

Eastern Sierra Focus

By CJ Webb

STAY ALERT DEER MIGRATION – Deer crossing the roads are still seeing lots of deer traffic, please be vigilant and watch out for deer browsing on shrubs near or along the roadside. Archery season started August 4th, be aware if you are fishing brushy streams and wear something bright to alert hunters but don't scare the fish.

Weather Conditions – Summer fire season has brought haze from fires to our elevation, some sprinkles on the 10th and cleared around the 15th for about 6 days then light haze again around the 23rd and clear once again. The Mammoth Fire kicked up again and will probably burn the remainder of the summer. All 3 passes are open. Wind arrived on the 26th and sucked some of the haze into our canyon but cleared on the 27th.

Fishing Tip:

Improving a skill-set over a few weeks or less can make for a more successful outing. Pick one particular thing that you would like to improve on, your cast, your drift, mending, control of your line, hook-set, or high sticking. Pick just one and work on it for the entire day. The saying is "you only need one cast to catch a fish". Then move on to the next but always incorporate the previous day's workout. Whatever you've been doing that does not provide consistent success, change it up and try something new and get out of your comfort zone. You don't need to waste time with bad casting, it doesn't catch fish.

The other benefit of improving your technique is that you get a better appreciation and enjoyment from fishing and hardly ever get bored. Yes, there are good days and exceptional days where you do actually become bored as the challenge has been removed from the equation. So pick another technique and improve it. There will always be a challenge as long as you are willing to get into the strike zone.

NEWS:

The House Committee on Natural Resources announced they are interested in working together to fix our national parks.

Years of increasing visitation and flat funding have left many of our national parks full of potholes, crumbling bridges, leaky water pipes and faltering power grids. Our parks have been "loved to death," as Secretary of the Interior quipped a few months ago. If we want millions of people to continue visiting and enjoying the national parks and making return trips showing their love of the natural world, we feel they have to put their money where their mouth is and work together and move forward to reduce the maintenance backlog of nearly 12

billion dollars. The blame can be attributed to several presidential administrations that have allowed lands designated by Congress as icons of ecological or historical importance to languish. The bill dedicates revenue from mineral extraction on federal lands and in federal waters to address the maintenance backlogs of the NPS, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, BLM and Bureau of Indian Education schools. A \$12 billion backlog won't be overcome overnight, especially if funding is held hostage by Washington politics. Our national parks are the crown jewels of our public lands, and the Public Lands Legacy Restoration Fund will help ensure they remain this way for decades to come.

The Politics of Fishing:

Hundreds of Millions in Bond Funds for Fish and Wildlife – Proposition 68, which statewide voters approved on the June 5, 2018 ballot specifically gave the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) \$50 million to pay for the backlog of deferred maintenance on its lands and property and \$30 million to improve habitat in rivers and streams, wildlife refuges, wetlands, and estuaries. The bond did not specify that other monies from it would go to the CDFW, but the department will likely get a share. There is \$200 million to implement the SF Bay-San Joaquin Delta Water Quality Control Plan, including installing and improving fish screens, providing fish passage, restoring and enhancing river channels, and improving stream crossings, culverts, and bridges to benefit salmon and steelhead. It also funds purchasing land and conservation easements from willing sellers for riparian buffer strips and for local watershed protection, hatchery management, and to remove sediment and trash. See the complete list at <http://voterguide.sos.ca.gov/pdf/text-proposed-laws.pdf>

\$16.7 Billion California Delta Project – Governor's "Water Fix Plan" twin tunnels to route water around the Sacramento—San Joaquin Delta to massive pumps so it can be transported to Southern California. That proposal is being opposed by environmental, agricultural, and some fishing groups because of its lack of protection for the Delta's threatened and endangered fish. The general public hasn't weighed in due to lack of knowing its exact location.

