

Eastern Sierra Focus

By CJ Webb

Watch for Deer Migration - STAY ALERT! Spring 2017

The General Trout Season opener greeted anglers with the best weather conditions possible. Overall fishing was better at lower elevations due to warmer temperatures and active hatches and plenty of open water. Anything above 9100 feet was frozen and ice fishermen were around depending on the distance they had to walk.

Early May followed the pattern of mid April with light snow, rain and cooler temperatures but finally warmed up with lakes starting to show water. I guess we have to watch what we ask for as Mother Nature can on occasion be overly obliging. Late May brought the no-see-um Armageddon, fully-fanged relentless biting machines.

Legislation

12-MONTH FISHING LICENSE

AB986 - is a result of Assembly Member James Gallagher, R-Chico to implement the policy for sport-fishing license is underway to direct CDFW to sell annual fishing licenses good for a period of 12 consecutive months, rather than for the remainder of the calendar year and is under legislative review. In addition to the license period change, it reduces some license fees for veterans and for the Sport Fishing Report Card. In past sessions, efforts have failed to make it through the legislative process but this bill is supported by various wildlife organizations. CDFW has not taken a position on this measure.

News -

DFW reports 2017 stocking will be on an every other week basis except for the most heavily fished waters, they will be on a weekly basis. This was confirmed early May, and will commence early June, 2017 for all open waters.

REMINDER: DESERT SPRINGS trout farm is on line for trout 6 to 8/9 pounds. Some additional funding for increasing the numbers might also be on the table. All Mono County waters were heavily stocked prior to the trout opener by DWF and Desert Springs out of southern Oregon.

CRISIS ON THE KINGS RIVER

A just-released report called *A River in Crisis* documents the extensive problems on the lower Kings River. The 70-page report, which describes the status of the 13-mile stretch of the Kings from Pine Flat Dam to Highway 180, says that the fish population has plummeted. "In 1973 the trout populations was 1,500 trout per mile. The 1984 population study found 435 'wild' trout per mile. That dropped to six 'wild' trout per mile in 2015." The report was written as part of the Kings River Fisheries Management Program. For more information go to <http://www.krfmp.org>

MOJAVE RIVER HATCHERY TEMPORARY CLOSURE to the public.

The hatchery located near Victorville in San Bernardino County will be closed to the public as of May 1, to allow for maintenance and repairs of the raceways, buildings and equipment. The facility is expected to reopen in approximately three to four months when all repairs are

complete. All fish currently at the hatchery will be stocked by the end of April. During the closure, the rainbow trout normally hatched and raised at Mojave will be raised at the Fillmore Hatchery and stocked from there to Southern California waters. "We understand that anglers are concerned about their favorite fishing sports being affected, but rest assured, we will continue to stock the 66 waters in six counties with trout just as we have done in the past," said CDFW Senior Hatchery Supervisor Gary Williams. "The work being done will make our operations more efficient and result in better fish production for Southern California." To view statewide fish planting schedule, please go to <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FishPlants>

IT'S RATTLESNAKE SEASON

It's that time of year when the warm spring weather encourages many species out of winter hideouts and rattlesnakes are at the top of that list. There are many precautions you can take to avoid getting bit if you live in an area where they find home. For more information go to www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CWHR/Life-History-and-Range

THE R.L. WINSTON ROD COMPANY suffered a great loss in history, tradition and the best bamboo rods on the market when the Winston Bamboo shop caught fire. It is suspected the fire resulted in a total loss of property and equipment, valued at over \$1 million. Fortunately, no one was harmed and no damage to surrounding property occurred. The fire took place exclusively at Winston's Bamboo shop as their Boron/Graphite facility and Bauer Fly Reel operations run separately and business hours have not been affected. R.L. Winston has crafted bamboo fly rods since 1975 and has been in business for almost 90 years. A fire will not impede that history and continued growth, as they move forward. Every situation has two sides. They will choose to look at this as an opportunity and continue to their passionate drive toward the future. Winston will be rebuilding the facility over the coming months and hope to have operations running by the end of the year. It won't be easy, but this fire represents a great opportunity to reinforce their time-honored traditions and get back to their storied roots. For more information please contact them, at info@winstonrods.com or by phone at 406.684.5674.

CALTRANS REMINDER - The Lee Vining "Rock-fall Project" is mostly complete with only a few items needing to be wrapped up. There is a long-term plant establishment period that Caltrans will be abiding by according to an agreement they have with the Mono Lake Committee. Any delays in the area will be minimal.

