

Eastern Sierra Focus

By CJ Webb

How trout feed is the most important aspects of fishing that a fly tier and fly fisher should be very aware of. Sight and sound are the largest part of how trout detect their food. They can be aroused by noisy food or lures as the sounds of aquatic food or other feeding trout often trigger them into feeding. They rely on their sense of smell to confirm if an object is edible, as all natural foods emit amounts of odor, dead, alive or artificial; this odor can be identified. Unique scents can be picked up from panic stricken minnows, injured live foods, insects and crustaceans going through skin changes and even freshly laid eggs.

It is well known that all salmonids are put off by human scent or organic chemical odors that are foreign to their environment. Head cement on a new fly, varnish, paint, dyes, as well as human lotions and glued fingers will make trout turn away from your offering.

It is always wise for any fly tier/angler to wash their hands to remove unnatural odors. I've always told fly anglers that I step on my flies and give them a squish, but I never have mentioned why. Dirt has a tendency to slightly distort the new fly not only visually but adding a natural odor. Some tiers rub their flies with the bottom of a rock or a piece of vegetation from the lake or stream they are fishing not just to mask the odor but to help the fly sink.

Trout also have a mouth sensitivity as they strike, and close down on their food. Trout seem to hold a fly longer if it is made with soft tying materials and not hard plastic or enamel "stuff". Imagine a baby's first taste of carrots after applesauce, "pitui". The only exception I have found is the poxyback Callibaetis, but then it's only on a small portion of the top of the fly, and when it's on, it's a killer pattern.

Weather:

Eastern Sierra got blasted on the 17th of October with about 4 hours of rain with snow above 9300' elevation. Much needed precipitation but if the temps go up it will not add to the snow pack that is needed for 2015-2016 winter. Late Tuesday (27th) into Wednesday a Pacific trough splits with the main portion moving thru NORCAL and PACNW and the weaker portion moving thru Central CA. However right now, its orientation leaves most of the precipitation to our north, with a slight chance of precipitation in the Sierra. Wednesday, snow amounts look to be about 2 – 4 inches above 8,000 feet, particularly from Yosemite north. This has been a tricky forecast as models have been all over the place.

News:

2015 Fly Fishing Faire -

Bishop Tri-County Fairgrounds October 16-18

The 4th Annual Fly Fishing Faire put on by the Southwest Council Federation of Fly Fishers (SWC) was a month later this year and at the Bishop Fair Grounds instead of at Mammoth Lakes. Cerro Coso College and the SWC just out grew each other and it was time to find a new venue. The Bishop Fair Grounds and the Town of Bishop responded well to the needs and for those who organized the Faire this year were very positive that this was a good move and plan to have the Faire again next year in mid October in Bishop.

The Faire this year saw close to 500 attendants which has been the norm for the past years. The flooding and road closures to the south on I5 and the 58 on Thursday and Friday took their toll providing a challenge on travel plans especially out of the central valley.

The Bishop Fair grounds have lots of parking with a large hall which was capable of having a central casting area surrounded by vendor and exhibitor booths as well as a fly tying isle all under one roof - it looked great and more like a fly fishing show for sure. All the seminars and classes were again offered; from beginning and introductory levels to more advanced techniques and knowledge.

Friday afternoon and evening there was a Golden Trout Reception held which had on hand all the folks from the past to the present that have and continue to work on keeping our state fish protected. Phil Pister, Dan Christiansen, and Christy McGuire all retired iconic DFG biologists were on hand to give accounts of the long process that transpired to create the Golden Trout wilderness starting in the mid 60's. Lisa Sims of the Inyo Forest was on hand as well to explain the management going on and future planning from the Forest Service. There is always time and need to stop and reflect on conservation efforts and what a great opportunity and time this was to bring kindred together minds and grow the passion for the golden trout and the beautiful places they live.

Some Boy Scouts were on hand this year to get their fly casting and tying merit badges. There was a Casting Instructor exam on Sunday for those attempting to get their CI rating to help out others to learn and expand their casting skills. The Faire Dinner Saturday night maxed out at the Elks Lodge with the raffle and auction raising thousands of dollars for the SWC. Hutch from Orvis was on hand to inform us on how to handle traffic stops with a car full of the latest Orvis fly rods by suggestions for updating the officer's rod collection.