\$16.25 Million for Klamath Salmon Sanctuary

\$2.5 Million to Police Pot Grows

\$22,900 in CFFU Scholarship for Student Field Work

\$11,250 more for CFFU Projects

\$20,000 Grant for Kids Fishing in the LA River

OTHER CONSERVATION NEWS: West Carson Channel Restored – American Rivers, a Portland-based

national land conservation organization, has restored one mile of stream channel in the West Carson River in Hope Valley, which is located in Alpine County, south of Lake Tahoe. "The major and long-anticipated effort to restore iconic Hope Valley has been completed," said the group in a notice on its website. "The project will reduce erosion, improve floodplain connectivity, and enhance aquatic and wet meadow habitat for birds, fish, and other wildlife." The valley and its meandering river have been popular with fly fishers, partially because of its easy access and lack of fly-eating trees and brush. For more information go to <http://friendsofhopevalley.org> and <http://www.alpinewatershedgroup.org>

Cannabis Impacts on Fish –Legalized Marijuana

Could harm Rivers and Fish – According to a recent article by Tom Martens of *California Fly Fisher*, a growing number of local and state agencies, including the CA DFW, are trying to figure if the expanding number of outdoor pot farms have a big effect on rivers, and how to minimize any impact. The Nature Conservancy reports "Experts estimate that there are currently 50,000 grow sites in California and an additional 5,000 abandoned growth sites on public lands that are in need of restoration. "California produces a staggering 60-70 percent of all marijuana cultivated in the U.S.," with an annual "cash value . . . estimated to be \$16 billion, more than the top two agricultural crops combined, yet the industry remains largely unregulated." "Sites pop up frequently in hard-to-access, remote locations," the reports notes, adding that "the California Department of Fish and Wildlife has only enough resources currently to inspect less than one percent of those sites." When Prop 64 passed in 2016, legalizing recreational use of marijuana in CA, it devoted 20% "of the estimated \$1 billion in tax revenue . . . to clean, restore, and remediate environmental damage caused by cultivation of cannabis. Funds would also be used to discourage the illegal cultivation of cannabis which could harm the environment," the report recalls. The Humboldt Growers Association estimates that a typical marijuana plant requires six gallons of water a day from June through October, said Dr. Mourad Gabriel, Humboldt County environmental scientist.

Three years ago, the CA State Senate Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture devoted an extensive public hearing to the topic of the effects of marijuana farming, and its chair, Senator Mike McGuire, D-Healdsburg, concluded that pot farmers in the state have disregarded environmental laws in favor of profit. "Marijuana is literally sucking rivers dry," McGuire said at the time. DeWayne Little, a warden with the CDFW's Watershed Enforcement Team, told the hearing, "We have grows that are larger than ever. Streams are being

diverted at an alarming rate." As reported in a *Scientific American* article, "Little cited a recent example of portions of a stream his team encountered near Fish Lake in Humboldt County in which pot farmers were using PVC pipe, Dixie cups, funnels, and even two-liter Pepsi bottled to divert water for 5,000 plants." He told the hearing participants: "There literally wasn't a drop of water left after that diversion."

Legislative News:

AB-986 Update (Gallagher) 12-Month Fishing License/Veterans Discount. June 13 - "From committee: Amend, and do pass as amended and re-refer to Com. on V.A., June 14 - "Read second time and amended. Re-referred to Com. on V.A." Currently in the Senate Appropriations and will be heard on August 6, 2018, **STATUS: - Placed on Suspension August 6, 2018.**

AB2465 (Gallagher) Position: Support (CSL is the sponsor) This bill would require the department, on or before February 1, 2019, to convene a sport fishing industry group, to be known as the R3 Group, with "R3" standing for "Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation." Under the bill, the purpose of the R3 Group would be to collaborate with the department to identify barriers to sport fishing that contribute to the decline in sales of sport fishing licenses. The bill would specify the membership of the R3 Group and provide for the R3 Group to identify the above-described barriers to sport fishing and develop and approve recommendations for removal of those barriers, and submit to the Legislature, as provided, a report containing the approved recommendations.

Anglers have a voice in the political process, so please make sure your state Assembly Member and State Senator hear from you.

Committee Action Date: 07/02/18

Committee Motion: Do pass as amended

Committee Hearing Date: August 6, 2018

STATUS: Placed on Suspension File August 6, 2018

SB 518 (Berryhill) (Formally SB187) 12-Month Fishing License POSITION: Support Today, California has an antiquated and costly licensing system whereby annual fishing licenses expire on December 31st of every year, regardless of when it was purchased. This has contributed, in part, to significant declines in fishing participation rates and license sales. This legislation aims to increase fishing participation rates, license sales and state revenue by making annual fishing license valid for full 12-months from the date of purchase at a premium of 130% of the annual calendar-year license (\$62.86). This provision is also included in AB 986, introduced by Assembly Member Gallagher. This is an act to add and repeal Section 7149.06 of the Fish and Game Code, relating to fishing.

