

Eastern Sierra Focus

By CJ Webb

Late Summer-2016

Mid August and early September brought in two cold snaps or what I call the "burn" that pushes the aspens into a graceful change. September 11th turned the crystal blue sky into an afternoon cloud-burst into light drizzle for a couple hours. On that same morning there were groves of yellows, mixed with limes 14 days later they were mostly in vivid colors ready for their final stage of gold, orange and reds and should progress slowly into a magnificent event. It should peak between September 29th and the 3rd of October.

Predictions as to the type of winter are up in the air from what I can tell due to the unusual summer pattern. But I have heard several "opinions" but nothing concrete as yet. The Belding ground squirrels retreated August 18th to the 24th to their underground winter homes with very few stragglers. Most of the years that I remember them going in on-time was when we had a heavy winter coming.

News –

CDFW stocking is still on an every other week 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.

HOT CREEK RE-STOCKING!

D.F.W. has decided to introduce over 6,000 diploid fish to Hot Creek this year and 12,000 per year over the next few years until we reach 6,000 fish per mile while doing an electroshock survey each year to see how the spawn is doing. The goal is to get this once incredible fishery back to what it once was.

Reintroductions of Rare Rescued Trout to McCloud River Tributaries. The CDFW's Northern Region Inland Fisheries Program and Heritage and Wild Trout Program staff will soon reintroduce a small population of rare rescued trout to their native waters in the McCloud River in Shasta County. McCloud River Redband Trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss stonei*) is one of several sensitive and unique fish species that has required human intervention in order to ensure their survival during California's continuing drought." The drought continues to be devastating on the populations of these important fish," said Andrew Jensen, a biologist with CDFW's Northern Region Inland Fisheries Program. "If we did not take action to save them during the summers, small, independent populations may have succumbed. Our proactive rescue efforts will help maintain this unique species for the future."

CDFW biologists monitoring McCloud Redband streams (tributaries of the upper McCloud River) from late 2013 through mid-2015 found that drought effects were causing perilous conditions for the fish in both winter (with sections of the streams freezing over) and summer (with sections of the streams going dry). McCloud Redband, a state-listed Species of Special Concern, are in no immediate risk of extinction but their populations are small, fragmented and exist only in a few small streams. Rescue operations by CDFW in 2013-15 greatly reduced the drought mortality of the species. Anticipating potential drought impacts on

sensitive wild fish populations, CDFW installed self-contained Recirculating Aquaculture Systems (RAS) at several CDFW hatcheries throughout the state last year. The RAS enable the hatcheries to safely house rescued wild fish until environmental conditions improve. One of these facilities, Mt. Shasta Hatchery, was selected to serve as a drought safe haven for the McCloud Redband due to its proximity to the imperiled streams. More than 1,000 McCloud Redband were brought to the facility, where many were spawned by CDFW staff.

Today much of California remains in a drought, but the upper McCloud River watershed received some relief in the first half of 2016, with near-normal precipitation during the winter and spring. CDFW fisheries biologists believe that these improved habitat conditions (and forecast conditions) will support the release of the rescued McCloud Redband Trout. Both the rescued adult fish and the hatchery-origin juveniles will be released beginning this week in sections of the stream that will provide the best chance of long-term success with minimal impacts to the existing natural-origin population. All the released fish will be tagged, allowing fisheries biologists to track their movement and survival after release into the river. Media Contacts: Kyle Orr, CDFW Communications, (916) 322-8958 Andrew Jensen, CDFW Northern Region Inland Fisheries Program, (530) 225-2378

Feather River Hatchery Fish Ladder Opened Today

September 19, 2016 - The fish ladder at Feather River Hatchery in Oroville opened today, Monday, Sept. 19, signaling the start of the spawning season on the Feather River. California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) hatchery workers opened the gates in the ladder about 8 a.m. They will take more than 3 million spring-run eggs and 12 million fall-run eggs over the next two months in order to produce Chinook salmon for release next spring.

Visitors can observe the salmon through the viewing windows and from the observation deck located at the base of the fish barrier dam. At the main side of the hatchery, visitors can observe CDFW technicians performing the spawning process. Thousands of school children tour the Feather River Hatchery each year. For more information about spawning schedules and educational opportunities at the Feather River Hatchery, please call (530) 538-2222. For information about hatchery tours, please call (530) 534-2306.