CONWAY RANCH - The current sheep grazing lease expires Nov. 2017 and because the lease is up for renewal, the County has an opportunity to make a change. Recently, the Board of Supervisors and County staff have been focusing on understanding the current science related to the disease risk and evaluating grazing options for the property. The article is lengthy as there are other entities that would like to see cessation of grazing, and also any fishing activity on the ranch. Anyone interested in reading the article can either Google it or contact the Supervisor for that district or email me and I'll provide the newspaper article in both the Sheet News, and the Mono Lake Newsletter. Lastly, you can also contact the Eastern Sierra Land Trust and someone there should be knowledgeable as to what is current and what will happen should either activity cease (County

purchased the land for both sheep grazing and rearing fish). Personally, I would hate to see that entire ranch blown-off due to a 4 year drought that has started to refill aqua-firs in the basin.

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

ROCK CREEK LAKE - Frozen with some open water and ice fishing is still on the menu, but watch for soft spots or plan to get wet. Road is clear and you can drive to within 50 yards of the lake. Water is extremely cold so be safe.

CROWLEY LAKE - Water is clear and temps on the bottom are around 54 degrees mid-day. Things were on fire the other day with several triple hook-ups. Fish are still in Christmas, Alligator, and inside of Sandy in around 18 feet of water. The midges are HUGE! So don't be using the size you were using last season, go big or go home. Don't neglect the twitch either; most of the big fish we've been catching have been right after the twitch. 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. NOTE: The moving water on Crooked Creek BELOW 395 is ALWAYS closed to all fishing. No dries at this time. Streamers: Hale Bop Leech brown, wine and black. Nymphs: Dubbed head grey Optimidge #16, olive dubbed head Optimidge #16, dubbed head red Optimidge #16, Copper Tiger large, Albino large, Super Fly large, and large Shaft Emerger.

UPPER OWENS flow is at 174cfs water conditions are fair and things are starting to dry up finally, but there are still some pockets of standing water. Be careful if you don't have 4WD. Water is dirty above and below the confluence but clearer above. There are some resident fish and some rainbows that waited out the harsh winter to spawn with the cutthroat this year, but they're up high and in the deeper water.

PLEASE don't fish for cutthroat in 6 inches of water, especially if they are paired-up! These fish are spawning, not staging and are extremely vulnerable. Snagging these fish off redds is very unethical and only serves to reduce their populations in the long run. Fish the deeper bends as the fish in deeper water are sitting there for a free "egg meal" floating down river. Also, please DO NOT WADE in the shallow gravel beds; try to walk across in sections that are at least knee deep. Forget dry flies.

Streamers to try: Double Bunny, Ruby Eye Leech, Goat Leech and a Marabou Leech. Nymphs to try: #12-16 bead head Prince, #16-18 Pheasant Tail, #14-16 Flashback Hares, red Copper John #12-14, Western Coachman #12-16, #12 San Juan worm, Zebra Midge #18, and Copper Tiger Midge. NOTE: This section upstream from the Benton Bridge is open year round; down from the bridge is now closed to ALL angling. Special regs are in place here year around.

CONVICT was stocked with 400 pounds of 5lb trophy trout on May 17. Breezy afternoons have kept the hatches to a minimum due to the cooler evenings which changed the last few days. Standard 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). All flies listed above will work but this early in the season with water a bit on the chilly side, I'd stay with flashy streamers with a grey sky and dark subtle black, olive or brown with a beadhead at the south west end.

HOT CREEK flume is at 162cfs and water clarity is not good and will probably not clear up for several weeks. Flows include water from the springs, not just the gauging station at the highway so this is what is really flowing through the canyon. Fish the brightest patterns in your box and forget dries. Streamers: Conehead double bunny white/olive, Dirty Hippy Rainbow, and slump Busters. Nymphs: red San Juan worm #14, Western Coachman #14, Prince Nymph #14, red Copper John #14 and #14 Nitro Caddis.

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 - Road is not open as yet and no information was available as to when it would open for the trout season. All lakes are frozen with 6 plus feet of snow on top.

SAN JOAQUIN - Road to Agnew Meadows, Devils Postpile and Rainbow Falls is under permit of Mammoth Mountain Ski area for the winter ski season. There is no estimated date for opening the highway at this time. Road has upwards of 18 feet of snow on it.

JUNE LAKE reported good action on Woolly Buggers with fish in the 1.5 to 2lb range. Surface action has been good if you know the water, stop in to see Jeremy or Scott at Ernie's, they know their stuff.

GULL LAKE (FULL) has turned up some really nice trophies so bring your best bugs and drop them near the reeds. Check in with the Gull Lake 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 (FULL) has been stocked by DFW and there are still some of the large rainbows from Desert Springs out of Oregon. Fishing was good overall according to non-fly anglers. My suggestion is to try black Woolly Buggers or large flashy flies when it's gray (sky) or streamers when it's blue. Try some East Walker killers, JJ's Special, Loberg's, or anything with some rubber to create movement.

