

Eastern Sierra Focus

By CJ Webb

Photo Tips - How to hold a trout for a great photo without harming the fish.

A lot of debate has been ongoing regarding taking photos of trout. Unfortunately the internet has blown this topic out of proportion and is filled with misinformation and accusations. In most of the publications on trout fishing there are always dozens of photos of fish being held out of the water for a good photo-op which is not a bad thing if the fish is not harmed in any way. The camera is not the culprit; the lack of angler education on ethical fish handling is to blame. Teaching anglers to pinch barb, wet hands, revive fish and limit their exposure to air is better than demonizing photography. Anglers need to learn to calm down and not panic; it only makes the fish panic and struggle more. If you keep the fish in water, it will relax. Check out the videos on the Internet and you will get educated very fast. The best method is to let the fish rest in the net for a few minutes so it will calm down and catch its "breath". To hold a fish for a photo, place your right hand under its skull and support it while keeping it in water and place your left hand under its tail then move your right hand so its pectoral fin is between your fingers (right hand) and the pelvic fin is between your hands and gently lift out of the water for a couple good shots and return it to the water gently and you will feel it gaining momentum to be released safely. This will protect the resource for future anglers if everyone takes the time to ensure the health of trout and/or fish.

Summer-2016

Early July wind changed the pattern of late June with daily light breezes with strong gusts that kept the hatches clinging to the brush along shore. Cooler temperatures were pushed out with very warm days the last half of the month bringing wind every week to stabilize the conditions without precipitation. Predictions are for a very warm summer with wind pushing temps down and heat during mid-day keeping them around the high 70's to low 80's the remainder of July. Latest news as of the 21st is record head is here for the next seven to 10 days with very low humidity but a possibility of a change at the month's end which might allow monsoon moisture to make it into the Eastern Sierra.

News -

DFW stocking is still on a weekly basis and continues to be consistent in all waters. Little Virginia Lake has been getting a consistent 500 pounds per week and both Big Virginia and Trumble lakes are also stocked the same day with their allocation.

NEWS BITS AND BYTES from "Trout" (Trout Unlimited summer edition)

Anglers Must Remain Vigilant to Protect Public Lands:

In 2005, some prominent US Representatives proposed a large scale sell off of public lands; the measure failed miserably. In 2012, Utah's Governor signed a bill demanding that America's public lands in Utah be handed over to the state. Last year, the US Senate narrowly passed a non-binding budget resolution to set up a reserve fund for future legislation that would "sell, or transfer to, or exchange...any Federal land that is not within the

boundaries of a National Park, National Preserve, or National Monument." This year, some presidential candidates made the disposal of America's public lands a campaign issue.

The scheme to relieve Americans of our public land birthright is well-funded, some state legislatures and Congress are entertaining the idea, and the threat is as real as ever—as long as America has public lands, there will be those who want to take them away from us.

The question of whether states or federal agencies like the US Forest Service are better equipped to manage public lands has long been debated. There is no doubt that the federal land management agencies face vexing challenges, but the way to deal with those problems is with improved stakeholder cooperative solutions, not wholesale sell offs. Let's not lose sight of the fundamental issue at stake: these lands belong to all Americans.

Take that away—even if it is "just" transferring public lands to the states—and the American people will cease to be the landowners.

CALTRANS REMINDER - The "Rock-fall Project" that was to resume on US395 along Mono Lake starting mid July has been put on hold due to the fire on the hillside above US 395 until the guard rail replacement and stabilization of the area (hillside) due to lack of ground cover to prevent mudslides, if and when rain hits this area.

CONWAY RANCH - No update yet...

***FISHING REPORT* - If it was easy, they'd call it catching!**

ROCK CREEK LAKE – Reports are good with plenty of hatches going off, and the number one top-water bug would be a, you guessed it, the California Mosquito size 14 along with Red Copper John #14-18, Hares Ear #16-18, and Zebra Midges #14-18. Upper lakes are also doing well with great action using dries and larger terrestrials along the streams. Walk up canyon for some wild fish taking small dries. Don't forget to bring nymphs like red Copper John #16-18, Hares Ear #16-18 and size 14-18 Zebra midges.

CROWLEY – LADWP just pulled the plug out with flows in the high 400's. The weeds are going off and all water less than 17 feet is fairly weeded out. Temps are rising and it's only going to get warmer. Fish are concentrated anywhere there is cold water entering the lake. Rainbows, browns and Cutts to 24" plus and a bunch of new arrivals 13-14" were recently planted by DFW. Trout are seeking cooler more oxygenated water so take a float up to McGee Bay. If the bite slows go to an Albino Baron or bright red larvae pattern early, then red/black bead head Optimidge or Copper Tigers mid morning and Shaft Emerger or Flashback bead head gray/black Optimidge midday. If you want the best chance to hit a big one, go to Dubbed Head olive Optimidge when the sun is directly overhead. Strip Damsel patterns up very slowly from the bottom with midge trailer or any bright streamer fast for that aggressive strike. There are also some big fish chasing Tui Chub fry out to 19 feet in McGee for the tubers. Check with Crowley Lake Fish Camp for current list of flies and specific areas to fish. A second Crowley Cam at the Fish Camp boat ramp is streaming video, so click it.

