

# Eastern Sierra Focus

By CJ Webb

**STAY ALERT DEER MIGRATION** – Deer crossing the roads is still very heavy, please be vigilant and watch out for deer browsing on shrubs near or along the roadside. Rifle season started September 15<sup>th</sup> so be aware if you are fishing brushy streams and wear something bright to alert hunters but don't scare the fish.

**Weather Conditions** – *Summer temperatures are staying within the normal 11-2 comfort range for our elevation, but the new moon brought 4 days of wind starting the 12<sup>th</sup>. Aspens started turning yellow at 9700 feet and still a mix of green and yellow around 9300 feet, and mostly green below that elevation as of the 15<sup>th</sup>. By the 25<sup>th</sup> we were at 50% color and increasing daily.*

## **Fishing Tip: The Mighty Midge**

The term midge is often misused to refer to any tiny insect like mayflies, micro-caddis, black flies, and terrestrials. Midges are Diptera or two-winged insects and these insects are usually tied on sizes 20-28 making them a delight to tie onto fine tippet with your "eagle" eyes or enhanced magnifiers. They hatch in more varied water than any other insect and can be found on nearly all trout streams that have pools, eddies and slow slicks, and also ponds and lakes. Because midges tend to live in slow waters, midge fishing is often associated with quiet spring creeks. There are three stages of midges: larva, pupa, and adult. Trout eat all three all year long, which makes the midge a year-round fly.

Sometimes you can find great midging in surprising or unusual places. The typical type midge is a Gnat, or Griffith's Gnat tied on a midge or wet-fly hook with peacock herl and Grizzly hackle palmered through the body. You want a hook with a wide gap and an offset point. The Partridge Marinaro Midge hooks are perfect. But you can open the gaps and offset the points yourself using small needle-nose pliers.

Simplicity is a major factor when working with tiny flies and you can burn out tying them after a few flies, so find a basic pattern that has caught more trout for you, i.e. Midge Pupa. It takes fish on the bottom, and also rising to the top or as an emerger in or near the surface film. There are several old style patterns that still work very well and can be altered to resemble a newer style midge in most fly shops. The Gnat and bead-head Pupa form the basic arsenal that should take fish in just about any midging situation. The colors of any patterns can be varied according to natural you are imitating: tan, olive, yellow, green, red, black or gray. Darker colors especially gray seem to stand out as go to colors. Google is a great resource for the latest and greatest patterns for the Eastern Sierra, and don't be afraid to experiment;

winter is around the corner for planning your 2019 trips and filling your fly boxes.

## **NEWS:**

### ***Pilot Peak Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Released into Truckee Basin Waters***

This spring, the CA Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW) released Pilot peak Lahontan Cutthroat trout into Truckee-area waters to give anglers the opportunity to catch large trout in a year or two. The cutthroat eggs came from the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Lahontan National Fish Hatchery Complex in Gardnerville, NV. This was the second shipment of eggs in the past two years and is part of a joint effort between the USFWS and CDFW to bring a native, trophy sport fish to the Truckee River Basin.

The Pilot Peak Lahontan cutthroat trout is a lake-form of cutthroat trout native to the Truckee River Basin. "They are an interesting fish to raise.... Being wild, they are a little wary, but they seem to take to feed fairly well," said Steven Schnider, a CDFW fish and wildlife technician. "They are aggressive, so if you don't separate them when they are young, you will see the bigger fish with tails sticking out of their mouths."

This piscivorous (fish eating) behavior is what allows the Pilot Peak Lahontan cutthroat trout to grow quickly and such large sizes. In choosing which waters to plant, CDFW fisheries biologists targeted place that have robust baitfish populations. Stocked sites include Echo, Fallen Leaf, Donner, Boca, Prosser, Stampede, and Webber Lake.

"We did a survey of anglers in some of the Truckee Basin reservoirs back in 2010, and 85 percent of the anglers we interviewed were in favor of CDFW stocking Pilot Peak Lahontan cutthroat trout at Pyramid Lake."

***The House Committee on Natural Resources announced they are interested in working together to fix our national parks. As I mentioned in the last ESF, 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. Here is an overview of the distribution of the largest revenues that have been made available to state and local governments to fund more than 42,000 projects through the nation; Dollar amounts are in the million. California with the largest amount at \$5.2, Florida at \$2.8, Illinois \$2, Georgia \$1.5, Maryland \$1.1, Mass. \$1.3, Michigan \$1.6, Minnesota \$1, Missouri \$1.1, New Jersey \$1.6, New York \$2.8, North Carolina \$1.5, Ohio \$1.8, PA \$1.9, TN \$1.1, TX \$3.5, Virginia \$1.3, WA \$1.2, and Wisconsin at \$1.1 and the least amount going to the US***

Territories of \$25,000. A complete list is available at <https://www.doi.gov/news> (June 11, 2018)

**Legislative News:**

California State Assembly passed Assembly Bill 2895 in late May which sets up a process that will give rivers state Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR) protection if Washington withdraws them from the federal WSR program. Some Wild and Scenic River segments are now under state protection, while others are under the federal umbrella. According to Friends of the River (FOR), which has been championing the program for many years, there are 747 miles of federally recognized Wild and Scenic Rivers in the state. WSR status protects rivers from being dammed.

