

EASTERN SIERRA FOCUS

By CJ Webb

CalTrans has had their “STAY ALERT DEER MIGRATION” on their overhead lighted signs since opening of Trout Season and want drivers to be aware that the Mule deer are STILL migrating to their summer grounds at lower elevations and crossing the roads. This seasonal event causes accidents and death, so please stay vigilant and watch out for deer browsing near or along the roadside.

Weather Conditions – Early July weather was great and continued with constant threats of thunderstorms, but to date nothing but red sky at night in the higher elevations. Rain hit Lee Vining Tuesday and Bridgeport Wednesday night. **THEN Thursday, the Virginia's were swallowed in a deluge for about 4 hours, woohoo!** Guessing that the added rain will add to the run-off with a lot of streams difficult to maneuver. There is still a lot of snow in the backcountry so it will most likely be a couple more weeks until it slows to safer conditions. Flows on streams still need to drop and it won't be long until they level off, probably in another couple weeks. The monsoonal moisture has returned to the eastern sierra. This week we can expect some afternoon thundershowers that will cool us down during the hottest part of the days. Most areas are fishing exceptionally well whether stillwater or moving water. Bug-Bugs, bugs and more bugs so get your best "stuff" ready and hit the great waters that hold the Mono County Trophy Trout.

Fishing Tip:

The first thing I always suggest to everyone when they arrive at any water, lake or stream, is take some time to scan the area and get a good sense of where fish are holding/feeding either by observing at lake-side or if necessary to gain elevation to see the lake's structure as to depth, channels, or obstructions. This is done to avoid wasting time in areas that do not hold fish. Trout tend to move around in high elevation lakes as they are the recipients of the best airborne food available and learning to watch the surface is mandatory in a lake. This is never a waste of time and you will become better at this if you do it enough. In streams it takes time to train your eyes to become proficient at spotting trout. They're experts at camouflage and often hold out of sight to avoid detection. It's impossible to spot every fish in a stream and the majority of us catch most of our fish blind casting, but it's the really smart trout, where getting a visual on them really pays off. Lastly, always scan the areas where you can clearly see the bottom first and this will eliminate a lot of “dead” water.

Legislative News – *CA Legislature is on a one month summer vacation and will resume August 12th; at that time all standing bills not resolved will be heard. Good news is that the “Bill” is not dead.*

AB1387 - *Assembly member Jim wood of Santa Rosa authored Assembly Bill 1387 that will transition California's calendar-based fishing license to one that is valid a full 365 days from the date of purchase. The bill, sponsored by the California Sportfishing League (CSL), is co-authored by Assembly member James Gallagher of Yuba City and a bipartisan group of 12 other legislators.*

CALIFORNIA DEPT. OF FISH AND WILDLIFE 2020 Proposed Fishing Regulations - UPDATE
<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Fishing/Inland/Trout-Plan/Regulation-Simplification>). No change.

Kern River Fish Hatchery Changes Focus

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) has announced that the Kern River Hatchery has reopened to the public with a new mission: To stop raising put-and-take stocker trout and to begin raising solely the Kern River rainbow trout and to re-stock the native fish throughout the Kern River Basin, high in the Sierra Nevada mountain range.

New facilities recently constructed at the Kern River Hatchery in Kernville are designed to breed rear and facilitate the planting of the Kern River rainbow trout, one of the 12 subspecies of trout native to California. The goal is to plant the native strain of trout instead of other domesticated strains of rainbow trout, which are the focus of the vast majority of fishermen in California.

“This program integrates genetic science, hatchery management techniques and common sense,” said Gerald Hatler, California Department of Fish and Wildlife regional fisheries program manager. “It is an innovative and exciting new project.” Unfortunately, it will not provide more angling opportunity for the majority of California anglers, but less opportunity.

The hatchery, located in Kernville, Kern County, is open daily to the public from 8am to 3pm.

