

# Eastern Sierra Focus

By CJ Webb

## **Watch for Deer Migration - STAY ALERT!**

*Opening Weekend April 25, 2015*

*It seems as though this has been the longest summer on record, starting April 2012! The mildest winter since 1977 produced only 6 snow-storms with two horrific wind-storms and the 2nd worst drought since 1977. March spoiled us with mild temperatures and garden-planting fever, then early April produced a couple snow storms and disappointed my Daffy's, but they survived. Mid April warmed up giving everyone a false sense of security that opening weekend would be warm and spring like. But another storm spanked the Sierra with 8 inches of snow in the wee hours of the morning of the 25th, covering the dark areas of thin ice on Big Virginia. Fortunately the ice had pulled away from shore enough to discourage the bravest ice fishermen. The winds kept most of the anglers away or inside enjoying their favorite sports. Eastern Sierra weather is always unpredictable, and Mother Nature never fails to constantly remind us she is in control!*

### **News -**

The latest legislation and the first hearing for the Sport-fishing Stimulus Act of 2015 (SB 345; Berryhill, R-Twain Harte), is set for Tuesday April 28th in Sacramento.

It is believed that fishing's economic impact is threatened by an unprecedented decline in participation that is due, in part, to one of the costliest annual fishing licenses in the nation not being valid for a full year from the date of purchase according to Marko Mlikotin, Executive Director for the California Sport-fishing League (CSL). He also states that "California needs to abandon its existing licenses program and remove barriers to participation by making recreational fishing more affordable. In doing so, jobs will be created and communities will grow stronger."

DFW reports 2015 stocking will be down by 40% due to budgetary problems within the department through the legislature. As previously reported, the size of trout to be stocked this summer were has changed to 2 to a pound instead of the original 4 to a pound. Stocking will probably be done every other week but that could also change. The normal trout production year was 4 million pounds of trout, and 2014 saw 3.28 million pounds, and 2015 will see 1.6 million pounds meaning many waters may not get planted but if they do, they will be drastically cut from prior years. Stafford Lehr, Chief of Fisheries stated they need to "find" \$2 million that could be allocated to the hundreds of thousands of fishermen in California that buy licenses. But obviously, "someone" in the Department doesn't see that as important.

All Mono County waters were heavily stocked prior to the trout opener by DWF and Desert Springs out of southern Oregon.

CalTrans will be working on US395 along Mono Lake starting May 4th to improve safety for the traveling public by minimizing rocks falling from the steep adjacent slopes. The project also includes a plant establishment program on the six slopes involved to reduce erosion, establish healthy

soil, and promote successful revegetation. Be prepared for daily lane closures with delays no longer than 20 minutes Monday thru Thursday from 5am to 8pm and Fridays 6am to 3pm with flaggers and a pilot car. But starting May 12th, there could be one hour delays but notices will be posted when the dates are determined.

My annual scouting was good but lake testing was minimal due to rotator cuff surgery and looking forward to using a rod in mid May when the shoulder has a lot more strength.

Remember to check the regulations prior to fishing unfamiliar water concerning limits, size, and other restrictions.

**ROCK CREEK LAKE** is ice free, but no report on angler success. Mosquito flats road is plowed to parking area. Resort scheduled to open by Memorial weekend. Creek flow has been around 32cfs as of the 24th.

**CROWLEY** water level is rising faster now with present elevation of the lake at 6763.7 ft. versus 6781 at the spillway. Because of the excellent food source in the 5280-acre reservoir, the hatches have been good so expect fish to be larger on the average and in the feeding mode. A lot of these fish are from previous years or are wild fish produced in Crowley's tributary waters. Fish are spread out but decent in most areas with higher water temps. The fish are also at various depths, 25 ft of water suspended at 16 ft at Stormy Flats so adjust to fit the depth. Watch for a second Crowley Cam at the Fish Camp boat ramp soon with streaming video.