Friends of the River have expressed concern about the potential for the federal government to remove the rivers' protective status under the WSR program or cancel the program entirely. Eric Wesselman, FOR's executive director, said in a letter asking its members for support and funding that, "we certainly can't depend on this Congress or the Trump administration to protect these rivers. We need action at the state level with legislation, grassroots action, and litigation if necessary." For more information go to [www.friendsoftheriver.org](http://www.friendsoftheriver.org)

***NO UPDATE on 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." 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.

Committee Hearing Date: August 6, 2018

**STATUS: Placed on Suspension File August 6, 2018**

No change in status as of September 25, 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 31<sup>st</sup> of every year, regardless of when it was purchased.

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

**Recommend: Do Pass. (Ayes 17. Nays 0.)**

To read more go to:

[https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201720180SB518](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180SB518)

On 30-August, 2018, the Bill was "***Ordered to inactive file on request of Assembly Member Calderon.***

**CALIFORNIA DEPT. OF FISH AND WILDLIFE**

I talked to Roger Bloom on July 31<sup>st</sup> 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. No new update as of 9-25-18.

**CDFW 'Buy a Stamp' to help a Game Warden**

Officials at the CDFW are urging anglers to contribute to a Warden Stamp Program that helps game wardens and the enforcement of fish-and-wildlife laws. According to the CDFW, purchase of the \$5 stamp will "procure vital equipment, protective gear, and training for wildlife officers and enhance the department's K-9 Program." Information on how to make a donation is available at: [www.wildlife.ca.gov/wardenstamp](http://www.wildlife.ca.gov/wardenstamp)

**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.

**Noteworthy News: SF Casting Club Turns 85**

At the ripe old age of 85, San Francisco's Golden Gate Angling and Casting Club has many accomplishments, the most visible of which is the fly-casting pond complex in Golden Gate Park, a popular spot for honing casting skills, swapping fishy yarns, and hobnobbing with some of the city's well-known anglers in front of the fireplace in the stately lodge. The club was formed in 1933 and had a lodge at Stow Lake in the park, club officials told the San Francisco Chronicle, adding that in 1938, they convinced the Work Progress Administration to create the Angler's Lodge. The first casting tournament was held there a year later.

The club has grown from 350 members in the early days to more than a thousand. "It used to be a bunch of curmudgeonly old men," longtime club member Larry Kenney told the *Chronicle*, "But it's a lot more open now." For more information on the Golden Gate

Angling and Casting Club and its activities, visit [www.ggacc.org](http://www.ggacc.org).

**TIDBIT from ORVIS** – New Orvis Rod-Repair System Makes Repairs Painless.

Orvis has just introduced a new rod-repair procedure that makes it seamless and quick for customers to return their rods for repair and track their progress.

The process starts with rod registration when purchased, and if a rod needs repairing, the customer signs into their account which shows their Orvis purchasing history, then select the rod to be repaired and fill out a simple online form. The entire process takes less than two minutes, including the \$60 handling fee, and a shipping label can be automatically printed. The online repair center also includes detailed packaging instructions for shipping then just drop off the rod at a FedEx shipping center or bring the rod to a local Orvis company-owned store. Of course, customers can always call the Orvis technical line to talk to an Orvis expert about the repair if they wish.

**AT THE BENCH:**

Lagartun Tinsel – Their “Twist” is new and comes in silver sizes large and medium. Similar to other tinsels, it is built on a polyester core with real metal and then varnished so it won’t oxidize. It shines more than other tinsels due to the three separate strands of tinsel that are twisted together. Go to Natures Spirit or contact them at [orders@lagartun.com](mailto:orders@lagartun.com) for more details.

VEEVUS FLOSS: - A single strand floss that is a bundle of long, fine, glossy, colorful filaments. Floss seems to have lost its fashion since holographic was developed. Twisting makes it a little easier to control the whole strand but a bit more difficult to get a strand completely flat. Veevus floss produces a tough, glossy, highly colored body and probably more suitable for salmon flies.

