

Eastern Sierra Focus

By CJ Webb

Fall 2017 Fishing Tip:

Learning the seasonal flies for the consistent bugs of the water in the Eastern Sierra seasons is probably the best way to get into fish all summer. Don't bring hoppers in April on a cold day, and don't leave your tricos at home in August. But know the bugs of the season. Most western states for the most part during the season will have the same hatches happening.

If you fished the area the day before then you know what the fish were eating and you have it down, or even used a seine to collect shoreline or in-water bugs and even if you flipped rocks, you are still in great shape for determining what trout will grab today. Never spend more than 15 minutes in the same spot, you will start to put down fish after the 3rd cast even with a well presented fly, so don't waste time sitting there hammering away. Once you learn the seasonal flies and their stages, your success will greatly increase when you can see an insect and identify each bug. I understand what you are thinking, "I don't know a caddis from a mayfly", ok it's not easy information to locate, but a few clicks will put it together with an in-depth easy to understand bug chart. I've been an advocate of learning the stages of bugs for a lot of years to inform anglers what they need to know that will make their fishing experience more memorable. Dragging the same fly with the same system over and over again doesn't always work and you need to learn the basic bug junk.

Watch for Wildlife Week reminding motorists to slow down and be alert. Caltrans and the CA Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) are telling drivers they can improve their own safety by slowing down and remaining alert while driving. "Between now and December, deer and other wildlife are more susceptible than usual to vehicle collisions," said Marc Kenyon, CDFW's Human-Wildlife Conflict Program Manager. Being particularly alert during the morning and evening, as wildlife are most active during these times. Also, if you see an animal cross the road, know that others may be following. Lastly, please don't litter, as the odors entice animals to venture near roadways.

Fall Color Change had taken off until the snow storm that dropped 8 inches of snow at 9700 foot elevation and more in the higher elevations. Depending on the warming trend predicted into mid October it looks as though aspens may "stall" for the photographers to enjoy a longer period of color change.

Legislation

12-MONTH FISHING LICENSE Update - New Bill

The 12-month fishing license bill (SB 187) shut-down by State Assembly Committee just before Labor Day weekend. It was torpedoed without a vote despite huge support by the California Sportfishing League a universal consensus that the current system is outdated and no recorded opposition. California anglers and communities dependent on recreational fishing for tourism and jobs should be profoundly disappointed that a bill that enjoyed overwhelming support was killed in committee. "Had it been

allowed to move to the Assembly Floor, we are certain it would have made it to the Governor's desk", said Marko Mlikotin, Executive Director of the California Sportfishing League.

On the plus side, another bill (AB 986) is making its way through the process and may be acted on in January 2018. The legislation, sponsored by State Assemblyman James Gallagher, R-Sacramento, also aims to increase fishing license sales and revenue by making annual fishing license sales valid for a full 12-months from the date of purchase and also discounts annual fishing license for American veterans by 25 percent, and by 50 percent for veterans who have a 50 percent or greater service-connected disability.

News –

ROSACHI CLEANUP and FISHOUT – September 11

High Sierra Fly Casters scheduled their fish-out at Rosachi Ranch and did some replacing of the "Catch and Release" signs and also some cleanup and provided the materials and tools to do the work and also provided lunch.

SMALL TIDBIT – California is Angling Hot Spot

A recent survey by the American Sportfishing Association found that California ranked in the top three in the nation as a recreational angling hot spot. The state was given that ranking because it has 2.7 million anglers. Texas was first, in the ranking with 3.1 million anglers and Florida came in second with 2.73 million. Angling in California generated 2.31 billion in sales, which also landed the state third place nationally, according to 2011 data. Florida led with \$4.06 billion in sales, followed by New York at \$2.41 billion.

RATTLESNAKE SEASON is not an issue above 7800 feet.

Make space in your closet for your chaps but do a thorough cleaning first. It will be a different situation at lower elevations until around late October as they start to go into hibernation around late October. For more information go to www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CWHR/Life-History-and-Range

CALTRANS REMINDER - The Lee Vining "Rock-fall Project" is at a standstill until stability is ensured and then the fencing and barricades will be removed.

CALTRANS GOOD NEWS

They are four-laning the dangerous and deadly two-lane stretch of U.S. Highway 395 north of Mojave due to the change in California's funding process which is finally allowing these long-planned road projects to be completed. The dozers will continue to clear dirt and I'll provide an update on the expected completion date as soon as it is available.

RUSH CREEK SCE Dams up for re-licensing.