**UPPER OWENS** is poor and the water cleared some and now back to normal. Try some large flashy patterns. Dries working are Parachute Adams, Stimulator #16, Elk Hair Caddis #16-18, and Brook's Hot Creek Caddis #18. Nymphs: Zebra midge #18-20, red copper John, #14-18, Prince nymph #14-18, red San Juan worm #12, flashback hares ear #14-18, flashback pheasant tail #16, Black Bead Bird's nest #14, Nitro Caddis #14, and Nori's Caddis Pupa Green #16-1. Streamers: Perfection Perch, Punk Perch, Sculpin Patterns, Meat Whistle, black and purple Woolly Buggers.

**CONVICT LAKE** was heavily stocked and reports were good but mostly on bait. Trophy trout were stocked for their Derby, with good reports. Try the inlet and outlets and keep your line tight should a "Desert Springs Beauty" cruise the area. Try some Woolly Buggers in black, olive or purple and if you have any with rubber legs, tie 'em on and be prepared. It's been a long dry winter and they are easily entertained. Use just enough line to drift by their nose BUT don't overcast.

**HOT CREEK** flume is at 18cfs and water is clear, but will produce when the temps are at their peak. Knowing how to throw a good drift to get into fish is essential. Some caddis in the afternoons with baetis in the am but not a lot of rises and this always changes as the weather warms up. Trout are mostly taking small mayflies with good numbers just no size. Dries: Parachute Adams size 20, Extended body blue winged olive 20-22 and Griffith's Gnats. Nymphs taking fish are WD-40 #20-22 Grey RS2 emergers, #18-20, Tungsten Psycho 18-20, olive Micro-mayflies #18, Zebra Midge 20-22, and Frostbite Midge 20-22. Streamers - no go.

**MAMMOTH BASIN** road crew cleared the basin and all lakes are thawed. Basin was stocked by DFW for the opener and they will be getting 15,000 pounds in the Lakes Basin by the Town this summer.

**SAN JOAQUIN** flow is low at 52cfs with normal around 200cfs. Road to Agnew Meadows, Devils Postpile, Rainbow Falls and Reds Meadow is projected to open by May 19th.

**JUNE LAKE** loop has been open since March 14th. The June Lake cage culture program did not raise fish this past winter but it is still holding Kamloop Rainbows for DFW due to water issues at Junction Reservoir. Wind also pummeled the loop and not many boats attempted the conditions. Reports were dark streamers using quick action near weedy areas by the west end of the lake (as

always) also near the south shore. There are a lot of deer moving into the area, so stay alert and avoid wrecking your trip.

**GULL LAKE** iced out in early March and was stocked for the opener. Gary put in some really nice trophies for the opener so bring your best streamers, buggers and a dropper near the reeds. Check in at the shop and see what's hot.

**SILVER LAKE** also iced out mid March and was stocked last Monday by DFW and 400 pounds of large rainbows from Desert Springs of Oregon averaging 5 pounds. Fishing was good overall according to non-fly anglers. My choice would be to hit the smaller areas of the inlet and outlet for browns cruising for larger morsels to whet their appetites. Lake is only about 11" down.

**RUSH CREEK:** Flows above Grant Lake are up to 60cfs and 33cfs below. No report on fly action.

**GRANT LAKE** is extremely low and anticipating some run-off, but there's still a lot of water to fish, try the south shore (drive) or the inlet (park and walk) for trophy's cruising for smaller fish. Check with Ernie's or the Grant Lake Marina for current info.

**LUNDY LAKE** is ice free and down due to low snow pack and the road is open all the way to the back-canyon restroom. The lake has come up one foot similar to 2014 and Edison is letting the lake rise to meet water requirements for the area. The resort will open around mid June from the latest report. You can hit the ponds for some great dry fly action or the inlet on the mountain side of the resort. These are always a good option to blow-out conditions but it is muddy. DFW didn't plant due to the possibility of the truck getting stuck and no one around to assist.

**VIRGINIA LAKES ROAD** has been open all winter to Rand Road due to the lack of snow. The County plowed and cleared the parking area at Big Virginia on the 17th.

**BIG VIRGINIA** has a lot of water showing at the outlet and 10-14 feet of water along the entire east shore with more at the inlet and the entire lake is dark. The ice will break down fast due to the warm weather of March and early April. It's the density of the ice, not the thickness. No one was on the ice for the opener. Smart!