***Fishing Report***

**LOWER OWENS** is at **487cfs as of 9/28**. All this info is current, just a whole lot tougher to perform than last week.... The trico spinner fall was ending at 9:30 and the rest of the morning was pretty inactive bug wise until 11 or so when the tiny bwo's start hatching sporadically. Afternoon was caddis. The fishing was fair but the fish were fat and feisty. **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** still reports lots of fish being caught with streamers, black, olive or dark olive with flash. No more Mosquitoes! Try terrestrials, stimulators, foam hoppers with rubber legs, flying foam ants, and anything large and bushy. Also dig out your favorite soft hackle 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 105cfs as of 9/28**

Conditions and Hatches: Fair to Good – Same old story, only thing I can add is with more fish starting to migrate, throw the kitchen sink at them. These fish seem to change what they're keying on from day to day and it doesn't have to make sense. The fish seem to be concentrating in specific holes so be careful about moving too fast. Look out for fish keying in on specific hatches midday. If it's action you want the numbers of Tui Chub are growing but if that's not your style take solace in the fact that they help the browns and rainbows grow up big and strong. Early and late are good times to throw some big streamers. **DRIES:** Stimulator #16, Extended Body BWO #16, Elk Hair Caddis #16-18, and Parachute Adams #16-20. **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.

**CROWLEY LAKE** - Fly fishing has been good to excellent. Lake is dropping about 1/2 an inch/day. Algae bloom getting worse but not a show stopper. I had a fish cough up a bunch of 1/4" clear fry this week so we might get a better fall bite with some of the perch hatching so late.

Typical Crowley, fishing is not consistent, but still good to excellent. The fish are starting to spread out even more as the perch fry grow and the mayflies and damsels dwindle. Even if you're catching fish, always have a variety of patterns on at all times, you never know when they might switch. Evenings are a little easier to figure out but the wind can be problematic. Getting reports that midging has picked up, Albino Baron and grey or green with flash.

McGee Bay has it's moments but the fish are concentrated in small areas with lots of barren water around them.

The lake has dropped to the point that fishing the stream mouths is difficult because there's very little water between shore and the weed beds.

North end has picked up all along the river channel in 10-14 feet but it's real streaky from day to day. If you don't like crowds

The Sacramento Perch fry seem to be arriving late this year. This gives fly anglers the possibility and likelihood

of an amazing fall fly fishing on Crowley Lake! Tie on the usual Chironomid style fly offerings and don't forget to carry a few different sized Perch patterns from about #14 up!

Albino Barons, Red Barons early and later am go to Copper Tigers, Red/Black dubbed head Optimidges, then Flashback Gray/Black Optimidges, Shaft Emergers when sun is overhead – all small.

**HOT CREEK** - Water condition is fair. Flows are at **45.3cfs as of 9/28**, Conditions and hatches: Good.

**WARNING:** To those who waded in Hot Creek, one of our guides witnessed 2 anglers being cited for wading in Hot Creek. Apparently they are using The Forest Service's explanation of the possible dangers.

It's that time of the year with the flows low, the weeds are just thick and the fish are highly educated.

Presentation is key. Those long drifts are a thing of the past and now the indicator is a "depth regulator". If you wait for your indicator to go under the only fish you'll catch are foul hooked. Hoppers are done and the Tricos are fading fast. Mid morning try caddis emergers and adults. Midday Tiny BWO's and occasional PMD's with caddis on calm evenings. Dries: Parachute Adams #12-20, Elk Hair Caddis #16-18, Parachute Caddis #16-18 trico and spinner patterns #18-20. Nymphs: Leopard Midge #18-20, Tungsten Psycho #18-20, Bottom Roller Caddis #14-18, Nitro Caddis #16-18, Anderson's Bird of Prey #14-16, Mayfly nymphs #20-24. Streamers: Meat Whistle, Crystal Bugger and D's Hoover Mover.

**CONVICT LAKE – Same report as last month.**

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** – Fall is here and the fall pattern has begun with the brookies and browns moving towards the streams. Mayflies and damsels are a thing of the past so the only consistent hatches are the midges, on the surface early and late, hanging them under an indicator or big dry middle of the day. This time of the year with the fish trying to fatten up and the hatches fading the fish are opportunistic so streamers and large dries when it's windy. 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 9/28**

Conditions are poor to fair. 2-3 weeks until the road closes. Post Labor Day is a great time to be down here, fishing is still the same so bring your 2 weight and enjoy the solitude. Fishing is still inconsistent as are the hatches and the size of fish is down dramatically. Good casting and a 1-3wt rod will provide plenty of entertainment with an encounter with one of the big wild fish leaving your mind and equipment frazzled. A surprise, nymphing has been more effective than dry. Zebras, # 16 bead PMD nymphs. Nymphing has been better than dry fly. 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 unknown but local businesses are still bringing in larger fish. **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 evenings.