SCE confirmed last week that their license to operate three dams in the rush Creek drainage expires in 2017 which triggers a long, re-licensing process that will include local, state, federal and public input and review. Rumors stated that SCE was considering the removal of the 3 dams (Waugh, Gem and Agnew Lakes), but this was only gossip according to Nick Van Gersdorff, the SCE Dam Safety Group manager. "There are no plans to remove or decommission the dams at this time. He did say that the SCE crews are retrofitting the dams this fall so they can better withstand another epic winter, should one arrive. He explained that the plan is to cut small "notches" in the

bottom of the dams, which can allow excess water to flow out of the bottom of the dams, should another big winter require such measures. "We will put in two, six-foot openings at the bottom of the arches on both dams near where the natural stream drains out," he said. This will allow the water to pass out in a steady stream." Most dams allow excess water to flow out over a spillway, something denied to the SCE dams in the Rush Creek drainage due to recent seismic restrictions on how high the reservoirs' water can be beneath the top of the dams. To ensure safety, SCE decided to mandate that the lakes could only be filled to a certain level below the top of each dam, giving an extra safety edge of the dams in case of a catastrophic earthquake. This past winter SCE was forced to completely redesign a project that literally pumped water from the lake and over the dam, using imported barges and pumps flown in by helicopter. The next challenge said Gersdorff, is to figure out how – or if – the company can go back to allowing the reservoirs behind the dams to fill up again, which is a mandate of the company's license with the federal government. "We have an obligation to meet the recreation requirements (keeping the lakes full for recreation)," he said. "This is a key component of our license and we are working to try to meet that requirements" stated Gersdorff.

CONWAY RANCH - No Update on any scheduled meeting in the near future. I haven't seen sheep on the ranch as yet and it's pretty dry in the meadow.

AT THE BENCH: Innovative products for tying flies.

IN THE VISE: Coming soon, still working on a series of good patterns for your tying pleasure this winter.

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

ROCK CREEK LAKE - Jim King reported September started out great until the snow hit but now things are getting back to normal and suggested standard dries early and late with streamers during the warmer mid-day. Water is has started to taper down some on the upper stream so try some dries along the shorelines where the brookies like to hang. The stream has also slowed down so if you find slow water curves use a higher-visibility dry fly but not too flashy.

CROWLEY LAKE - Water is clear and temps on the bottom are around 50 degrees mid-day. Algae are bad in some places. Lake is down about 2-3 feet. Fish are in pre-spawn mode already so changing flies often will be a must. You'll get a couple hits then nothing until you switch flies. Dries: Don't bother. Nymphs: All size 18, BH Black Optimidge, Copper Tiger, Red Baron, Albino, and small Shaft emerger. Streamers: Punk perch olive, Hare's ear, and Damsels. 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.

UPPER OWENS flow is at 51.8cfs above the confluence and water is clear above the confluence and dirty below. Conditions and hatches are fair. There are some small fish taking caddis and hoppers on the surface above the confluence. I've seen tons of hoppers 'til my eyes bug out. Even the small fish aren't afraid to eat them. Dries: Try elk hair caddis#16, Baby Boy Hopper and Fat Albert. 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 Ear, red Copper John #12-14, Western Coachman #12-16, #12 San Juan worm, Zebra Midge #18, egg patterns any size, Copper Tiger Midge and Marabou Leeches. Don't forget a good assortment of hoppers; this is "the" season.

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 year around. **CONVICT** is always stocked with trophy trout and the lake has does well most of the season so use the recommended flies below. The afternoons are probably doing better from around 11am until an hour before the sun leaves the canyon providing a more secure are when they feed. The cooler air has put some of them down, but it's been warming every day since the snow storm last week. 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: Wooly 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 I'd stay with flashy streamers with a grey sky and more subtle colors when it's clear. Olive is the color working just about anywhere with or without weight, and the deeper the lake the more available fish become.

HOT CREEK flume is at 38cfs and water clarity is good and cold. Flows include water from the springs, not just the gauging station at the highway so this is what is really flowing through the canyon. MORE anglers fishing since the water temperature dropped and the trout are happier. Caddis has been very consistent but that will change as the temperature drops. Streamers: Black BH Dock's Twin Lakes, Slump Busters Conehead double bunny white/olive, Dirty Hippy Rainbow. Nymphs: Drifting Little Weedy #18, Nitro Caddis \$14, Zebra Midge #20-22. Nori's Caddis Pupa Olive #16, fox's Caddis Poopah Olive #16-18. Dries: Olive Elk Hair Caddis #18, Brook's Hot Creek Caddis #18, and Parachute Caddis #18. Hot Creek WILL ALWAYS BE a challenge but worth every spooie fly you have to clean.

