

Eastern Sierra Focus

By CJ Webb

Fishing Tip:

Drought years are tough on fishing as the water levels drop the temperature rises making it difficult for fish to be comfortable in their feed zones (lies). Trout will react and not respond to the usual techniques dropping below the normal level of the fly that you are retrieving. Getting your pattern down to their depth is crucial as trout WILL NOT rise up from a chosen cruising depth to intercept your pattern. Constant refusals at 18-36" is that your pattern is too high above the trout and a few adjustments are needed: a weighted pattern; longer leader; a sinking line. The other reason is the fly is too bright. Most droppers are fairly dull as are the "bugs" that Trout prefer. Safety and comfort is the goal of all trout and choppy ruffled water has it's advantages due to their perception of comfort, otherwise they will stay deeper than normal. Fish seeking this will usually take the dropper at the right depth. Try a few different things with smaller flies and maybe save up some pennies and hire a half-day guide on Crowley Lake (no I'm not getting a commission); you'll be amazed at what you will learn. Sometimes getting away from your comfort zone will bring new rewards.

Fishing News and Updates:

Mono County's Board of Supervisors made a final decision on the Conservation Easement MOU for Eastern Sierra Land Trust on the 75 acres of the fish rearing portion of the Conway Ranch on the 21st of October. More details will be provided as they are released. I was unable to attend due to closing for the season.

DFW Fisheries Branch Chief Stafford Lehr urges anglers to enjoy California's outstanding trout fishing and to use good judgment to keep wild trout thriving. "Fish early and stop earlier during these continuing hot days ahead," Lehr said. Afternoon and evening water temperatures may be too warm to ensure the trout being released will survive the added stress of hooking, fighting and sustained exposure to the warmer water that builds up during hot days in summer and fall.

The 3rd Annual Southwest Council of International Federation of Fly Fishers held their Fly Fishing Faire the weekend of September 19th-21st without a hitch. The event was held once again at Cerro Coso College in Mammoth Lakes. Fly fishing clubs throughout Southern California got together to put on this event to promote fly fishing from every level--beginner to expert. There were about 400 or so attendees that got a look at a good selection of new gear from the dedicated vendors. Over the three days of the Faire, the usual beginner and introductory classes went on as well as a more advanced technique classes including such topics as shore fishing at Crowley, Tenkara on the water, Spey casting, fly tying and rod building. The fund raiser dinner Saturday night had local guides Kevin Peterson and Pat Jaeger as featured speakers giving everyone there a light hearted if not hilarious insight of guiding the east side with west side clients and their expectation and "how not to be that guy". Some folks got some steals on rods and reels in the auction and saw a Yeti ice chest get all the attention and high bids, go figure. The Faire this year was a great way to end the summer. Weather was pleasant and the opportunity to go off and fish for a few hours was easy. Lots of networking went on and friendships made that expand beyond clubs and region. There is nothing like being there with friends who love and enjoy fishing this place as much as you. (Report provided by Lew Riffle Santa Barbara Fly Fishers). Thank you Lew.

Weather – Rumors abound about Mother Nature smiling on us this winter with a normal amount of precipitation from January to March, but possibly warmer through December.

Also reported is the percentage of California that's in severe drought is 99.8. The loss of water weight from the draining of

aquifers has caused the earth's crust to rebound, raising the Sierra Nevada by half an inch.

A small front blew into the high-country on the 25th bringing much needed rain to the west side while crossing the crest and closing Sonora Pass, which will most likely reopen shortly. The wind will need to continue for a couple days in order to break-down any high pressure behind the current disturbance, unfortunately it didn't.

Fishing Report:

Remember to check the regulations prior to fishing unfamiliar water as to limits, size, and gear.

ROCK CREEK lake is still fishing well. Conditions and hatches have slowed down but still fairly active. Hike in to Long Lake and fish the inlet/outlet for great action. Resort is closed for the season but I'm sure you can find Jim King still there getting some extra work done while the weather holds. The stream is low and clear so stay away from the edge on the west side or fish the opposite side of the creek so you do not appear as a large predator. Dries working are Para-Adams #6-18, BWO (very thin body) #16-18, elk hair caddis #18, parachute kicking hoppers, Fat Albert and foam ants. Nymphs working: Crystal Hunchback Baetis #18-22, Tungsten Psycho midge #18-20, Split Wing-case BWO #16-20, Zebra midges #18-20, Pheasant Tails 18-22 and Hare's Ear #16-18.