**LITTLE VIRGINIA** thawed on the April 11th. Weather was cloudy and cool most of the week prior to the opener with night temperatures between the high 20's to low 30's. Only a few braved the conditions early morning, but a few tubers hit the water late Saturday afternoon and two anglers reported 30 fish C&R but they didn't want to say what they used. The bugs out (very small and dark), were definitely midges but possibly a hungry mosquito on the hunt. Sunday saw about 15-18 anglers on and off all day, with about 9 tubers mostly using flies but not a lot of success until late afternoon.

**TRUMBLE LAKE** has been ice free since April 9th and snow around the lake was gone until the storm early am on the 25th. A few small snow patches remain throughout the campground. No one fished it on opening day due to the weather. Saw a couple hatches earlier in the week and trout were rising so small dries would have been my choice, small black midges, Griffith's Gnat, green body mosquito size 18 or even a parachute Adams size 18. A few anglers showed on Sunday but not much luck even on bait.

**EAST WALKER** flow continues to hover around 20cfs with good reports of high count fish days. I managed to scout the area and found a bounty of bugs before the cold snap. Reports say some really nice fish up to 24" were landed on both the CA and NV sides of the river. Best spot is below the bridge on the CA side. Don't give up on the Miracle Mile it can be unpredictable and productive as well. Low clear water is the current norm so fish are skittish; tread softly to avoid spooking them prior to tossing a fly. Try woolly buggers, double bunnies, flashback emerger, WD-40, white Zebra midge, Rainbow Warrior, Micro-mayflies, stimulators, rubber leg stimulator and Chubby Chernobyl.

**BRIDGEPORT RESERVOIR** and the feeder creeks are very low but fairly clear. Lake has been stocked and DFW bows were ready for some action. Also, an unexpected load of catchable browns appeared out of nowhere. The Rez fished fairly well from boats and shore but mostly on bait. Conditions will improve after the

low-pressure moves out. Tube the drop-offs with Hornbergs, leeches and perch patterns. Also try Callibaetis nymphs, broken back midges, and flashback pheasant tails for good action. The Rez will fish well early in the season and hopefully get more water from run-off depending on what comes out of the canyons into the confluence. There is a small boat launch/courtesy dock near the dam that will get you on the water. Check with Jeff at the marina for flies, boat rentals and current fishing info.

**WEST WALKER** flow is 160cfs but it's early, it will get higher as the temps increase this week. Look for great action the entire length of the "West" into town. DFW stocked some nice fish, but no report if North County Chamber put in some Desert Springs fatties, but I'm sure they did. Flows have been a bit inconsistent but without the huge run-off numbers as in the past. The town will also be hosting two big Derby's this summer. Check their website for details (Northern Mono County Chamber of Commerce). No report due to weather.

**KIRMAN LAKE** - Reports from yesterday that the weather was nasty and anglers that fished were soaked and frozen with only a few caught on streamers. The weather is going to be great for the next week, so probably try Seal Buggers, Matukas or Mini Leeches with an AP emerger or soft hackle dropper.

**TIOGA PASS** ~ is still currently closed from Crane Flat to the Mono County line on the pass. The Mono County side has been cleared to the pass but currently closed due to recent storm.

Saddlebag, Tioga and Ellery all remain frozen and/or inaccessible.

**Please note:** Tioga Pass will be undergoing a resurfacing project that is in progress from Crane Flat to White Wolf and is scheduled to conclude in November 2015. Once the road opens for the season, expect 15-60 minute delays depending on the time of day. Work will be 24 hours a day beginning Sunday at 11pm through Friday at 4:30pm. Big Oak Flat road tunnels will also have delays. Check their website for specific times. If you can't locate it email me at (vlresort@wildblue.net) and I'll send you the schedule.

**SONORA PASS** - Opened April 17th (subject to storm closure) and closed currently due to storm but will reopen tomorrow.

**MONITOR PASS** opened on March 7th (subject to storm closure) but has been closed off and on for storms may reopen in 2 days.

See you on the water, CJ

(15.4)