House Location: Assembly in committee process

Committee Location: Assembly Appropriations

Committee Hearing Date: **08/16/18**

Recommend: Do Pass. (Ayes 17. Noes 0.)

To read more go to:

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180SB518

CALIFORNIA DEPT. OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

I talked to Roger Bloom on July 31st for an update on the CDFW public meetings held around the state regarding the revision and creation of a new Strategic Plan for Trout Management and hatcheries including simplification of inland trout angling regulations. Mr. Bloom stated that the Department received over 6000 questionnaires and they are currently sifting through all this information and will prepare a press release of the final draft of these plans in the near future.

CDFW to Graduate 32 new Wildlife Officers

CDFW's most recent Wildlife Officer Academy class graduated August 10th with a final inspection at noon. The Wildlife Officer Academy is certified through the California Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) and offers training consistent with every law enforcement agency in California. Wildlife officers make contact with more than 295,000 people and issue more than 15,000 citations annually. These officers primarily work alone, in remote areas, contacting subjects who almost always have some form of weapon, and they do so knowing that backup could be hours away. The Law Enforcement Division will be accepting applications through September 30, 2018 for the Academy beginning in January 2020. For more information and application timeline, please visit www.wildlife.ca.gov/enforcement/career.

Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW):

Updated trout releases will be on their web-site (<http://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FishPlants/>) or call their specific region (Inland Deserts 855.887.1275)

CDFW has an updated free downloadable app for

Freshwater Sport Fishing Regulations application at <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/regulations>. It tracks your current GPS location and will tell you the regulations of the water where you are standing and regulations for waters within a designated area or approximately a five-mile radius. Take a look, it's pretty thorough.

Fishing Report

LOWER OWENS is at **521.1 as of 8/27**. The flow will probably increase for the remainder of the season with Pleasant Valley Reservoir filling fast. Water has cleared up but the hot temperatures and fluctuating flows have very few fishing there, try starting earlier, around 6am

for the Trico and Caddis emergence. Tricos early and Caddis late as fish will be feeding in the slower water on the surface. Tricos are done by 9am so be ready for the buffet as they will be stuffed. Dries: Griffith's Gnat #20, extended body BWO#20, Para Adams #18-20, Elk Hair Caddis #16-20, Parachute Caddis #16-18 and yellow and tan Stimulators #14-16. Nymphs: Zebra Midge #18-29, Baetis BBH #18-20, Barr's uncased caddis #14-16, Tungsten Caddis #14-18, Birds Nest Olive or natural #12-16, and stonefly nymphs #14-16. Of course **STREAMERS** – big and ugly

ROCK CREEK LAKE reports lots of fish being caught with streamers, black, olive or dark olive with flash. Some areas currently have a Mosquito deficit but it's wise to carry your strongest Deet as it isn't called Mosquito Flats for nothing. Try terrestrials, stimulators, foam hoppers with rubber legs, flying foam ants, and anything large and bushy. Also dig out your favorite caddis pattern and give it a toss. Cool nights and very warm days have recreated hatches. Trout at this elevation don't need UV glasses to see you, just the bugs!

UPPER OWENS – Flow is at 119cfs as of 8/27

Conditions and Hatches: Fair to Good – Water is clean and fishing is picking up, especially above the bridge and it's definitely hopper time, but there are still days when you're wondering where the fish went. Older planters are starting to move upstream, also some browns are coming out of the lake. Tricos are hatching so set your alarm for "early", yikes 6am? **DRIES:** Stimulator #16, Extended Body BWO #16, Elk Hair Caddis #16-18, and Parachute Adams #16-20. and hop-hop-hoppers. **NYMPHS:** #12-16 Bead Head Prince Nymph, #16-18 Pheasant Tail, Flashback Hares Ear #14-16, Anderson's Bird of Prey #14-16. **STREAMERS:** Meat Whistle, D's Hoover Mover, and Big and ugly. Dead drifted on strip under the banks on a type 3 sinking line. Hoppers are here so try a foam hopper or even a parachute Kicking Hopper.