RUSH CREEK: Flows are high so safety should be your first concern. Fishing conditions have been fairly good when night temps drop and the run-off has a slight pause. Standard recommended Flies: Purple Prince Nymph #14-18, Red Copper John #14-18 and Woolly Buggers in black or olive sizes #10-16. Check with Jeremy at Ernie's he's the guru.

GRANT LAKE is FULL and absolutely beautiful, and I'd try the south shore or the inlet where Rush comes into the lake. Check with Ernie's or the Grant Lake Marina for current info. There is a guide from the area that has all the tricks, it might be worth your time to stop in and talk to Scott or Jeremy at Ernie's and get on his list. I saw the pix of the browns, and all I can say is WOW!

LUNDY LAKE is full from the run-off of the snow pack melting up canyon. Edison probably plans to continue the current level until they meet their water requirements. The resort will open around mid June from the latest report from Bob Owens. You can always hit the ponds for some great

dry fly action or the inlet on the south west side of the lake with streamers. These are always a good option to run-off conditions. DFW planted last week, but no report on the fishing except for a 30 minute sneak trip and I did well on small Brookies with a #20 Professor on a 7' 4wt. sneaking around.

BIG VIRGINIA is still frozen with less than 5 feet of ice. Fishing has mostly been through holes with bait and a bit cold for hatches, although I've seen the small midges ducking for cover during the last week with the 5 days of warmer weather.

LITTLE VIRGINIA is frozen with some open water at the inlet and outlet. I walked out on May 20th and measured the ice holes with a depth between 4 to 5 feet at various spots around the southeast corner, then walked out again the 24th and I broke through the top layer of ice/snow and had to use the 2 rods to pull myself out and crawl about 12 feet to get upright. Boy is that water cold. Temps have been running in the high 50's for the past 5 days and around 34 to 40 during the night. At 8100 feet daytime temps are running 65 to 67 degrees and evenings in the 40-45 degrees. Not much fishing activity especially since the skiers are taking up all the parking available, but it's hard to cast a fly into a hole 5 feet down. Maybe cheat a bit and use a jiggy-fly.

TRUMBLE LAKE is frozen with hardly any fishermen wanting to walk down through the soft snow since only a couple holes are available. It will be the first lake to totally thaw and my guess is around June 5th to the 10th depending on night temperatures between now and then.

EAST WALKER flow is 800cfs due to the run-off. Jim Reid reported "the fishing down there has been a little tough for some anglers and not quite so bad for others if you are mainly kayaking for time trials to the state line. Heavy line/tippets are the order of the day as fish are pretty tough with the current in their favor. Safety when wading should be your first concern should you decide to "take this mission" wear a belt, and have a guy on each side of the bank holding bridle rope for security then try large streamers, like zuddlers, zonkers, double bunnies and sculpzillas. If you want to fish the bottom give prince nymphs, stoneflies or hare's ear's a soaking.

BRIDGEPORT RESERVOIR - Lake is coming up daily as the run-off increases so there's going to be a lot more water in the days to come. Lake was stocked with DFW rainbows again and ready for action. Fishing has been mixed depending on the lake level. BFE stocked diploids last November and December with load of catchable browns and it's warmer and the bugs are happy to be out and the trout and even happier. The wind was the major factor most of this past week and kept tubers at bay. If you tube, try the drop-offs with Lo-Bergs, leeches and perch patterns to see what's stirring. Also try Callibaetis nymphs, broken back midges, and flashback pheasant tails for some action. Check with Ricky or Jim at Ken's for boat information as Jeff Wenger is not involved due to his demise on May 25th, 2017.

WEST WALKER flow hit 2310cfs on the 26th. Flows will continue with the temp increasing the run-off in the next few weeks. Fly anglers were reporting Class V white water with eyes the size of ET. Check North County for their Derby's for the summer as stocking probably won't happen again

until the flows guarantee the fish will remain in the area and not all the way into Topaz Lake.

KIRMAN LAKE - No reports on Kirman this week but try using leech patterns like Simi seal leeches, seal buggers and mini leeches with soft hackle and AP emerger droppers. Anglers that have had the most success have been getting into 2 to 4 fish for a half day, mostly cutthroat.

TIOGA PASS - The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) said they are approximately 2 miles from the Entrance which is at the Ellery Curve at the dam with no estimate for opening the highway at this time. Google "Tioga 2017" and you'll get an idea of what they are dealing with. It's a great helicopter ride.

SONORA PASS snow crew are approximately 1 mile from the summit on the East side and about 4 miles from the summer on the west side. Snow-pack is estimated to be 12-515 feet on the highway, with no estimated date for opening at this time.

MONITOR PASS opened on May 8th and is subject to storm closure.

Road Condition HOTLINE: Phone 1.800.427.7623 and punch in the highway number for all highways. Don't forget to be safe and MOVE OVER where possible.

On the Bench - New for 2017 coming next issue.

See you on the water smokin' reels, CJ (17.5)