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 – The Town is still stocking tons of fish. Water is warming so try fishing edges for a few nice trout. Go-to flies: Doc's Twin Lake Special in olive or black #12 or 12, and Crystal Bugger in black or olive #10.

Nymphs: Copper John #14, Prince Nymph #14, Zebra Midge #18, and Hare's Ear #14. Always check in at Rick's Sports Center for the best information on what to use and how.

SAN JOAQUIN – 33.9cfs as of 9/28, shuttle runs only on weekends and is now allowing vehicles. Water temp is a down and running clear but wait until the sun is on the water which is about 11am or after. I fished it last week (it was warmer) and it was a lot of fun using Elk hair caddis, Hemmingway Caddis, and ants early afternoon. You can use

an indicator rig but surface “bugs are definitely more fun. Dries: Baby Boy Hopper, Elk Hair Caddis 16-18, and Kauffman’s stimulator #16. Nymphs: BH Copper John #16, Prince #16, Micro mayfly #16 and Flashback Hare’s Ear #16.

JUNE LOOP - Dark flashy flies are working on all lakes. Fish dries late morning when lakes are calm and warmer with elk hair caddis, stimulators, Adams, flying ants, paragnats and light Hoppers. As temps warm with a good chop go deeper to 20 feet with full sink or weighted line dragging streamers and buggers with a scud or hare’s ear dropper. He also suggests work your roll casts so you’re not limited by trees and bushes.

JUNE LAKE reported good action on Woolly Buggers with some fish in the 1.5 to 2lb range and a few larger. Surface action has been good if you know the water, stop in to see Jeremy or Knot at Ernie’s, or talk to Abby at June Lake Marina. Try standard streamers and toss a midge near the reeds at the northwest side of the lake away from the “boats”. Olive has taken over the Sierra, so tie on your favorite and chuck it.

GULL LAKE has turned up some really nice trophies so bring your best bugs and drop them near the reeds/back bay. Check in with the Gull Lake shop and get the latest info on patterns. It might be tough to pull them up due to the cooler weather, but it has started to warm nicely in the loop so your imagination and skill is your best weapon. Patterns to try are woollies in black/olive, Loberg’s mallard and olive and even an Aggravator size 14, a great nymph.

SILVER LAKE remains full and has been steadily stocked by DFW and the August load of 4000 pounds is still keeping them busy and all are enjoying the angling. My suggestion is to try Olive Matuka, green woolly buggers, grey hackle peacocks, Sierra Bright dots and the very effective Mosquito size 14. Remember this will be a great year for the Silver Lake Resort as they continue to celebrate their 100th year Anniversary.

RUSH CREEK: Flows were almost normal until the storm hit putting more water downstream. You might want to chuck out a few odd-ball flies just in case some trout has lost its mind. The resort will put in more hulks in September and October. Standard recommended Flies: Purple Prince Nymph #14-18, Red Copper John #14-18 and Woolly Buggers in black or olive sizes #10-16. Also try a San Juan worm with an egg pattern dropper. Check with Jeremy or Knot at Ernie’s for their daily fly choice.

For backcountry hiking/fishing check with Inyo Forest Ranger district to see if there are any closures due possible flooding which may affect access at 760-873-2483. SCE is almost done with their work on the dam and installing equipment to handle the overflow.

GRANT LAKE was FULL and has been taken down about 10 feet. It has to be a real headache for the owner to try and figure out what the water level will be each week and if your boats will be dry docked or floating over the spillway. If you go 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. His method is a bit different, but it still is great fun. Slow trolling for browns

with a large ugly fly, mouse or even a flesh fly might get you into some nice hawks!

LUNDY LAKE remains full as water is released over the spillway to relieve the run-off. Edison plans to continue the current level until they meet their water requirements, and this plagues shore anglers due to the high level of the lake. Try the inlet on the south west side of the lake with flash olive or black woolly buggers but get your heaviest bugs and try a bit of Spey action to get farther into the deeper water. DFW still plants weekly and it is also known for browns. Leo, at the store said catch rate has slowed due to the cooler temperature from the reports of tubers tossing flies. I took a quick drive down to see the water level and it is starting to drop due to water requirements. Still a lot of bugs around but not many anglers. Elk Hair Caddis #18 would be my first choice then an olive woolly bugger size 12 with a Zug Bug dropper.

