

Eastern Sierra Focus

By CJ Webb

Fishing tip with a bit of Fly Fishing Faire Mammoth Lakes

The 2nd annual Fly Fishing Faire at Mammoth Lakes went down on September 20 through the 22nd. It's put on by the Southwest Council of Fly Fishers as something more than a conclave but not as big as what you would call a show. There were more vendors this year along which taxed the available space at the venue of Cerro Coso College a bit but it was cozy and friendly with pros and volunteers presenting a wide range of programs to help further fly fishing skills and showcase the latest products. The attribute to this show is the friendly atmosphere, most everybody knows everybody and asking a question is all you have to do for someone to go out of there way to make you feel welcome and answer your query.

The attendance this year was some where over 400 folks mostly from down in the LA area but also some from the east side and bay area. There was three days worth of the faire at Cerro Coso with programs going on there with a broad range of topics. Boy Scout merit badges, casting, conservation workshops, fly tying, fishing techniques, rod building, and photography were the main core. Some programs were on offsite locations to like Hot Creek, the Owens, and Crowley Lake. The presenters were some of the best to be had dealing with locations and techniques that they love to guide. The fly tiers were world class and gave a great bunch of programs as well as demonstrations at the vice with the benefit of a show where a crowd is seldom a problem. While some would give the excuse that they would avoid Mammoth with all these folks in town for the faire; the faire itself is small and the opportunity to get to know fly fishing and the fly fishing industry is easy and not like a normal fly fishing show. Besides there is fishing!

For those that attended the dinner Saturday Night they were treated to as wonderful club fund raiser style of affair with Marshall Bisset as master of ceremonies with the main speaker Brian O'Keefe and Hutch Hutchinson from Orvis adding banter and style that can only come from fly fishing. Brian gave a slide show of his favorite fish from all over the world. The auctioning off of some rods from Sage and Orvis went well along with some other gear and stays at Hot Creek Ranch. It was warm and fuzzy and as the crowd broke up for the evening walking out into the first snow on the season. Sunday turned out to be a beautiful day despite the storm from the night before. The faire wrapped up with plans are for the 2014 3rd annual event September 14 through 17. The venue may change but the Southwest Council has the friendly theme worked out and invites all fly fishers to come be friendly as well. Thank you Lew Riffle for this report.

News: Smith River Fish Counter

"The Smith River has been important because of its strong run of steelhead and the considerable anglers that recreate there. The Smith has been designated a Salmon Stronghold—a protection and restoration priority given to the healthiest remaining ecosystems for wild Pacific salmon in North America. The Smith's Chinook and Coho salmon, steelhead, and cutthroat trout are fortunate to have committed support, including government agencies, tribes, individuals, and foundations that have worked cooperatively to advance it's conservation and protection", according to Jeff Bright.

The SRA's (Smith River Alliance) mission is to provide for the long-term restoration and protection of natural resources in the river's watershed.

The CA Department of Fish and Wildlife and SRA have partnered in the dual-frequency identification sonar (DIDSON) station at the county boat launch below the bridge at US Highway 101. This employs sonar to count anadromous fish and potentially could unlock the mysteries surrounding salmon and steelhead movement in fresh water. "It employs multibeam, high-definition imaging sonar to produce video like images of fish, typically within a range of 20 to 40 meters. The unit is generally positioned . . . to view a cross section of

the channel and fish are imaged and counted on a computer monitor as they pass through the sonar beams.

Zack Larson was instrumental in implementing the program and now heads an environmental consulting firm contracted by CDFW to operate the system.

DIDSON is a powerful research and management asset, but only if it's staffed and operating. As of late 2012, what was to be a three-year program with 24/7 staffing during Chinook and steelhead migration months had a funding snafu. Fortunately through the cooperative efforts of Larson, the Del Norte County Board of Supes, the SRA, and CDFW there is hope that funding will be secured to continue, at least for a while. If you're fishing the area and want to see it for yourself, visit the DIDSON station as an educational diversion, you won't regret it. For additional information and how you can help (www.smithriveralliance.org).

Weather:

September has been a mix from hot to cold in just days. Once the air cleared of smoke the wind arrived dropping the temp to a chilly 31 degrees. Aspens have been slow in changing and the color has not been impressive to date. They just turned gold with a few patches of rust along the Virginia Lakes road. This is not unusual after 2 dry winters and it's a slow start, but it could still be a spectacular fall color array.

Also, I've been watching the birds and the remaining 3 species of squirrels and their feeding patterns, the Pine Siskins are gone, but the white crown sparrow has arrived. This could be good news, or it could be bad, so it's something to file in my cranial cavity where the two remaining brain cells reside.

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 has improved. Upper stream is doing well on small dries even with skinny water. The County planted their usual end of the month Enhancement Program to boost the action. Flies working are black and gray dry patterns in the evening (small mosquitoes, Adams, black gnat, and their Rock Creek Special).

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 Brown 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 just as the air temperature sets the bugs to flight.

HOT CREEK flow is at 6cfs and the Flume is at 38cfs with clear weedy water but doing fair. As always, use a stealth approach and perfect your nymphing technique, it will be very very tough due to the conditions. Air temperature can sometimes be a factor in the canyon so use very small to minuscule flies. Bring midges and mayflies for the **early** evening 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 high and water to low for streamers. I would forgo this area to better water like the Upper Owens and give the fish a break.