CDFW ‘Buy a Stamp’ to help a Game Warden

Officials at the CDFW are urging anglers to contribute to a Warden Stamp Program that helps game wardens and the enforcement of fish-and-wildlife laws. According to the CDFW, purchase of the \$5 stamp will “procure vital equipment, protective gear, and training for wildlife officers and enhance the department’s K-9 Program.” Information on how to make a donation is available at: www.wildlife.ca.gov/wardenstamp

CALIFORNIA FISH AND GAME COMMISSION

The next meeting is August 7-8, 2019 for the California Fish and Game Commission. For their agenda go to:

70994&inline. Please refer to the agenda for important meeting information and deadlines. See ITEM 15 below.

15. Strategic planning

This agenda item will be held in a workshop format, where commissioners and members of the public will engage in dialogue about the Commission's strategic plan. The item will begin at 2:00 p.m. or 30 minutes after the last agenda item heard today, whichever is later.

- (A) Review adopted vision, mission, and core values
- (B) Discuss and make initial recommendations for potential goals
- (C) Discuss next steps in the planning process

CA Fish and Game Commission is seeking a talented and exceptional executive Director to take the helm of a high performing team to support and carry out the mission of the Commission. The deadline for applications is August 14, 2019 and interviews will be held in Sacramento on August 28, 2019. For more information and instructions on how to apply for this exciting opportunity, please see the recruitment flyer at <http://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=171096&inline>

Questions regarding the position should be directed to Program Manager David Thesell at (916)654-9903 or David.Thesell@fgc.ca.gov

Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Stocking

Updated trout releases will be on their web-site (<http://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FishPlants/>) or call their specific region (Inland Deserts 855.887.1275)

CDFW has an updated free downloadable app for

Freshwater Sport Fishing Regulations application at <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/regulations>. It tracks your current GPS location and will tell you the regulations of the water where you are standing and regulations for waters within a designated area or approximately a five-mile radius. Take a look, it's very handy.

TIDBIT'S – Dick Dahlgren - Eastern Sierra fly-fishing crusader, dies at 80.

He was one of the most iconic men of the last 45 years plus for supporting fly fishing in the Eastern Sierra. His contributions were many and known as the "father of year-round catch-and-release fishing in the Eastern Sierra and one of the pioneers in fly-fishing the region.

His many pursuits were the flows of Rush Creek vs. LADWP, two significant changes in Crowley Lake and the Upper Owens River drainage; Heenan Lakes' continual stocking of brook trout.

His life was based on protecting fishery resources for future generations and always felt that if no one knew of some places they would be easier to destroy. He also battled with cattle grazers so all the water wasn't diverted out of the little streams around Crowley in an

effort to protect the fry that has been naturally produced in those waters.

He fought against more geo-thermal plants near Hot Creek, fearing it would harm that amazing fishery or ruin the DFG's Hot Creek Fish Hatchery. He battled against ranchers who sought to block access from public fishing on several Sierra rivers. Dahlgren helped rescue trout when a cattle rancher turned off the water into an irrigation ditch, leaving trout that had collected there for over two years to die. He was a constant thorn in the DDFG's, U.S. Forest Service's, and LADWP's side if they did anything that might threaten one of his -- one of our -- fisheries. And he was great at sharing his enthusiasm and getting others involved. His large presence will be missed.

AT THE BENCH: New materials

Just Add H2O Polar Dub

Polar Dub, made from Just Add H2O's popular Polar Fiber, features a subtle UV flash. Similar to Senyo's Laser Dub, this new material can be used for wings, collars, dubbed bodies, and many other fly parts. Highly versatile, Polar Dub (\$2.99 per pack) is widely applicable for trout patterns, but also ideal for a variety of panfish, carp, and bass patterns, and even for bonefish flies. Choose out of 27 colors at www.rdflyfishing.com

Lively Leg Brushes

An ingenious compilation of Just Add H2O original synthetic fibers, micro rubber legs, and ultrathin steel wire, Lively Leg Brushes facilitate a whole range of possibilities in creating innovative and effective patterns with wiggly, buggy bodies. Baitfish streamers crab and shrimp patterns, Woolly Buggers and leeches, creative bass bugs, and a variety of other flies get a major facelift from these easy-to-use brushes, and the time required to tie on individual rubber legs is a thing of the past, simply palmer the brush along the hook shank and tie off. Each package (\$6.99) contains two 12-in-long strands; the streamer-style brush is available in 32- and 3-inch-diameter sizes, and the crustacean-style brush is available in 0.5- and 1-inch diameters. Each is available in 44 colors. Order direct at: www.rdflyfishing.com or at your favorite dealer as listed on the R Distribution website.