UPPER OWENS - Don't expect good conditions downstream from the Benton Bridge due to heavy aquatic weed growth. Upstream from the bridge special regulations apply, & the conditions are better above the confluence of

Hot Creek inlets. Grasshoppers are prevalent so be prepared with all sizes in the appropriate color. Use a stimulator with a bead head nymph like an Assassin, FB Pheasant Tail, olive crystal caddis; or olive zebra midge as a dropper. You will also see a solid caddis hatch. Hi-vis caddis adult patterns with a dropper will also get grabs. The water levels are very low above Hot Creek and the irrigation canal inlets. You will find most of the planted rainbows, and wild browns in the deepest pools and pockets. There are a few nicer rainbows hanging around that are best fooled by attractor patterns like the "Drifters Crawler" and crystal eggs. A strange thing this season is the migration of Sacramento Perch moving up the river. You may get into quite a few of them in the deeper pools.

NOTE: This section upstream from the Benton Bridge is open year round; down from the bridge is now closed to ALL angling. Special regulations are in place here year-around.

CONVICT The DFW is scheduled to plant both the lake and creek the week of June 26th. Recommended Dry Flies: Adams#14, Female Adams#16, Cutter's Caddis #14-16, Elk Hair Caddis#16-18, Stimulators#12-16, Black/Red Ants, Sierra Bright Dot, Royal Coachman and Hoppers. Streamers: Woolly Buggers (black, brown, olive, or green), Matuka (olive, or black), Olive or Rainbow Hornberg#12, and Muddler Minnows. Wet Flies(Nymphs): Prince Nymph, Flashback Pheasant Tail, Hare's Ear, Zebra Midge (red and black), Red Copper John and San Juan Worm (brown or red). Wind should bring out your best presentation so drop your flies with extra weight, it's a better option.

HOT CREEK flume is at 41cfs. The run-off from Mammoth Creek flows are coming down and fishing has been fair/slow this summer. The slower fishing can be directly attributed to the lack of planting from the HC hatchery. This is the primary reason HC is not kicking out the numbers it once did. HC is now being managed as a wild trout fishery only, and new practices are not allocating the planting of additional trout here. You can still get into some good bites on smaller fish using scuds, Assassins, and smaller olive crystal caddis, or dubbed olive caddis larva patterns while nymphing the deeper pockets that are weed free. Caddis adults and hoppers are best for surface action.

NOTE: Year around fishery with special regulations. Please **DO NOT WADE** in Hot Creek to avoid spreading the New Zealand Mud-snail to other waters. Please protect this resource!

MAMMOTH BASIN - Desert Springs has stocked the area twice and campgrounds are at capacity and very entertaining for the bears. Some road work is currently underway with some areas closed to camping due to the repairs. Check with the visitor center for specific areas being repaired.

SAN JOAQUIN - Flow is 35cfs and water temp is in the low 60's by mid-day. Definitely better early am and late evening. Plenty of small wild browns but they are selective so concentrate on a good drift. Most of the fish are hanging out in faster moving riffles for good oxygen and food supply. Try a small dropper below your dry to boost your odds. DFW still has not stocked, so let's **not** keep those 5-7 inch wild browns and give the area a chance to develop. Avoid the campground areas and hike a bit for the best action.

JUNE LAKE has been fair to good with everyone fishing at about 18 feet and deeper and that is where the fish are comfortable. Carry a pocket thermometer and tie on some line marked every 10 feet with a felt pen and then fish according to the action. Try a double fly rig, if nothing, hitch another bug to it. Make sure and use Duncan loop to give your flies more action depending on the bugs of choice.

GULL LAKE is still kicking out nice trophies so bring your best bugs and drop them near the reeds. Check in at the shop and get the latest info on patterns. It might be tough to pull them up so your imagination is your best weapon.

SILVER LAKE Has been stocked by DFW and large rainbows from Desert Springs. The water temperatures are starting to warm up. My suggestion is to hit the inlet and outlet for browns cruising. Dry Flies: Adams, Female Adams, Cutter's EC Caddis, and Elk Hair Caddis. Fishing was good overall. Streamers: Woolly Bugger (black, brown, olive, or green), Matuka (black, brown, olive, or green), Hornberg, and Muddler Minnows. Nymphs: Prince, Flashback Pheasant Tail, Hare's Ear, Zebra Midge (red and black), red Copper John and red or brown San Juan Worm. Dries starting to hit are California Mosquito, Yellow Sally or a Sierra Brite Dot. Even throw on a dropper of a midge to help allure the fish up to the surface. Fishing should continue to be rewarding as we continue to hit our normal stride for the summer but would greatly improve with thunderstorms or just plain rain.