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

CROWLEY water temp is finally down 61-62 and 62-63F in the north end and algae is almost gone but the weed line is still there. 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 as it covers the buoys. Fishing has been excellent. The fish are spread out in about 5-12 feet of water. Try bright red larvae patterns before 9am, perch patterns or red/black BH Optimidge with or without flash after then to Mickey's Copper

tiger early with bright red blood worms. Also, strip punk or perfection Perch smallest size in both colors of the Punk. NOTE: Due to previous high water temps and low oxygen fish that should NOT be taken out of the water even for a photo, cradle them in the net and 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 with recent storms. Great dry fly fishing with the recent DFW stocking near the shore early am and late evenings but mid-day has also come up on the scale in catching. Try everything, but tugging streamers when the air ruffles up the water should provide some good action. Dries: Parachute Adams, humpy's, callibaetis, humpy, fat Albert, CDC Baetis dun, hatch matcher, and Griffith Gnat. Nymphs: wd40, midges, western coachmen, AP emerger, birds nest, flashback/hares ear and callibaetis nymph. Streamers: purple crystal bugger, punk perch, Doc's Twin Lake specials, BH burgundy Carey bugger, seal bugger, Carey bugger and Canadian mohair bugger.

SAN JOAQUIN is low but the recent snowfall brought up the water level. Fishing below the "falls" will be your best shot but as there are some nice pools and you'll need to bring some small fluffy dries for the best action. If you wish to fish between the Gift Shop traveling north along the stream be sure and bring some small mosquitoes, para Adams, olive elk hair caddis flying ants, organza, yellow sallies, stimulators, and baby boy hoppers.

JUNE LAKE always fishes well at the west end of the lake toward the north corner away from the marina and along the north and south shore. Single or two fly rigs are both showing fair to good action, but change up if they don't produce. If no takes, lift your line or use a type II as the temperature is more comfortable for trout to feed in cooler water and recent storms have cooled the upper portion of most lakes. Standard streamers like woolly's brown, black and dark burgundy, Hornbergs, Light Spruce fly, leech patterns and damsels.

GULL LAKE is doing well near the reeds with damsel's, Rickard's Stillwater nymph, and burgundy woolies. Dries working are Humpy's, black fur ants and baby boy hoppers. Fish early and late for better action but also work the riffles with top water flies if nothing hits go to the center or bottom with some great action producers like Hornbergs, brown wooly buggers and spruce fly's, and rainbow Hornbergs.

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 Hornbergs, Matukas, Spruceabou's, and crystal leeches. Aspens are terrific and will peak soon.

LUNDY water is holding but the ponds in the back are very low. Be observant and look for buggy bushes and fish nearby with a similar "bug". Typical flies for this time of year for the front-water are Olive/black wooly buggers, the Pistol Pete in olive and grizzly along with chocolate woollies, and Hornbergs. Some dries are working on the south side near the inlet where the browns are feasting before they settle in for their long winter nap. I prefer to use large gnarly flies that you would use on the Madison River which will surprise you. Go to Blue Ribbon flies and look at their guide flies, this might give you a hint.

VIRGINIA LAKES DFW is stocking every other week now along with our IAG Alpers. Trout have been taken on wooly worms, olive and brown wooly buggers, callibaetis, olive guinea Hornberg and green eyed damsels. But the best evening entertainment has been with a grey hackle yellow. Day-tuggers have been using chocolate wooly buggers size 8. Try 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 dries they are more merrier than Santa on a ride after an "Effen" Vodka Collins. The cooler air and riffly water will continue to pump out these Monte Pytons on numerous unsundry flies. Always be prepared for the unusual and try different flies that you don't normally try on "frontcountry water", wait for the "bend" and see if you can get it to net. It's "spider trail" time so use a BH yellow soft hackle, or a dark orange no bead when the sun starts it's descent over the ridge. The next moon event will be the "Penumbral

Eclipse of the Moon" on October 18th. It will last about 30 minutes 45 seconds and should not affect fishing depending on what part of the planet you will be fishing and more than likely won't be visible **EAST WALKER** flow is at 37cfs and has been steadily low making it difficult to fish except for the holes. 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 rubber leg copper John, yellow Sally, Elk hair caddis, para Adams, para caddis, para kicking hopper, pearl butt trico spinner and extended body BWO. Nymphs to try and 2-bit hooker, micro mayfly, fox's poopah, prince, Best streamers are marabou leech, Matuka, meatwhistle, mini sculpin and crystal buggers. Remember should you catch the "fish of a lifetime" revive it slowly and take CARE, this river does not get restocked. Good photographs can produce a great replica of your prize.

BRIDGEPORT RESERVOIR is very low and fish are concentrated in the bathtub which is deeper. 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 lake for daily conditions and specific patterns that are working the best. They know the heartbeat of the area.

WEST WALKER flow is 32fs. Fish the first north curve just past the bridge as it has been a dry year for the high country and snakes are starting to retreat near their dens, but you can never be sure until the night temperature holds below 40 degrees. Also look for pools where trout will hold for safety and water that provides a consistent menu. Try some two-fly rigs with bushy indicators using a wd40, buckskin, Fox's poopah, pearl caddis, lightning bug and rubber leg copper johns.

See you on the water, CJ

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