Barnyard genetics - Whiting 4B hen neck – ginger.

I associate Whiting with fine, sharp dry-fly cock capes, narrow bristling feathers – and plenty of them – and similar for Whiting hen capes: soft feathers, with finer and sharper fibers than, say, an Indian hen cape. Whiting capes are always in beautiful condition and a product of generations of selective breeding. This is all aimed at producing the idea dry fly hackle – with hen, obviously, as a by-product. Feather quality if excellent: no stress marks, no peck damage. I'd describe the color as medium ginger. It's nice that Whiting have included

more than the neck, given the type of feather and tying this is for, these body feathers are a perfect addition.

Fishing Report

LOWER OWENS - The flows are steady at 398cfs as of 7/26. Lows are still a little high, but if you can stand the heat and high flows you should have plenty of privacy. Most fish will be caught nymphing. There is some surface action in late mornings. Keep an eye out for Stonefly and Mayfly hatches around noon. Sort of a broken record but click on any stream report right now and you'll know what's happening here. Recommended DRIES: Griffith's Gnat #20, Extended Body BWO #20-22, Para Adams #18-20, Elk Hair Caddis #16-20, Parachute Caddis #16-18, Brooks Sprout Baetis #18-22, and Yellow and tan Stimulators #14-16. NYMPHS: Zebra Midge #18-20, Baetis B/H #18-20, Barr's Uncased Caddis #14-16, Tungsten Caddis #14-18, Birds Nest Olive or Natural #12-16, Stonefly nymphs - #14-16, Barr's Flashback BWO #18-22, Chamois caddis for the crane flies and #12-16 for the stoneflies. STREAMERS: Big and ugly, always. Pick your favorite large streamer and chuck it everywhere. You will catch fewer fish but there's a chance to catch much larger fish this way.

ROCK CREEK LAKE -

Some great action near the inlet and trophies also arrived this week. Try Woolly Buggers in Dark olive, Black or Burgundy size 8 even toss a purple in the mix. Also try caddis patterns, small stoneflies, moths and the balanced leech. Walk up the stream and see what's happening where the MOSQUITOES and every bug that knows the area resides. You'll be surprised once you walk the bushy areas and it will give you a better appreciation of what you've been missing.

UPPER OWENS – Current flow is 89cfs as of 7 26.

Fishing Conditions and Hatches: Good: Fishing has gotten a little tougher on the Upper Owens. The larger fish coming out of Crowley are spreading out and with all the fishing pressure they're getting a lot more selective. Tricos are hatching at first light with the spinner fall mid morning, PMD mayflies are hatching around noon, and the Caddis are out in the evenings. Hopper action is best when the wind blows. Fishing seems to shut down in the late afternoon, but picks up again around sunset. Recommended Flies: DRIES: Stimulator #16-18, Elk Hair Caddis #14-18 | Extended Body BWO #14-18, CDC Spring Hopper Tan or Yellow #10-16, Rubber Leg Parachute Hopper #10-16. NYMPHS: Hares Ear #14-18, Radiation Baetis #16-18, Barr's Uncased Caddis #14-16, Zebra Midge #16-18. STREAMERS: Shock Collar Leech #10, Woolly Bugger, Olive & Brown #12-10.