BIG VIRGINIA seems to be seriously stable this summer in producing really good size trout from Desert Springs. The parking lot and the amount of tubers on the water is a good indication and it’s been full all summer. Trophy trout still being pulled out every couple days so stick with the same streamers that work - Hornberg’s, olive woolly buggers, red throat Olive Matuka’s, light spruce flies tied a bit more sparse than usual, seal buggers and Zug bugs, Stillwater nymphs and pheasant tails. Desert Springs will be putting in another load in the area in September, so watch for the weekly fishing report. Some reports of large fish cruising the west shore near the hook and no one has attempted going over there the last few days due to the snow and mud.

LITTLE VIRGINIA water temperature cooled again due to the snow which put down the trout for a few days, but that changed and has stabilized for feeding trout. Today’s hatch was a tent wing caddis and also huge spider trails have been coming off the trees for 2 days, so try some small Sierra Caddis, Hemmingway Caddis or beadhead partridge and orange soft hackles. Hope your sinking or intermediate line is cleaned and ready for some great fall action starting at your local theater in the canyon. BFEF (Bridgeport Fish Enhancement Foundation plans to stock trophy’s again this coming week. Backcountry has slowed due to the cooler air up there, but I’m sure the reports will start to come in again, of course when I get up there in the next day or 2.

TRUMBULL LAKE - Remains stable and very consistent when the air temps are agreeable to trout. Most people think there are no fish in the lake due to the amount of algae that accumulates from the lack of a heavy inlet and outlet, but this is actually the opposite of the truth. The lake has 3 types of trout and each has a resident population in addition to the wonderful stockers that DFW plants weekly. Give this lake a try next time you are in the area and come and see me as to the right fly for the right conditions. The campground is open still and plans to close on the 9th of October, and the aspens should be ripe or possibly over ripe by then.

TWIN LAKES - The two lakes have been kicking out some nice fish with some hitting the 6 pound mark. The best success has been with Matukas, buggers, seal buggers, mini leeches, soft hackles, Zug bugs and prince nymphs. Upper Twin kicked out an 8 pound 10 ounce Brown on an ORANGE Woolly Bugger. Most of you all thought I was crazy tying up yellow/orange buggers, well now you know.

EAST WALKER flow is down to 204cfs and starting to liven up. Jim Reid said he has good and bad reports that the river is starting to fish well. It's still very technical so you need to use your talents. It is still a bit high for some Anglers but those that are able to handle the level should do well. Nymphing has been the go to method, but streamers are also working. Use extra lead and get your bugs down near the bottom and you'll see a better catch rate. The Miracle Mile section is still fishing well. The fish that are being caught are mostly in the 12 to 18 inch range but there are some tipping the tape around 24 to 26 inches. The streamer action has gotten better lately and the nymphing is still hanging in there, still now dry action to speak of. Patterns to try: dead drift crayfish, Great Basin Drifter, Zuddler, Moal leech, Darth baetis, San Juan worm, wd-40, silver streak, Rainbow Warrior, Dark Lord, Fox's Poopah, Buckskin Caddis, Deep Sparkle Pupa and Z-wing caddis. Safety when wading should be your first concern making sure you are prepared and ready for everything and can handle it.

BRIDGEPORT RESERVOIR – was stocked with 4,000 pounds of larger rainbows before Labor Day, and those fish have circulated and are being caught. The Marina and campground is now open again after being closed since April following the death of long-time owner, Jeffrey Wenger. New owner Chase Pasley has docks in and boat rentals available, along with RV camping and boat launching, and plans more improvements. Lake still has a lot of weeds making it a tuber nightmare. Be sure and keep your flies clean. If you tube, try the usual streamers, 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 current patterns to try.

WEST WALKER flow currently is 121cfs and will continue to drop as summer moves into fall and fishing conditions have improved. Good reports on a fair amount of fish being caught in the Pickle Meadows area as well as the canyon section. Try a hopper/dropper as well as dries, para madam X, Dave's hopper as point and soft hackle, birds nest prince or a PT underneath.

KIRMAN LAKE – No report on Kirman according to Jim at Ken's and the change in weather did not improve the fishing, but it's still early and fall has not set in yet. If you go, try 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 a few fish, mostly cutthroat. Stocking of the 20,000 Brook trout and the 2,000 LCT's was supposed to have happened in 2016

1.800.427.7623 then punch in the highway number for all highways. Don't forget to be safe and MOVE OVER where possible.

See you on the water smokin' reels, CJ (17.9)

Road closures due to recent storm activity may occur unexpectedly, so call CalTrans for current road updates at