There are eight state-run salmon and steelhead hatcheries, all of which will participate in the salmon spawning effort. Those hatcheries, along with federally run hatcheries, will be responsible for the release of 40 million juvenile salmon into California waters. These massive spawning efforts were put in place over the last 50 years to offset fish losses caused by dams that block salmon from historic spawning habitat. Once the young salmon reach 2 to 4 inches in length, 100 percent of the spring-run stock and 25 percent of the fall-run stock will be adipose fin clipped and implanted with coded wire tags prior to release. CDFW biologists use the information from the tags to chart the survival, catch and return rates of the fish. For more information about California's fish hatcheries, please visit www.wildlife.ca.gov/fishing/hatcheries. Media Contacts: Penny Crawshaw, Feather River Hatchery, (530) 538-2222 Kyle Orr, CDFW Communications, (916) 322-8958

FLY FISHING INDUSTRY TRENDS – Winston Rod Company hires Wagner as GM. R. L. Winton Rod Company has named Jeff Wagner as General Manager of the company. Wagner is a Master Certified Fly Casting Instructor, avid fly fisherman and former Director and Casting Board Member of the International Federation of Fly Fishers. Most recently, Wagner worked as the Fishing Divisional Planning Manager at Cabela's, the Native Fisheries Restoration Project Manager at the National Park Service, and merchandise buyer at Jax Outdoor Gear. Winston's Chairman and owner, David Ondaatje stated he "believes Jeff's impressive background will help them grow the business while maintaining a steady focus on product quality, customer service and innovation."

CALTRANS REMINDER - The "Rock-fall Project" that was to resume on US395 along Mono Lake starting mid July is still on hold until the 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 but I have heard reports of some entity showing interest in using the ranch as a fish holding area for stocking but nothing confirmed.

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

ROCK CREEK LAKE – Reports are good on the bite and catching has been fair to good. 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).

CROWLEY – LADWP is dropping the water level fairly fast now. The water temps are starting to come down and the algae is holding steady - fairly clear for the most part. The weeds are finally dying off and should continue to decline through the rest of the season. The North Arm continues fishing just about as good as it gets. There are very few fish anywhere else. Rainbows, Browns and Cutthroats to 24" and a bunch of new arrivals 13-14" recently planted by DFW. Throw in a few Perch and Tui Chub and the full-five Grand Slam, Rainbow, Brown Cutthroat, Perch and Tui Chub have been managed by several in the last week. McGee is pretty much done for now. Occasional fish in close to the weeds but they are very spread out. Some fish still in the Hiltons and Crooked Creek, but not in large numbers. The Perch fry are subsiding and stripping has been pretty slow compared to fishing under the indicator. Hanging Perch fry imitations under the indicator might scratch up a couple of grabs before 8 am but Albino Baron or a bright red larvae pattern has been better. Later go to Red/Black Dubbed Head Optimidge or Copper Tigers mid morning and maybe Shaft Emerger if the red/black slows down. If you want a chance to pluck off a big one, go to Dubbed Head Olive Optimidge when sun is overhead. Strip perch imitations right along defined weed lines.

UPPER OWENS – Water conditions are fair. Flows are at 38cfs as of 9/27 and water is clear above the confluence, and stained below. DRIES: Elk Hair Caddis #16, Kaufman Stimulator #16, EC Caddis #16, Foam Hoppers, Chernobyl Ants, Fat Albert's. NYMPHS: #18-20 Psycho Prince Nymph (purple), #16-18 Pheasant Tail, Flashback Hares Ear #14-16, Western Coachmen, #16 Sparkle Caddis Pupa Tan #16-18, San Juan Worms (red), Fox's Poopah Olive #16,

Zebra Midge #18. STREAMERS: Doc's Twin Lake Special, Woolly Buggers Olive #10-14. There are a few nice 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.

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. Their standard list of 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). If you have fished Convict you know your best choice in flies so try them first. The Ambush at the Lake fall fishing derby started September 5th and will run until the end of the 2016 fishing season. Don't miss out on the chance to win \$6,000 in Resort prizes! The Morrison Bonus will be on the weekend of October 28-30 - \$2,200 in cash prizes.

HOT CREEK flume is at **32cfs as of 9/27** and water temps are on the decline and running clear. Fishing conditions and hatches are fair. So many weeds, it's almost not worth even going down here until the fall. If you can get a fly through the weeds then you deserve any fish you catch because it's not easy! DRIES: Taylor's Fat Albert, Chernobyl Ant, Foam Hopper, Parachute Caddis #18, Mercer's Missing Link #18, Elk Hair Caddis #18, Brook's Hot Creek Caddis #18, and Clownshoe Caddis #18. NYMPHS: Flashback Scud #16, Tungsten Zebra Midge #20, Old School Caddis Emerger #18, Brook's Hot Creek Caddis #18, LaFontaine's Sparkle Pupa #18 Olive, Nitro Caddis Olive #18, Buckskin Caddis #18, Fox's Caddis Poopah Olive #18, Nori's Caddis Pupa Olive #18. STREAMERS: Water is back down, so streamer fishing is a bit challenging.

(Note flows include water from the springs, not just the gauging station at the highway so this is what is really flowing through the canyon).