CROWLEY LAKE – The Lake is now dropping a couple inches a week but should be nice and full for the near future. Conditions and hatches have been good to excellent. The boats are starting to move out a little farther in the Mcgee channel but if you don't want to be part of the zoo there are fish all the way out to 20'. The fish are not glued to the channel but are also spread out over the flats feeding on midges, mayflies, damselflies and...wait for it...Perch Fry. This applies to the entire lake, with lots of fish migrating all over the lake as they feed on perch. This is the time of year that the variety and abundance of food makes fishing tougher, change up flies as needed, don't get stuck with the same pattern, things happen fast and you need to be ready. Evenings are easier to figure out but wind can be an issue. DFE just stocked up to 50,000 small cutthroats a couple of

weeks ago and they have spread throughout the south end of the lake. Some fish in north arm channel and off Green Banks Bay, some in 13 ft, but most out in the 20+ft. Also in 2-7 feet along the shoreline but this is not consistent. Flies to try: Albino Barons, Red Barons early then later in the morning go to Copper Tigers, Red/Black dubbed head Optimidges, then Flashback Gray/Black Optimidges, Shaft Emergers when sun is overhead - all small. Callibaetis mid morning to early afternoon, Damsels late morning to mid afternoon depending on the wind and Perch Fry off and on throughout the day.

HOT CREEK - Water condition is fair. Flows are at **45.3cfs as of 8/27**, Conditions and hatches: It's that time of year with the flows decreasing, the weeds are getting thick and the fish highly educated so your presentation has to be on its best behavior. Those long drifts are a thing of the past and if you wait for your indicator to go under, the only fish you'll catch are foul hooked. Mid morning has been the best time to fish but something has been going on just about all day. Hoppers are every where so pick a good pattern as they've seen 'em all. The weeds are growing fast, combine that with fishing pressure and the fishing is getting a lot more technical. Caddis hatches have become more consistent, good throughout the day. Trico hatches will be fading soon but October caddis is around the corner. Dries: Parachute Adams #12-20, extended body BWO #16-18, Elk Hair Caddis #16-18, Parachute Caddis #16-18 and Stonefly dries #14-16 trico and spinner patterns #18-20. Nymphs: Zebra Midge #18-20, Tungsten Psycho #18-20, Split case PMD #16, Bottom Roller Caddis #14-18, Nitro Caddis #16-18, Anderson's Bird of Prey #14-16, Iron Sally #16-18. Streamers: Meat Whistle, Crystal Bugger and D's Hoover Mover.

CONVICT LAKE - Action has been mainly at the southwest corner and the outlet even toward the aspens on the south shore and some action on the north shore about mid point of the lake. Resort has stocked consistently with larger fish and they are starting to come out on flies. Suggested flies would be dark buggers, light Spruce Flies, or even a crystal bugger in dark purple or burgundy and black size 8 or 10 and even try a point fly to search around 15 feet or so. Loads of action on hoppers along the north shore anywhere there are overhanging bushes. Also try a Loeberg and a light Assassin as a dropper. But don't forget the Convict Lake Marvel (bugger with a prop) in green and brown. These are fairly stable throughout the summer until the cooler temps arrive.

MAMMOTH LAKES BASIN - Water conditions are great, summer doldrums have arrived and even with the weekly plantings fishing has slowed down. Lakes will have been stocked again with Desert Springs Fish this week. Hoppers are all over the water when the wind

picks up so try some stimulators. Early and late with midge patterns is probably the most consistent but all of the lakes have Callibaetis and Damsel hatches with Twin Lakes having the best hatches of both, but they're on the way out soon. Watch for mayfly emergency between 9:30am and 10:30 with damsels starting an hour or two later. Streamers: Dock's Twin Lakes Special #10-12, Crystal Bugger #10-12, Beldar Bugger #10-12, Pops Bugger #8-12. Nymphs: Barr's Copper John #12-18, Zebra Midge #14-18, and a Lightning Bug #16-18.

SAN JOAQUIN - Flows are **32cfs as of 8/27**.