CROWLEY LAKE Fishing is about as good as it gets on Crowley, the only downside, as is common in July, the best fishing is localized in McGee Bay. Deep water midging will be most productive outside the weed beds in McGee Bay. Look for fish in 20 feet of water or more. Hilton had about a week of stardom but has slowed considerably. The damsel and Callibaetis emergence has picked up and the perch fry are almost eating size so the fish are going to start making it much harder to pin down their food of choice. There are fish showing inconsistently all around the lake so with a little exploring you might find the next hot spot and have it to yourself for a while. Recommended Flies: NYMPHS: Copper Zebra #16-18, Shaft Emerger #16-18, Albino Baron #16-18, Bubba's Callibaetis #14-16, Damsel Flies #12-16. STREAMERS: Marabou Leech Brown #12, Crystal Bugger Olive #12 Copper Clown, Albino Baron in grey or black. Also the larger blood midges have started showing up in the north end.

HOT CREEK - The flows are up to 110cfs as of 7/25. These flows are the flows at Mammoth Creek; Hot Creek flows out of the hatchery are constant. Water clarity is leveling off right now and the flow is dropping due to cooler night time temperatures so we might get a little relief. Really good action here on dry flies in the mornings and evenings. You will see fish rising all over the creek here and it is as good as it gets for dry fly fishing. Sizes range from 10" up to 22" currently. Go with small nymphs, midges, and worm patterns. PMD's, Caddis, midges, are coming off daily and the fish are all over them. Nymph it up with some SJ worms, SD Crawlers, gold and black head pheasant tails, and an assortment of midges for some good success! DRIES: Baby Boy Hopper #12-14, Parachute Extended Body BWO #16-18, Chernobyl Hopper #14-12, Spent Partridge Caddis #16-18, Stimulators #16-18. NYMPHS: Hares Pheasant #14-18, Barr's Uncased Caddis #14-20 | Juju Baetis #16-20, Zebra Midge #18-22, Mercer's Micro Stone #16-18. STREAMERS: BH Bopp Leech Olive & Brown #12-10, Woolly Bugger Olive & Brown #12-10.

CONVICT LAKE – Same report. Marvel wet flies are perfect for catching the big ones in the lake. The best way to use the fly is to thread your line through a 1 1/2 in. plastic bubble and a swivel large enough not to be pulled through the bubble. Attach a 5 to 6 ft. leader to the swivel using 4 to 6 lb. test line. Tie your fly to the leader and fill the bubble completely with water. Cast your fly out into the water. The bubble will sink about 3 inches per second. Reel the fly in slowly with a twitch from time to time. Strike any unusual pull or drag as fish sometimes bite softly. Marvel flies are available to purchase in the general store. This is a good method for that fly, but standard streamers should also work. The resort is also loading the lake up with nice trophies.

MAMMOTH LAKES BASIN – Water conditions, fishing conditions and hatches are all good. Stripping streamers and scuds is still productive. Also fishing dry dropper rigs will work this time of year. Most fish will be caught off the nymph; however, you may get a few takes on the surface. Callibaetis and Damsels are now emerging late morning especially on Twin Lakes; the Callibaetis Spinner fall coincides with the emergence so just another piece of the puzzle to figure out. With the new hatches start concentrating along the weed lines and drop-offs. Early and late fish midge dries in and around the weed beds.

DRIES: Stimulators #12-14, Yellow Sallies #12-14, Parachute Adams #16-18, Griffiths Gnat #20-24.

NYMPH: Red Copper John #14-16, Zebra Midge #16-18, Everson's Filo Swimming Scuds #14-16, Sierra Damsel #12, Janssen Emerging Callibaetis # 14-16.

STREAMERS: Docs Twin Lakes Special, Brown, Olive, & Black #10-12.

The Town has put a lot of money into trophy trout this summer so get up there if you can handle the crowd to toss a fly and pull out one of the Oregon beauties.

