

Eastern Sierra Focus

By CJ Webb

You've arrived at the stream and did your perquisite observation and there are not hatches. Now what? Don't panic; fishing between hatches is really simple. You need to try nymphs, attractors, and terrestrials until you find something that works. A streamer is a last resort. This method is not as burdensome as it sounds, and obviously you know something about rivers/streams you fish and what should be hatching at this time of year. Nymphs that work during a hatch will usually work before and after a hatch. When BWOs (blue winged olives) hatch, an RS-2 will also work. When trout see the occasional hatching caddis, Hare's Ear nymphs work well.

Anglers have a mind-set that when something has consistently worked well, they will use it to distraction even if the score is "O" and are as loyal to it beyond reason. Favorite flies are good but don't waste time trying to force-feed trout something they don't want. In my first 30 minutes on a stream or lake, I will probably change flies at least 5 or 6 times until I find something the trout will take. It could be the color, the size, the silhouette or even the smell that is turning them "off" to your choice. High water time in the spring dislodges a lot of food from the bottom, and San Juan worms and other large nymphs will always work well. June and July have good morning hatches, so attractor patterns are a good choice for the afternoons when you would rather fish dries. It's just the opposite in the fall when the flows are down try an RS-2 and quill midge and you'll be surprised at the results. No, this doesn't mean that streamers "stink", they work all summer and trout will chase them as their effectiveness is a well known fact. Ants and hoppers are abundant during the peak heat of the summer and your choices are huge, but I like to stay with woolly ants, and grey/tan hoppers that conform to the real thing, but some of the Chernobyl ants and colorful foam hoppers may just hit a big trout's fancy. Get use to being flexible, as it is always a surprise if a "hawg" hits something you would not normally use.

Weather Conditions

Eastern Sierra high-pressure system moved in after a brutal wind beating on the 19th, and temperatures returned to somewhat normal, but the remainder of the month has been unseasonably warm with some cooler evenings. Fishing in the backcountry has improved with the cooling at night and trout seem to be getting ready for winter rushing around filling their bellies for their long dry spell in order to sustain them.

Long range forecasts predicts a warm October at least until around the 15th to the 17th. It would be a blessing to get in a few more weeks of creature-comfort fishing in the upper elevations.

Lawsuit – Nothing to report.

The invasive New Zealand Mud Snail remains a problem and it is imperative that fishers-of-the-fly help thwart the spread by NOT WADING.

UPPER OWENS flow has been consistent at 102cfs and the water is warm so look for cooler channels with undercuts. No sightings of spawning browns, but it should start happening soon. Caddis and hopper patterns have been fairly consistent. When the cooler nights start the BWO's will show up. Try parachute Adams, and Caddis, and #16-20 Elk hair caddis. Nymphs doing well have been flashback pheasant tails, Prince nymphs, Hare's Ears, Zebra midges and #14 Western Coachman.

ROCK CREEK LAKE has been good, and fish are still taking black or olive Matukas, but some caddis action late in the day. Mosquito Flats have been hammered and the gluttonous mosquitoes are few and far between, but still around. In the slower water try flying ants and elk hair caddis and work Mack Lake for "the" brown.

CROWLEY LAKE algae is gone and the lake is fishable everywhere. DWP is still dropping the lake level which is 6 to 12 inches a day, and report that the lake will be taken down 4 feet lower than anytime in the last 25 years. Conditions are excellent for stripping perch imitations with dry or intermediate lines. Midging in 12 feet of water has turned up some nice size fish. Larger fish are reported in the North End and measuring in the 19 to 23 inch range. Check with local fly shops for patterns of the day if you plan a trip. Things change.

MAMMOTH LAKES BASIN – The basin has reports of fish feeding aggressively as the days shorten, dries, nymphs and streamers are taking their turn in bringing fish to net. Parachute Caddis, Stimulators, Adams, and plenty of flying ants.

HOT CREEK water conditions are good and flow is 23cfs. Caddis dries and emergers are hot right now, and hoppers will start to disappear as the evening temps drop. Some PMD and BWO are stirring up the mix. Constant afternoon breezes so be ready to adjust as conditions change. Try #18-20 Zebra midges or tiger midge, and #16-18 scuds dark olive. Try some big streamers like Doc's BH in black.

SAN JOAQUIN water level is dropping but hatches are continuous all day, and trout are still rising to dries, parachute Adams, Humpys, and stimulators. Copper Johns, BH pheasant tails, and hares ear flashback. Doc's Special in rust and olive are the hot colors around mid-day.

JUNE LOOP has been doing fairly well on a variety of rigs with Streamers with a dropper, small midges, and bird's nest. Also Twin Lake special in rust or olive. June and gull both did well using the same methods, except June depth was about 10 feet lower due to the water temperature. It's starting to cool, but should stay constant due to the warming that is ongoing.

LUNDY LAKE did fair to well most of the month near the inlet using any top water fly, streamers in brown/grizzly # 10 or 12, also the grey/grizzly did well. Breezy most afternoons with the occasional flat water, but the inlet still held the number one spot for the best action.

VIRGINIA LAKES did great for tubers using birds nest under an olive wooly bugger with a full sink line. Consistent patterns were Rust or olive Twin Lakes Special, black gnats, Griffith Gnats, and Rickard's AP emerger, Tuolumne Tamer and the naked caddis. I've been using dries and emergers just under the surface, and still popping about 8 or 9 fish in around 35 to 40 minutes just before the bats hit the water. DFF had a great outing and turned up the numbers of trout on Big Virginia as well as Little Virginia. A special Thank you for the fly and you know who you are.

GREEN CREEK (nothing new) has not been stocked this summer due to the logistics and I'll keep you updated if anything changes.

BRIDGEPORT REZ has algae and loads of weeds and channels to fish. Try streamers with a dropper near the weed lanes for browns and also near the dam. Pheasant tails under an indicator have taken fish, and black and gray zebra midges. Some damsel patterns have also been working.

EAST WALKER – Flow currently is at 123cfs (cubic foot per second) and the temperature is running in the low 60's. Stimulators, little yellow sallies, and extended body BWO's have been doing well along with a few caddis hatches. Nymphs working are Buckskin Caddis, PT size 20, hare's ears, and Fox's olive pupa size 18. Streamers that have been working are leech patterns, perch and zonkers. Please take extra time when releasing fish, this is a valuable resource.

WEST WALKER – Water is at 43cfs so look for flat water to fish using a one fly rig with flying ants, and hopper imitations. If no results, move and use a two-fly setup with any nymph as your trailer and a parachute Adams as your top fly.

SADDLEBAG LAKE has seen some good action around the north inlet and the dam area using streamers but the staple has been cone-head dark olive with a lot of flash...

See you on the water! CJ (10 9)