In short the Faire has found a new home and room to grow. The challenge of moving the venue was worth the effort. Everyone who walked into the hall all had a smile on their faces gazing down the way with fly lines looping and folks poking about in the many vendor booths. It will get better simply because this is a better venue all the way around for the vision of why to have such an event. Don't forget to put this on the list for the fall of 2016. Report written by Lew Riffle of Santa Barbara Fly Fishers.

CDFW

Last week, the Bureau of Land Management and California Department of Fish and Wildlife signed a conservation agreement that provides new tools to help manage impacts to wildlife and their habitats in California.

The agreement, known as the Durability Agreement, recognizes that BLM-managed lands play an important role in conserving sensitive species and their habitats. The cornerstone to the agreement is the ability for the CDFW to utilize BLM-managed conservation lands for a variety of conservation actions and under certain circumstances for project mitigation.

"Through this agreement, our agencies are committing to using all tools at our disposal to conserve wildlife and habitat in California," said BLM California Deputy State Director for Resources Tom Pogacnik.

The agreement applies to projects that cannot avoid or minimize all impacts to wildlife, which, according to the two agencies, are typically required to compensate for the remaining impacts. The tools outlined in the agreement may be applied in a variety of ways, including establishing wildlife connectivity, conserving habitat under future climate conditions and offsetting project impacts.

"The 15 million acres of BLM-managed lands in California are critically important for sensitive species," said CDFW Chief Deputy Director Kevin Hunting. "This agreement will accelerate conservation efforts statewide and at the same time address threats and stressors in a targeted way."

The two agencies developed this agreement while working together on the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan, a renewable energy and conservation plan covering 22.5 million acres of land in the California desert. However, the tools and process described in the agreement are appropriate for publicly managed lands statewide.

Copies of the Durability Agreement are available at www.drecp.org.

DFW Quarantined Shasta County Hatchery to Reopen

Darrah Springs Hatchery was partially released from quarantine on Oct. 9 after being in quarantine since May because of whirling disease. Extensive DNA testing of the fish by a commercial sciences lab have determined that all the trout in the hatchery building and the lower rearing ponds are free of the disease and the hatchery is resuming normal operations for that portion of the facility. "We were able to save thousands of fish by isolating them from the disease and will be able to grow and plant them into state waters very soon," said Linda Radford, CDFW Regional Hatchery Supervisor. "Unfortunately part of the hatchery is still infected and we will have to destroy some fish."

The upper part of the hatchery is still infected with the disease; and approximately 160,000 fish will be euthanized, recycled and used for pet food and other purposes. The infected areas will be dried up and not utilized until the water supply can be either disinfected through a water treatment system or pathology testing verifies that the water supply no longer is infected. The disposal of infected hatchery-raised trout is a necessary precaution to prevent the spread of the disease to non-infected state waters where the fish would normally be planted. Whirling disease is caused by *Myxobolus cerebralis*, a protozoan parasite that destroys cartilage in the vertebral column of trout and salmon. It can be fatal to infected trout and salmon but does not affect humans or other wildlife or fish. The disease parasite is naturally present in some streams and rivers in California.

Darrah Springs Hatchery supplies catchable trout for waters in Lassen, Modoc, Shasta, Siskiyou and Trinity counties and is one of the 21 state-run hatcheries that provide millions of fish for California anglers.

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

ROCK CREEK LAKE road has been paved and work continues but no report as to the final completion date. Fishing picked up a little bit over the last week, but no big changes. Water temp is probably around low 50's by now.

Actually the upper lakes have been fishing well for the wild trout, Rock Creek Lake is consistent for the stockers. Most lakes got a surprise stocking which gave a boost to the catching. Nice limits were coming out up through early morning Wednesday until the wind came in. Try streamers with a nymph, or wait until the sun is out and hit it with a small dark dry fly.