SAN JOAQUIN – Currently the river is running at 487cfs as of 7/26 and the shuttle is running unless you can get past the gate before 7:30am. Flows are getting lower, and starting to hear reports of improvement but nothing specific. If you decide to head down there I recommend the afternoon. We will start to see better conditions when flows drop. Water conditions are poor-fair, fishing conditions unknown due to heavy flow. If you go use nymphs on the bottom, or bottom rollers, Prince Nymph's weighted, or even a weighted Hare's Ear. You can call the **Visitor Center for current status at (760) 924-5500 for updates on the conditions.**

JUNE LOOP - Stop in at Ernie's for the latest info on all lakes. When you see fish feeding on the surface mostly in the mornings when it's calm roll with dries including gnats, mosquitoes and caddis. You'll get more hits in lakes anywhere when stripping in with the fly slightly submerged. As the day goes on switch to streamer and buggers deeper with sink line or add some split shot dragged and twitched along. Also try a bead head wet fly with a nymph dropper.

JUNE LAKE – Periodic plants of the Oregonians have been put in by Ernie's Tackle and Ski Shop's Trout Fund and the individual Marinas/Resorts.

SILVER LAKE - The fishing at Silver has been doing well even with run-off going into the lake. The cooler weather for the past couple days with rain has improved the catch rate in most of the loop.

GRANT LAKE - The Lake is full up and over the spillway. Best approach is by boat for better access.

When it's this full some of the shore fishing gets cut down in particular along the west or highway side. The east or back side is accessible via dirt roads. The bite should improve as the run-off slows and less food is being pushed into the lake via Rush Creek.

RUSH CREEK - Rush is still high and starting to slow down in some stretches. There are folks fishing it so you may be able to work some slower spots or try a jig hook fly or even a balanced leech. These new flies are getting a lot of attention.

LUNDY LAKE – Water level is rising but still no date as to when it will reach capacity. Check in with Bob Owens at the resort and get the latest fly info before you hit the water. This bug thing is crazy, and they are coming off consistently with terrestrials, ants, hoppers and small gnats. Check the water's edge and also the bushes for bugs and try your luck with some dries. Man cannot live on streamers alone. Bob still says most anglers hitting the water in boats are trolling large streamers. Stake out your area and be observant to what's fluttering around. You might even carry a small pair of "binos" to check out the bugs over the inlet.

VIRGINIA LAKES – Great weather so far to date with very little wind but managed to get 2 days of rain Thursday and Friday. A few breezy days put a nice riffle on the surface. The BFEF dumped some nice tagged fish this last week and they are still being caught. Also the County Trophy Trout program dumped a load in Big Virginia and Little Virginia on Tuesday the 23th; didn't get to see the fish as that's our early day and the birthday for one of our young Chinese students. The thermometer hit a high around the 18th thru the 21st with no prediction of moisture in the forecast but rain did hit both towns north and south and more on the way. Flies working at black, dark olive, white and dirty doc woolly buggers size 8 or 10. Olive Matuka's size 8, grey ghosts, callibaetis, black elk hair caddis, any moth pattern, Hale Bop leech in olive and a couple standard dries. Also try seal buggers, leech patterns, Matukas, and soft hackles.

LITTLE VIRGINIA is starting to see more surface action over the past week or so due to the cooler mornings, but since the am temps are around 52 degrees things have changed. It started to warm up then two days of rain drove every bug into the lakes giving the trout a huge buffet from above. Flies working have been my Dirty Doc #10, Prince Nymph #16, hare's ear (no weight) under an olive bugger or leech. A few large terrestrials are starting to appear, and beetles have hit the area hard along with ants and some small hoppers. Try and find a pattern with the belly the color of peacock herl. They are every where especially on our banister, thus the "banister beetle". Also, try black woolly buggers with and without a bead depending on the type line you're using. Only dry action has been on a black

gnat parachute and a black elk hair caddis. Still tossing Hornbergs and they are taking a lot of fish now that I've treated the upper section of the head and top of the wing with a bit more head cement.

BRIDGEPORT RESERVOIR – The fishing on the Reservoir has been a little up and down due to the water temperature, but a good heart strip and a tug should produce some nice fish, the surface temperatures are a bit high but there is still a lot of cold water coming into the reservoir from the rain today and snow melt. The fish are a little deeper than usual and more scattered. There has been some pretty good fly fishing lately and stripping leech patterns down near the dam has produced some nice browns this past week and there are some fly anglers doing well up in Buckeye Bay stillwater nymphing.

