at your local theater in the canyon. Backcountry fishing has slowed due to the cooler air, but I'm sure the reports will start to come in again now that rifle season is over. Most of my fishing will stay around Cooney and Blue which is still producing consistent Brook trout. Brook trout are spawning and return them to their redds (spawning beds) carefully so they can reproduce and there are some left for the future of our sport.

TRUMBULL LAKE - Remained stable and very consistent most of the summer when feeding conditions were agreeable to trout. Most people think there are no fish in the lake due to the amount of algae that accumulates from the lack of a heavy inlet and outlet, but this is actually opposite of the truth, but don't tell anyone. The lake has 3 types of trout and each has a resident population in addition to the wonderful stockers that DFW plants weekly. Give this lake a try next time you are in the area and come and see me as to the right

fly for the right conditions. The campground closed on the 7th of October due to the weather.

TWIN LAKES - The two lakes have been kicking out some nice fish with some hitting the 6 pound mark. The best success has been with Matukas, buggers, seal buggers, mini leeches, soft hackles, Zug bugs and prince nymphs.

EAST WALKER water temp is still in the mid to upper 50's and the water is dirty. There lots of algae. Flow is down to 134cfs and starting to liven up. Tossing streamers or nymphing have been the go to methods, so get your bugs down near the bottom and you'll see a better catch rate. The trout are everywhere but you just can't see them due to the dirty water. The Miracle Mile section is still fishing well. The fish that are being caught are mostly in the 12 to 18 inch range but there are some tipping the tape around 24 to 26 inches. Still now dry action to speak of. Patterns to try zuddlers, zonkers, double bunnies, sculpzillas, Simi seal leeches, seal buggers, silver streaks, rainbow warriors, copper johns, zebra midges and pheasant tails.

BRIDGEPORT RESERVOIR – The reservoir is still fishing very well with lots of nice rainbows being caught as well as a few browns. Fly anglers are stripping streamers like seal buggers, wooly buggers and simi seal leeches with a soft hackle or pheasant tail dropper. New owner Chase Pasley has boat rentals, along with RV camping and boat launching, and plans more improvements. Lake still has a lot of weeds making it a tuber's nightmare. Be sure and keep your flies clean. If you tube, try the usual streamers, leeches and perch patterns to see what's stirring. Check with Rick or Jim at Ken's for current patterns to try.

WEST WALKER flow currently is 67.3cfs, 50% less than a month ago even with the few storms that added water to the flow but- will continue to drop as fall eases out. Good reports on a fair amount of fish being caught in the Pickle Meadows area as well as the canyon section. The weather has warmed up again so fly anglers can go back to dry/dropper rigs with hoppers or stimulators on top and a prince nymph or pheasant tail underneath.

KIRMAN LAKE – Still no report according to Jim at Ken's and the change in weather may have improved the fishing, as fall has set in yet. If you go, try leech patterns like Simi seal leeches, seal buggers and mini leeches with soft hackle and AP emerger droppers. Anglers that have had the most success have been getting into a few fish, mostly cutthroat. Stocking of the 20,000 Brook trout and the 2,000 Lahontan Cutthroats were supposed to have happened in 2016 and still waiting for an update. If you fish it, please let Jim or Rick know how you did. We are all anxious to know what is going on up there.

PASSES / Road Closures due to storm activity may occur unexpectedly, so call CalTrans for current road updates at 1.800.427.7623 then punch in the highway number for all highways. Don't forget to be safe and MOVE OVER where possible.

See you on the water smokin' reels, CJ (17.10)