HOT CREEK flow is at 13cfs and clear. Weeds are dying and opening up water to better drifts. Fishing conditions and hatches are good with mid-morning to late afternoon the best time to fish. Some mayflies and caddis are showing up in the afternoon over the weeds. Streamers are a "no go". Dries working are extended body blue winged olive (BWO)18-22, CDC Caddis 18-22, Hot Creek caddis 18-20, Parachute Caddis 18-20, Parachute Adams 16-20, and Elk Hair Caddis 16-20. Nymphs: Fox's Caddis Poopah in olive size 20, Nori's Caddis pupa olive #20, Anderson's Bird of Prey in Olive size #18, Buckskin Caddis #20, and Hogan's S&M Nymph size 20. Also try some Zebra midges 18-22, WD-40 18-22, Micro Mayfly 18-22 and grey Scuds size 16. **Please stay out of the water to help prevent the spread of New Zealand mud snails.**

CROWLEY LAKE has stopped dropping and sits at 6756 ft versus 6781 ft elevation at the spillway. The islands just outside the marina have finally popped out so be careful and go wide. Water temperature is 57° on the bottom uniformly around the lake. Water has zero algae and very clear, and weeds across the lake are holding fish. The trout have congregated in the Norm Arm and is wide open for big fish but they are moving on a daily basis. McGee Bay is fairly dead. Sandy Point has been producing off and on. Alligator Point in a strip that runs north and south in 15 to 17 ft has slowed but still excellent quality. Big Hilton has been consistent in 15 feet and about half way back into the bay on the north shore. The recently planted trout are everywhere. Move around so the "big boys" can get to your fly avoiding all the new meat. The bite has recently started around 9:30am to 10am. Flies to try are Red/black Optimidge or copper Tiger all day. Also try grey/black Optimidge #18 or Shaft's emerger midday. Get out the leech patterns and hang them under an indicator. Stripping has picked up for the tubers so try a stillwater hare's ear or trail a small PT behind a perch fry, Hornberg's, perfection perch and punk perch. Be sure and twitch it slowly the last 10-15 feet just like a midge or ascending Callibaetis

UPPER OWENS flows are at 48cfs above the Hot Creek Confluence (10/23), and clear above but off colored below. The section between the bridge and the fishing monument is now CLOSED to all fishing until next season. Bigger fish are on the move but it's crowded down low and holding all over not just in the deepest water so keep moving until you find a few fish. The water above the HC confluence is very clear and the fish can see you coming so fish way below and try not to cast a shadow with your

rod. Top water flies: EC Caddis 16-20, Elk Hair caddis 16-18, parachute Adams and Stimulators 14-18. Nymphs: Red Copper Johns 14-18, Prince nymph 14-18, Flashback Hare's Ear 14-18, flashback PT #16, Zebra Midges 18-20, Anderson's Bird of Prey olive #16, red San Juan Worms 12, Nori's Caddis Pupa Green, Western Coachmen #14 and black bead bird's nest #14. Streamers working are Perfection Perch, Punk Perch, Sculpin patterns, Meat Whistle, black and purple Wooly Buggers. Dries: EC Caddis 16-20, Elk Hair Caddis 16-18, Parachute Adams, and Stimulator 14-18.

CONVICT LAKE has been fishing very well and is getting ready for the Morrison's Bonus Cash Derby starting October 31st through November 2nd for a chance to win \$2000 in cash prizes. They will be stocking 12 tagged fish with corresponding values from \$50 to \$1000. Hit the water with these recommended flies: Adams, Female, Adams, EC Caddis, Elk Hair Caddis, Sierra Bright Dot, Royal Coachman and Hoppers. Streamers: Wooly Bugger (black, brown, olive, or green), Matukas (black, brown, olive, or green), Hornbergs, and Muddler Minnows. Nymphs: Prince Nymph, Flashback Pheasant Tail, Hare's Ear, Zebra Midge (red and black), Copper John (red with copper bead) and San Juan Worm (brown or red).

MAMMOTH BASIN - Water is clear and cool with temps in the high 30's to low 40's at night. Fish a full sink line and make sure you are getting it down there. Also try fishing under an indicator or try some dries late in the evening. Flies working are Griffith Gnat 16-22, Parachute Black Gnat size 16-18, small Stimulators and Yellow Humpy #16-18. Nymphs working are red Zebra midges 18-22, olive Bird's Nests 14-16, Pheasant Tails, Hare's Ear, and Callibaetis. Streamers working are olive and black Twin Lakes Specials 10-12, olive Wooly Buggers 10-12 and Flashabou Buggers in black.

SAN JOAQUIN - Water is clear and flows are very low (4cfs) which is the normal winter flow. This is an all year fishery but the road will close after the first significant snowstorm. Fishing conditions and hatches are poor. Again, look for pools as it is probably the only choice where fish will be holding. Dries to try are parachute Adams #14-16, Yellow humpy #14-16, Stimulator, Elk Hair Caddis, Chernobyl Mini all sizes 12-14, and Fat Albert size 14. Nymphs to try are chartreuse Copper John #14-16, Pheasant Tail #14-16, Prince Nymph #14-16, and Hogan's S&M nymph #14-16.