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 - This is a great place to fish right now because the water is cold and there are plenty of fish up here. Good place to learn how to float tube if you've never done it before. You can't get yourself into too much trouble! Some stockers being caught in Mamie and Mary, with the occasional bruiser planted by Mono County from up in Oregon since they stopped getting fish from Alpers. DRIES: Callibaetis Dries, Parachute Adams, Stimulators NYMPHS: Zebra Midge, Copper John, Prince Nymph STREAMERS: Docs Twin Lake Special in Black or Olive, Crystal Bugger Black

SAN JOAQUIN - Flow is 32cfs 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. Please do not keep the 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 14-18 feet and deeper and that is where the fish are happy. 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. My favorite flies are Orange Fish Hawk above a rainbow Hornberg both size 14.

GULL LAKE is consistently kicking out trophies so cast by the weeds and do a strip twitch with a large terrestrial. Supposed to get really warm this week. Check in at the shop and get the latest info on patterns. It might be tough to pull them up so your imagination and presentation are always your best weapons.

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. Their consistent fly recommendations are: 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 has continued to be rewarding with the few light storms that hit the Sierra pumping up the water levels just enough to help.

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 damselfly.

GRANT LAKE is low but some added water from the few thunderstorms over the last month 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 overall and fish in the area were mainly taken on the south shore. Check with Ernie's or the Grant Lake Marina for current info.

LUNDY LAKE – Has been fishing great with olive woolly buggers, black flashy bead head woolly buggers for the lake and small dries for the back ponds i.e., Griffith's Gnat, midge cluster, Bi-visible, or my naked blue wing olive parachute with an ultra thin wool body and calf tail post size 16. Callibaetis are abundant throughout the Sierra this season probably due to the mild weather. They are large dull tan/rust with two antennae and quite amazing looking.

BIG VIRGINIA is still producing (hard to believe) some nice Desert Springs trophies on streamers around 15 feet with a bit of weight and a 2 flies rig. Evening dry fly action has been fair due to the temperature changes in the last week. Fish 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 lots of spider trails off the southwest edge and up near the inlet. Surface water is cooling after the recent storm. Day temps are running around 67-70 degrees. Big Virginia seems to be getting more pressure than I've seen in a couple decades.

LITTLE VIRGINIA has had consistent stocking 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, Olive woolly buggers size 10 not weighted, 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. Also, spider trails are hitting the north edge of the lake so use your soft hackles when there is a light breeze from that side of the lake. Also try a yellow Sally with dark tan elk hair the color of the wing on a Dave's Hopper as there are still large caddis around the yellowish willows around the lake's edge.

EAST WALKER The East is still running at about 90cfs right now. The fishing has been tough but there are some anglers getting into some nice fish here and there. The Nevada side still seems to be producing better numbers but the California side has been kicking out a few fish over 20 inches. Compared to the last couple years the flow is great though I expect it to be dropping at some point over the next week unless we get more rain/snow. The caddis seem to be all gone for this season so it's been mainly small midge patterns and some streamer action going on down there lately but this could change with the warmer air. Patterns to try are: Moal leeches, Sculpzilla, Zuddler, JJ Special, D's Hoover Mover, top secret midge, dark lord, San Juan worm, rainbow warrior, flashback emerger, tungsten midge and pheasant tail. We did have one angler report last week that the water quality was poor on the Rosachi though there were several others who said it didn't seem too bad to them, not sure if it was just a random period that it was murky down there or what.

WEST WALKER flow is 32cfs. The West is still kicking out some good numbers of fish both in the Pickle Meadows area as well as the Canyon section. Fly anglers are still picking up some fish with dry/dropper rigs as well as drifting attractor nymphs through the deeper pools. Patterns to try include: para hopper, stacker hopper, chubby Chernobyl, foam hopper, Zug bug, Prince nymph, Copper John and soft hackle.

BRIDGEPORT RESERVOIR - Water level is low but better than the last 4 years. Few fly reports to date. Tube near the dam but watch for boats cruising the same area and use streamers or large terrestrials near shoreline for the accidental hopper suicide. Be sure and check with Ken's for the latest report.

KIRMAN LAKE - Again this week we only had a couple reports from Kirman, a couple anglers we talked to said they

landed 3 or 4 brookies in the 12 to 15 inch range, this is pretty good news as the brookies have been pretty shy this season so far. Hopefully they'll start making a showing for the fall. It sounds like the water quality is still pretty crummy as we've been told the visibility is pretty slim up there right now, we're assuming it's just that as the weather cools the algae and weeds will be dying off and decaying so this is probably causing the low visibility. Leech patterns with nymph droppers should be the best way to go for fly anglers.

SCEIRINE RANCH -The ranch is still kicking out good numbers of fish as well as some browns going over the 20 inch mark. We're getting booked up a little in advance lately so try to call ahead if you can. The patterns listed above are also working on the ranch with the San Juan's, dark lords and rainbow warriors topping the list.

See you on the water smokin' reels, CJ (16.9)