EAST WALKER – The flows on the East have been come down to about **337cfs as of 7/25**. The East has been lowered to about 333cfs this week. We've been getting some very good reports from the river lately, there are lots of anglers doing very well down there, both on the California and Nevada sides of the river. As usual one of the keys to success down there is to get your flies near the bottom where the fish are hanging out, add some weight to get them down and get a good dead drift and you should be able to hook up. Recommended Flies: Rainbow warrior, flashback emerger, silver streak, zebra midge, WD-40, buckskin caddis, z-wing caddis, deep sparkle pupa, San Juan worm, squirmy wormy, shock collar leech, slump buster, zuddler, sculpzilla, peanut, dead drift crayfish.

The gauge might be damaged as the visual gauge on the river shows a cfs that is 100-50 cfs different than the online flow rates. Whenever the water is high one of the keys to success is to get your flies down towards the bottom where the fish are hanging out, so don't be afraid to add some weight to your rig.

Recommended flies: DRIES: Baby Boy Hopper #12-16, Spent Partridge Caddis #14-16, and Panty Dropper Hopper #10-14. NYMPHS: Tungsten Psycho #16-14, Golden Bead Biot Epoxy Stone #8-10, Dead Drift Crayfish #8, BH Chiron Larva Blood #14, Worm-Annelid #16-18. STREAMERS: Meat Whistle, Sculpzilla

TWIN LAKES BRIDGEPORT

Fly anglers have been doing well from tubes or kayaks with Twin Lakes Specials, wooly buggers, Matukas, seal buggers, soft hackles and Zug bugs per JR at Ken's.

HONEYWELL POND – The clients we had on the pond this week were able to get into a dozen or more fish for a half day, fishing all dry hopper patterns! Seems there was good action on the surface for them this trip. The ranch staff has started the weed mowing operation for the summer to try to keep the weeds at bay. When you're

tubing around out there it's good to search out the areas that are not too weedy and focus on.

SCEIRINE RANCH - We didn't get much news from the pond this week though the damsels should still be hatching out there as well as some Callibaetis and various midges. Dodging the weeds and keeping your flies near the surface should produce some good fish for you out there. We haven't had any clients on the ranch this past week, like the California side the fishing can be difficult but could definitely be worth the trip!

KIRMAN LAKE – We didn't have any news from Kirman this week again, if we get any info we'll pass it along

WEST WALKER – The flow is 666cfs as of 7/25 and starting to get some decent reports from there. The water is still a bit high but if you search out the calmer stretches you should start catching some fish. We've had reports of some fish caught up to 4+ pounds lately. Fly anglers will likely do the best with wet flies like prince nymphs, soft hackles, pheasant tails, hare's ears and wooly buggers. The dry fly fishing will likely get better when the water flows get down to 300 cfs or so.

TRAFFIC ADVISORY from Caltrans:

Lane closure for the week of 7/22 – 7/26/19

Southbound Long Valley Thin Blanket Project – On US Highway 395, from 1.3 miles south of South Landing Road overcrossing on the junction of US Highway 395 & State Route 203, crews will be placing a new asphalt surface on the roadbed. Tuesday, July 23 from 9:00am to 10:00am, the SR 203 southbound on-ramp to US Highway 395 will be closed and a detour will be available.

Conway Guardrail Project – On US Highway 395, 6 miles south of Bridgeport to State Route 270, crews are reconstructing the guardrail system along this stretch of the highway. Traffic will encounter lane and shoulder closures with no anticipated delays. Monday through Thursday – 6:00 am to 8:00 pm, and Friday, from 6:00 am to 3:00 pm.

Aspen/Walker Shoulder Project – On US Highway 395, from the junction of State Route 108 to 2 miles north of State Route 108, construction crews are widening the highway. Traffic may encounter up to 30 minute delays as vehicles are piloted through the active work zone. Monday through Friday from 6:00 am to 4:00 pm.

See you on the water and keep 'em wet. CJ 19/7