CROWLEY LAKE - The water is still very clear, and has dropped again. Frustrating! The bite continues to be inconsistent here. Some days they just get lock-jaw and move out to 25 feet to feed on tiny freshwater fleas called daphnia. Water temps are slowly cooling with the fish moving into shallower water during west winds & low light periods. The best fishing occurs during those conditions. You can find some nice browns cruising in 9 feet along Sandy Pt. & Hilton Bay. Streamer fishing with perch imitations, or small rainbow trout profiles can be a good call right now. Intermediate full sinks, or heavier sinking tips are the right lines to cast Loebergs & Punk Perch patterns along the remains of the weed lines. Stillwater nymphing with leech & perch fry patterns superior to midges. Minor chironomid hatches will continue to occur during periods of high pressure. Gillies, crystal emergers, & midge pupa patterns are good calls as the upper flies during hatches. Twin gillies, or a broken back gillie as the upper- along with dark zebras, copper tiger midges, BB tigers and zebras will get you take downs during pupa ascents. If you locate some clean water along the weeds, try an assassin, punk perch, or crystal leech as your upper fly. Hang a midge pattern as the dropper/lower fly below an Under-cator.

UPPER OWENS Fishing remains spotty for larger migratory fish moving up from Crowley. Water levels are consistent; but lower than normal. Dry/dropper techniques can be effective during warmer periods. Overall conditions remain good here with a few larger fish holding in the deeper pools. The section up from Benton Crossing are much better for numbers, more hawks down from the monument. You can hook a few decent browns on hopper patterns. The Trico mayflies are the main surface attraction during the fall. Small parachute BWO profiles in the #20-22 range will get looks. Some larger browns hitting crystal leeches fished with a sink tip in the deeper pools. Stimulators, hi-vis caddis, & natural caddis are good calls for the warmer periods. Use mayfly adults during the cloudy days. I like a tandem nymph rig in the deeper pools using an assassin, FB Pheasant Tail, or crystal leech as the upper-put an egg, or smaller Assassin as the dropper. Aquatic weeds are an issue in the lower sections below the Benton Crossing Bridge. McGee Creek proper has some small browns and a few decent rainbows. Dry dropper rigs, & nymphing with FB PTs, Assassins, & olive crystal caddis below an Under-cator, or hi-vis caddis or hi-vis para BWO will work. Special regs are in place here year around. The section from the Bridge down to the monument is now closed until next Memorial weekend 2016. You may fish down from monument to the lake-same regs as Crowley.

CONVICT LAKE - Standard list of recommended flies for most of the summer into fall:

Dry Flies: Adams, Female Adams, Cutter's Caddis, Elk Hair Caddis, Stimulators, Black/Red Ants, Sierra Bright Dot, Royal Coachman and Hoppers. Streamers: Woolly Bugger

(black, brown, olive, or green), Mutuka (black, brown, olive, or green), Hornberg, and Muddler Minnows. Wet Flies(Nymphs): Prince Nymph, Flashback Pheasant Tail, Hare's Ear, Zebra Midge (red and black), Copper John (red and copper) and San Juan Worm (brown or red). The Ambush at the Lake Fishing Derby runs September 7th - November 15th. Don't miss out on a chance to win \$6,000 in Resort Prizes! The Morrison Bonus Cash Weekend will be October 30th - November 1st. \$2000 in cash prizes!

HOT CREEK - Still pretty tough here with limited open water. Some fall caddis, & micro mayfly (tricos) currently happening. Dark bodied, or natural colors for the caddis bodies are the hatch. Light olive to gray for the Mays. Keep them well dressed to ride high in the foam. Pheasant tails, & birds nest patterns are best for nymphs. Small parachute midge; or mayfly patterns used with a 10 foot leader for surface presentations when the fish are on midges/or clusters. There are a few sections that can be fished with a dry dropper nymph rig. The hoppers are here. A stimulator is a good profile for them. Use these in the wind, as the terrestrials get blown off the banks, and the trout hunt the shoreline. Try a hi-vis caddis pattern, it works well here. Dead drifted broken back zebras, small gillies, scuds, flashback PTs, or assassin, birds nest bead heads in #18 are good calls for the dropper. Size 18 or smaller crystal olive caddis larva or zebra midges are good calls as droppers. This is a year around fishery with special regulations in place.