RUSH CREEK: Flows above Grant Lake are still low with a vegetable garden edging the feeder stream from Rush Creek. Flies to try: Purple Prince Nymph #14-18, Red Copper John #14-18 and Woolly Buggers in black or olive sizes #10-16. Some dries are working but you'll have to check the streamside brush to see what's hanging on, but I'd suggest hoppers, ants and damsels.

GRANT LAKE is low but some run-off added water to the middle section of the lake, try the south shore or the inlet (park and walk) or the rock jetty's where you can park and walk to the water and cast to trophy's cruising for smaller fish. Fishing conditions have been good and fish in the area were mainly taken on the south shore near the gate but mostly around the rock shoals where the speed boats and shore fishermen were avoiding. Check with Ernie's or the Grant Lake Marina for current info. Same report as last month.

LUNDY LAKE - No Report. But past experience says that tent-wing caddis, olive wooly buggers, black flash bead head wooly buggers for the lake and small dries for the back ponds i.e., Griffith's Gnat, midge cluster, hi-vis Griffith's, or my special blue wing olive parachute with an ultra thin wool body and calf tail post size 16.

BIG VIRGINIA is still producing some nice Desert Springs trophies on streamers around 18 feet with a bit of weight like a drop-shot with 2 flies above the bottom shot. It's kind of unique for fly rods, but it works. Evening dry fly action has been good between the areas near the inlet from Red Lake to the outlet of Big V. Most hatches have occurred around 7 to 8am and again around 4pm on with hoards of spinners and large flying ants approx. 5/8" long. Surface water is warming up so fish are deeper than normal. Day temps are running around 77 to 78 degrees. Hate to think what the surface temperature is.

LITTLE VIRGINIA has had 3 stocks from DFW and two Enhancement loads so far this summer with trout ranging from 3-5 pounders. Mainly taking anything subsurface but bring along that floating line if you want to give dries a try. Try midge clusters speckled grey/black, tent-wing caddis size 14-16, and flashy black bead head streamers, BH Olive wooly buggers size 10, Stillwater nymph size 12 or dirty doc. Some action has been reported on a weighted nymph under a streamer. Copper red Zebra's, Prince Nymphs, hare's ear and soft hackles are also working.

EAST WALKER flow is 165cfs and a wading staff is in order so don't be too proud to use it. Temps are in the low 70's mid-day. Water is close to the point where it's not good for the fish if you are there after 11am. Fishing is better the lower you go, so if you head into Nevada make sure you have your NV license or head to Ken's in Bridgeport. Loads of Baetis hatching throughout the day but fish are spread out. Spend ten minutes working an area then move as the flow is still a bit high so fish will not be concentrated in one area. Dries to try: Baetis size 14-16. Nymphs: #16-18 Zebra midges, Pocket Water Baetis #16, Hogan's S&M Nymph #16, Tungsten Psycho #16. Tie on any large meaty streamer to see a large meaty trout.

WEST WALKER flow is at 125cfs and very fishable especially on curves and riffles below flat water. Use ant patterns, hoppers, or bushy dry flies as the heat is brining out all the terrestrial patterns to keep the fish fat, dumb and happy. Use a dry/dropper rig with hoppers, stimulators, madam x, or a hippie stomper on top and a hare's ear or Copper John below. Also a straight hopper, beetle or ant on top has been good. The Northern Mono Chamber scheduled two rainbow plants around the 15th and the 22nd for their "How Big is Big" Fishing Derby that runs during the month of July. Hundreds of pounds of 3 to 4 pound bows will kick up the action.

BRIDGEPORT RESERVOIR - Bridgeport is still fishing very well from boats and we did have one or two good reports from shore anglers this past week. The good shore reports were from down near the dam using mainly bait. Few fly reports to date. Tube near the dam but watch for boats cruising the same area and use streamers.

KIRMAN LAKE - Fishing has been pretty tough the last few days, we've talked to several anglers this past week that were not able to get into any fish. Anglers reported seeing fish surfacing in the early morning hours but not being able to figure out what flies they would take. It's not really unusual for Kirman to be tough this time of year with the warmer weather and a good amount of weed growth, hopefully it'll get better later in the season when the weather starts to change to the cooler temps.

Please note: Tioga Pass is working on the resurfacing project on State Route 120 but no info was available as to exact location and time frame.

See you on the water smokin' reels, CJ (16.7)