JUNE LAKE reports that fish are still hanging in deeper water and are working up towards the surface. Try some black or olive Matuka's, rainbow Hornberg's, Loeberg's and a few Punk Perch for some action. The weather is slated to be cooler. You'll be hard pressed to get dries to work unless the temperature goes up by 10 degrees or more. Nymphs working are Prince, Zebra, Copper John, Flashback Pheasant Tail and red or brown San Juan Worm. Try your own personal favorites, as it's that time of year and weather predicts it all.

GULL LAKE - Fish the weeds and watch for rises otherwise fish sub-surface. Terrestrials and anything that comes off the bushes and weeds will get hits. Damsels, Dragonflies, ants and hoppers should show good results.

SILVER LAKE - Has been producing better on streamers in Black or Green, Matuka's, rainbow Hornbergs and a grey ghost. Give them all a shot.. Fall colors are always spectacular throughout the loop but after this blast of wind the aspens will be bare.

RUSH CREEK flows above Grant Lake are up at 30fs and 39cfs below as of 9/21. Fishing conditions and hatches are fair. Try an Elk Hair Caddis #14-18 or Stimulator 14-18. Nymphs: Copper Johns 14-18, Prince nymphs 14-18, Micro Mayfly 16-20, Micro Stone 10-16, Zebra Midge 18-20, PT 14-20, Tan Bird of Prey and Hare's Ear 14-19. Streamers working are BH Carey Bugger, wounded Sculpin, Crystal Bugger, Rickard's Emerging Bugger, Matuka, and BH Pop's Bugger.

GRANT LAKE - Water is still cold and clear, and down from last month but with good reports on fishing. DFW reported stocking this past week and fishing has been fair to good throughout the month and if you want a current report check with the Marina or Ernie's Tackle in the Village. The Marina might be closed already.

LUNDY LAKE - The lake is down but it won't affect the fishing so stay around the inlet or outlet and work the south shore doubling back each time you fish east and repeat it.

VIRGINIA LAKES - DFW stocked 1000 pounds of catchable Rainbows in the drainage which should make ice fishing a fun event if you enjoy dunking worms this coming spring or you can toss that tube into the truck and head to Big Virginia for some fun action before it turns to ice. Best fly for the last couple weeks is still the "Dirty Doc" size 12, it's a real catcher and everyone is having fun. Also try the Virginia Lakes Special, over a copper head red Zebra Midge, Hare's Ear or Zug Bugs depending on the air temperature. Dries are working around 1-3 pm if there's a good ripple and air temp is warm, so try a Griffith's Gnat, black caddis or EC Caddis emerger size 16 or my X-Caddis. Nice Caddis hatch for the last few days prior to the wind on Thursday over by the inlet, lots of fun.

EAST WALKER flow as of this writing was 20cfs and fishing is better below the bridge and into Nevada. The wind has made it hard to fish unless you can get behind a curve. The nights are colder and days are fairly nice. If you feel you need to fish here, remember the water is very low and if you hook into something substantial take care in releasing and protect the resource. Ken's usually suggests some the following to try (Zuddlers, JJ special, Chubby Chernobyl, Fat Albert, Madam x, stimulator, flashback emerger, San Juan worm, Zebra midge, Rainbow Warrior, silver streak, and Miracle Nymph) but be sure and call Ken's at 932.7707 and get the latest report, things change rapidly with low water.

BRIDGEPORT RESERVOIR is very low and the deeper water is the only spot for hooking up. Try Callibaetis by the inlets and Zebra Midges, Shaft Emerger, No Name damsel #12, olive Bird's Nest, Jensen's Callibaetis, and Rickards AP Emerger 12-16, and BH Sparkle Ex-leech 10-12. Streamers working are Hornbergs #6-10, Twin Lakes special size 12, Matuka's 10-12, olive and brown Buggers, Hale Bopp Leech 10-12, and Punk Perch 10-14. Don't forget to call Ken's and talk to Rick or Jim for the best flies for the day, as conditions and water change constantly and they will put you onto the right fly and method.

WEST WALKER flow is 20cfs. Water is low and very clear. My recommendation is look for pools that might be holding fish. Bring an assortment of flies for warm and cool air temperatures. Try olive Wooly Buggers with a good strip. It had been warmer but has cooled off so bring some foam attractors over Bird's Nest, Pheasant Tail or San Juan Worms. It usually fishes well but check with the locals to see if you'll be wasting your time. See you on the water! CJ 14.10