MAMMOTH BASIN - Water is clear and cool with night temps hovering around the mid-40's. Trout are holding in the southeast side of Mary at the drop off. Check the local tackle shops first, then give the listed flies below a shot. Try Callibaetis, stimulators, foam hoppers, royal wulffs. Nymphs: Prince size 14, Red Copper John 14, Zebra 16, damsel's and Callibaetis nymphs. Try Black or olive woolly buggers and Rickard's seal buggers olive with rust or stillwater nymph light olive and rust #12.

SAN JOAQUIN - Still slow fishing overall. Locating riffle water/runs over a foot is difficult; however this is where you will find the trout. Mid-day is best after the gravel warms up. The trout will still take surface imitations in the #14-18 range. Make upstream presentations, staying on the tails of the fish. Try hi-vis para mayflies, Stimulators, and hi-vis caddis patterns as a point fly. Tie a one foot dropper off the hook bend and add a blue winged olive or natural caddis adult. Dry/dry tandems are effective and can really help you see you imitations in riffle water, or shadows.

JUNE LAKE - Slowed down, but the water temp seems to be at a slow drop as most lakes above 7000 feet so use a fast sinking line and run your streamers down around 10-15 feet with buggers and leech patterns with soft hackle droppers, hare's ear, prince nymphs and Zug bugs should bring up some fish. Fish the shores especially the northwest and south.

GULL LAKE - Still open and said that fishing is good but didn't know what flies were working as most are using mice-tails but check with Ernie's Tackle to see what's hot. It can be good one day and off the next. With the cooler water temperature things are heating up as far as the catch rate. Always fish the west end reeds by the rock as fish like to feed where there's safety.

SILVER LAKE: The Big Bows were starting to show up as they had a number of very nice Rainbows come in from both Silver Lake and Grant Lake prior to their closing. The fishing is probably productive down deep in the water but it will depend what the expected storm will do in the next day or so. Try darker and bigger flies like Olive Matukas, Rainbow Matuka and Green Woolly Buggers if you can get them deep. DFW dumped in their load of catchable Rainbows which helps to keep the action moving along.

If you are a Fall Color seeker, aspens are spotty due to recent winds. Check the Mono County tourism site for the latest information at monocounty.org.

RUSH CREEK: Reports said fishing was great but probably using bait, it's that time of year.

LUNDY LAKE. DFW stocked the 11th of October and tubing was good using buggers, black, brown, dark olive, Rickard's seal-bugger, stillwater water nymph in rust/olive along with Prince nymphs, Zug bugs, olive bird's nest and the rubber legged flashback Prince, my trophy special fly and the Pistol Pete in olive/black.

LITTLE and BIG VIRGINIA & TRUMBLE LAKE Water levels are STILL holding pretty close to normal. The steady fly had been Bill's nymph (my version of Rickard's stillwater nymph but fuzzier. SLOW dry fly action early am and late evening if there's a ripple on the water, with the exception between 10-12, we had a couple good hatches. Trophies were still coming out of both lakes, at least one or two a day up to last Saturday the 24th. Other flies working were olive Matuka's, red San Juan worms near the inlets and outlets and never forget the midges and emergers, very important items to keep handy on your vest patch. Trumble Lake has been off and on and the rainbows seem to be the main fare and not as many brook trout have shown their fins to peek at anyone's fly.

GREEN CREEK has been the same since the last report and water levels are holding with a fair outflow from all the lakes above. Still good catch rate if you can hit the right fly. A lot of small browns are moving out of Dynamo pond to the area I call the "big pond" on the south side of the valley as you head west to the campground. They are still hitting small terrestrial flies in and around the willows where they hide to keep from getting sunburned. Use your best "sneak" approach to get close enough for a precision cast above their nose. Tie on a small barbless terrestrial for some fun. Lots of deer moving out of the canyon so watch the road for migration.