Conditions are poor to fair. The flows are more than double than average, too bad the fishing population is so low. Fishing is still inconsistent as are the hatches and the size of fish is down dramatically. Sadly without the stocking people continue to keep their limits, no matter what their size. Good casting and a 1-3 wt rod will provide plenty of entertainment with an encounter with one of the big wild fish leaving your mind and equipment frazzled. For solitude you'll have to walk way beyond the campgrounds. Nymphing has been better than dry fly. Zebras, #16 BH PMD. Try #18-20 Zebra Midges, #16 golden stone #16-18 Pheasant Tail, #16-20 Purple Prince Nymph. Dries: #16-18 Yellow or tan Stimulator, #18 Elk Hair Caddis, ant and #14-16 mayfly patterns.

JUNE LOOP - TROUT PLANTS: CDFW Rainbow Trout plants are still on a weekly basis through Labor Day then usually going to every other week through Oct. Local marinas and resorts are still bringing in plants of larger Desert Springs Rainbows from Oregon. NOTE: The Oregon Trout are raised in 60 degree water so this may be their "comfort zone" after being dropped into the Loop Lakes The surface dry fly bite took a downturn with the haze over the lakes but there has been a few nice clear days. FLIES: "Hopper Season" is still with us but may change as cooler temps arrive so keep throwing those Terrestrials in local streams and creeks. Dry flies are still working in the lakes while in a tube or kayak mainly in the mornings when the wind is calm including elk hair caddis, BWOs, para Adams, Cahill's, mayflies, etc. Until the surface water temps cool switch to deeper waters mid day with sink line down to 25' dragging wooly buggers, Hornburgs, Matukas, and other streamers. Also try a wet fly/nymph combo with that sink line or nearer the surface mornings and eve's.

LUNDY LAKE - Similar to last month's report as a few that have fish there then returned to give me a report. Anglers getting into some nice rainbows on dark wooly buggers size 10, Flash-a-Bou's size 10, Carey Specials (olive chenille body) size 10, Olive Hornberg's with a prince nymph on point. Back ponds are difficult to access to the slide on the road behind the resort. Looks like the trout may have to change their belt size

with all the available food. Keep a low profile or perfect your presentation with a lighter weight rod.

VIRGINIA LAKES – Conditions were perfect until the haze from fires arrived mid July but was only about 15% of what lower elevations were experiencing. Loads of people have flocked to the higher elevations to evade the air quality of the basins with limits and large trout being taken on a variety of bait and lures and only a few on flies. So reports say that fishing has slowed down and the reason is due to the number of anglers on and around the lakes. There was a run on respirators for bugs but it sure made it easier to see them on the water. Dry fly action improved overall. A limited number of caddis, and hoppers have moved into the main menu but flying ants and small lime midges size 22 or 24 have done a great job, but it's been tough with the heat during the day driving the fish down to where it's below 62 degrees. Young Faruzzi said he did well a couple days ago early am on rust Twin Lakes Special size 12. Good dry action when the sun ripples the surface early and late afternoon; green body mosquitoes, Sierra Caddis, Henryville Special if you can find them, or tie some up after you review the "old timer's" pattern. If you keep it with the standard body and medium gray wing, you will be surprised. I keep my bugs on a diet and they're faster and easier to tie when they're not really fat, and the water distorts them anyway.

Both Trumble and Big Virginia lakes have seen mediocre action last week due to the numbers of anglers all vying for trout. Big V produced a few really large fish but not like prior numbers and only a few were biting flies. We did see one day of 31 degrees at 6am on the lower creek, and that turned the aspen leaves over showing their dull side. We will start to see aspens going into their lighter green phase shortly especially in exposed areas along the Virginia Lakes Road. When it warms up toward the weekend this should improve surface action with a few bugs testing the air to venture from their security. Try some leech patterns, damselfly, buggers, hoppers, soft hackles and Zug bugs and any terrestrial in your box. Hoppers are leaping off the shoreline brush and a Beldar Bugger (olive with rubber legs). Don't know what guide gave up this secret.