EAST WALKER - Not much has changed on the river this past week, the temps are holding and the flow is at 22cfs. Please take care when releasing fish and stick around to assure their safe return to the water. The fishing has been holding pretty good, especially now since the weather has cooled the water down. Small midge patterns seem to be doing the best though there are a few good streamer reports. The stretch below the bridge seems to be producing the best still. Haven't heard much from the Nevada side lately. Be sneaky and focus on the deeper pools and runs and you should be able to have some success. Patterns to try include micro mayfly, wd-40, flashback emerger, psycho prince, miracle midge, zuddler, double bunny, jj special, and mirrored minnow.

BRIDGEPORT RESERVOIR - Bridgeport is still showing some pretty nice fish in the 3 to 5 pound range and lots in the 1 to 3 pound range. We've had a few good fly reports from float tubers stripping streamers near the bottom both down near the dam and over near Rainbow Point, buggers, seal buggers, mini leeches, hornbergs and zonkers have been doing well. Check with Ken's Sporting Good and Jeff Wenger at the marina for any changes in flies or conditions, also boat rentals and current fishing info. Flow is running at 22cfs.

Open year around with special regulations in place.

TWIN LAKES - They're still catching some really nice fish lately with some of them around 7 or 8 pounds. It has been sporadic this past week but maybe with the storm things will change. Try last month's fly suggestions, they are constant this time of year. The Kokanee are still spawning so don't forget to bring some orange and red flies.

WEST WALKER - Flow is 34cfs surprisingly. Dry dropper rigs are my choice for fooling the trout in the deeper pools and runs. Try a Stimulator, hi-vis para BWO, or hi-vis caddis as the upper fly. Hang a crystal tiger midge, Assassin, or Flash Back Pheasant Tail about 2-3 feet off the dry. Pikel Meadows is a fun spot with plenty of area to fish. Wind will make it tough, so get on the water early.

See you on the water in 2016, CJ
(1510)

From the President [Chris Wood] of Trout Unlimited

I've often talked about the healing power of fishing and time on the water.
This is what it means.

The Fisherman by Stanley Munson

I stand here in the river, the water almost to my knees,
And for the first time in forever, my mind is now at ease.
The water pushes against my waders, my feet set firmly in the sand,
As the river flows gently past me, I begin to understand.
I can hear the burbling of the water, the breeze blows gently on my face,
And I know deep in my heart, that I have found the perfect place.
There is a faint touch upon my forehead; I hear the buzzing of a bee,
There is a slight musty smell in the air; I've never felt so free.
I lift my rod up by my head, my motion sharp and clear,
My fly line makes a hissing sound, as it goes past my ear.
I wait for just a moment, until I feel a gentle tug,
Then I snap my arm back forward, and I launch my little bug.
I feel the line roll over, and my fly lands gently on the stream.
And I am thinking to myself, that this must surely be a dream.
For the river, it has called me, my stress left back there on a shelf,
As the peace I feel around me, I take deeply into myself.
The rhythm of my arm, is like the waves rolling towards the beach,
And the fly that I am casting, looks exactly like a leech.
My fly drifts on the river, between the fast water and the calm,
I can feel the cork of the handle, nestled firmly in my palm.
My heart starts beating fast, as I feel a gentle bump,
I lift my rod tip gently, and I feel a big one jump.
I point my rod towards the sky, as I let the salmon play,
My heart says reel in quickly, but I know that slowly is the way.
My rod is bent almost double, as I let him take some line,
But I let it feed out slowly, because I know this fish is mine.
I can feel the difference in the line, as it crosses from the fast water to the slow,
As I feel him coming closer, I know there isn't long to go.
Carefully I reach out, and lift him in my net,
But I make sure not to touch him, until my hands are wet.
For not doing so would damage him, and that would not be right,
For this indeed I owe him, for such a noble fight.
As gently as I can, I remove the hook and set him free,
As I felt him swim out of my hands, that fish I'll never see.
For I am blind, but just for now, the both of us are free,
As I stand here in this river, the one I'll never see.

This poem was written by one of the vets that TU helped guide last May on the Beaverkill.