BRIDGEPORT RESERVOIR – Bridgeport is still kicking out lots of fish in the 2 to 6 pound range lately; we've also had a couple good fly angling reports stripping streamers up in the channels this week. Trolling has been the best out in the middle from around Rainbow Point on over to Paradise Shores. Guides have been doing fairly well on the Res with some great days for their clients. No I'm not getting a percentage, but it can be a hard water to fish unless you are in the "know".

EAST WALKER – Water conditions are fair with flows at 192cfs as of 8/27. The weather has cooled down a

little since last week; the water temps are fairly high but not high enough to endanger the fish at this time. Fishing had been good but water temp has gone up to 70 by midday, but with the longer nights the morning water temps are getting down to the mid 60's. Best reports are from 5:30 to 9am and again in the evening. Dries: Big flies to get fish to come up and eat them; Stimulator #8, Parawolf Purple #10, Chernobyl Ant #6-16, #16-18 light mayfly patterns. Nymphs: Radiation Baetis #16, Copper Zebra #16, BH Prince nymphs #12-14, Olive Birds Nest #10-14 Caddis Larva #10-16, Nitro Caddis #14-18, Stonefly Nymphs #6-10, Sparkle Pupa #18-20. Streamers: Meat Whistle #2, D's Hoover Mover Rust #4, Hornbergs #10-20)

HONEYWELL POND – The pond fished fairly well this week. Weeds have grown but there is also clear water to fish and they are pretty hungry! Try some leech patterns, damsel nymphs and adult patterns as well as midges dropped off a dry have all been working. Give Ken's Sporting Goods a call if you want to book some time on the pond!

SCEIRINE RANCH - The Sceirine is still fishing well and the fish down there are also still feeling happy and healthy. The mornings are the best just like the California side. There are still lots of nice fish in the 20+ inch range on the ranch lately. Dry/dropper rigs and drifting crawdad patterns seems to be the best technique down there right now.

KIRMAN LAKE – No recent reports. There was hope that DWF would stock it, but no news as yet.

WEST WALKER – is running at 80.2cfs as of 8/26. The West is fishing still well on fly's right now, the water is low and clear so be sneaky when approaching the water to avoid spooking the fish. Fly anglers are doing the best with dry/dropper rigs including hoppers, beetles, ants, humpy's, stimulators, soft hackles, prince nymphs and copper johns.

Polly Rosborough's Favorite Flies:

Polly was best known for his 1965 self-published book, *Tying and Fishing the Fuzzy Nymphs* which listed 15 nymphs. He became famous for his book and his flies. He began observing the aquatic insects intently and was advised by his barber to tie his own flies due to the fragility of bought flies, and so his career began. Polly gave us the vision behind his flies, he collected naturals that trout were taking on his favorite river, devised flies to match and methods with which to fish them. He created a box of flies for his region and a formula that all of us can apply to our own regions. The formula—collecting, studying, matching, fishing—more than the flies, is the true importance of Polly Rosborough.

Polly's patterns that I've used are the Caddis Emergent dark version, Near Enough and his Mosquito Dry. They are all easy to tie and work well in the Eastern Sierra especially at Big Virginia. I found a fly shop that was unloading about 3 dozen of the Casual Dress several years ago for .50 each so I bought all of the size I liked.



CalTrans reports 4 areas they are working on that will delay traffic up to 30 minutes, Monday through Thursday and/or Friday

1. Walker Canyon along US Highway 395 from State Route 108 to Eastside Lane Mon-Thu 6am to 6pm.
2. On US 395 near Bridgeport from 2.9 miles south of Swauger Canyon – daily lane closures up to 30 minutes traffic delay Mon & Tue only this week from 6am to 8pm, and Fridays from 6am to 3pm.
3. Left turn sleeve--Conway Summit & US 395
CalTrans is in week five of their scheduled 40 days to complete the left turn pocket and a new access road to the Conway Cinder Shed. It seems to be moving along as about 30% of the equipment is no longer at the CalTrans yard. They are making progress and not interfering with traffic and have even repainted the lines. Check the website for more specific information and any other road delays in both Inyo and Mono counties at: www.dot.ca.gov/d9/projmgmt/projects.html
4. Lee Vining Rockfall on US 395 north of Lee Vining, crews will be watering the landscape with daily lane closures that may delay traffic up to 20 minutes Mon thru Thursday from 6am to 5pm.

See you on the water and keep 'em wet. Cj