**LUNDY LAKE** – Not much news from anglers getting into fish but I'd try dark wooly buggers size 10, Flash-a-Bou's size 10, Carey Specials (olive chenille body) size 10, The Marvel fly, Olive Hornberg's with a prince nymph on point. Road to back ponds is clear all the way to the last campground. Still keep a low profile and perfect your presentation using a lighter weight rod. Try some unusual flies with 1, 2 or even 3 and get down with a full-sink. Back ponds have been good with small brook trout taking anything dry. Be careful as they are getting into the mood to spawn in a few weeks. Please carefully release all brookies so they can reproduce as any removal of slime on their bodies will seal their fate.

**VIRGINIA LAKES** –Fishing has slowed down and the reason is due to the number of anglers on and around the lakes here. Dry fly action improved overall we had light cloudiness most of the afternoon. Basically the same report as last month with a good number of caddis and hoppers and damsels on the menu but flying ants and small lime midge's 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. Good dry action when the sun ripples the surface early and late afternoon; green body mosquitoes, Sierra Caddis, Grey Hackle Peacock, Henryville Special if you can find them, or tie some up after you review the "old timer's" pattern. I keep my bugs on a diet and they're faster and easier to tie when they're slim; and the water distorts them anyway.

Both Trumble and Big Virginia lakes have seen action this past week due to the numbers of anglers still around the area all vying for trout. Big V's action has dropped off a bit for the large fish. Try some leech patterns, damsels, 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).

We did see one day last week of 31 degrees at 6am here, and the aspen leaves are 90% yellow with amazing color as you leave 395.

**BRIDGEPORT RESERVOIR** – Bridgeport had one or two tough days this week but overall the fishing has been getting better and better each day. The bait anglers are still doing the best with crawlers but there's also some pinched crawler, mice tail and powerbait action. The trolling is good with needlefish, Thomas Buoyants, Rapalas and crawlers. We haven't had much news from the fly anglers lately but there should be some streamer action going on up in the channels and maybe down near where the lake narrows near the public launch ramp as well. The shore fishing hasn't picked up yet, hopefully sometime in October that will take off.

**EAST WALKER** – Water conditions are fair with flows at 124cfs as of 9/28. The East is running at about 167 cfs right now. The fishing down there has been a little hit and miss for some but really good for others. We've started to get some good reports on streamers, and the crawdad patterns are still working well. The caddis nymphs are still bagging some fish but the small midge patterns are coming on strong as the weather cools. The flows are still great and the water temps are dropping and the fish are all happy and healthy. The anglers that are having the most success are working some of the riffles as well as some of the deeper pools. Dead drifts are a must; these fish have seen a lot of flies this summer and can be very picky. Recommended Flies: Buckskin caddis, Fox's poopah, LaFontaine's deep sparkle pupa, silver streak, rainbow warrior, San Juan worm, squirmy wormy, flashback emerger, WD-40, disco midge, top secret midge, radiation baetis, dead drift crayfish dark lord, Sculpzilla, Zuddler.

**HONEYWELL POND** – We had 3 days worth of clients on the pond this week and nearly all of the

anglers did very well with some of the reports coming in at up to 16 trout for a half day. We were told that there are definitely weeds on the pond but they didn't seem to be of any hindrance to the anglers. Most of the fish were caught near the surface with either dries or nymphs and leeches just below the surface. Some of the patterns that hooked fish included: soft hackles, Mayers mini leech, pheasant tails, prince nymphs, black ants, hoppers and flashback emergers. Report from Ken's Sporting Goods.

**SCEIRINE RANCH** - The ranch is still fishing very well, lots of good action on some rainbows from about 14 to 18 inches as well as some browns up to around 16 inches. The patterns that are working on the California side are also working on the ranch; they're also doing well with some large prince nymphs, pheasant tails and soft hackles.

**KIRMAN LAKE** – No fishing reports from Kirman this week but we did get some reports from the DFW, they spent the week catching, adipose fin clipping and transplanting brookies from Silver Creek to Kirman. They were able to transplant 968 fish into Kirman and only lost 2 fish on the way. The fish they moved were from about 3 to 12 inches. Hopefully this will be a good seed to get Kirman back on track again! They are also apparently in discussion on how to proceed with Kirman as a brookie fishery in the future; hopefully they will start putting fish in there regularly and bring Kirman back to its glory days!

**WEST WALKER** – is running at **27.1 as of 9/28** The West is still kicking out some good fish, especially in the Pickle Meadows section. Fly anglers are having success with hoppers, stimulators, prince nymphs, soft hackles and small stoneflies. Bait anglers are going with salmon eggs and night crawlers. For lures early and late in the day try panther martins and rooster tails.

**CalTrans reports 3 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, Fri. 6am to 3pm.
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 Is complete and a very welcome improvement for those recreating in the Virginia Lakes area.

For other areas go to:

[www.dot.ca.gov/d9/projmgmt/projects.html](http://www.dot.ca.gov/d9/projmgmt/projects.html)

See you on the water and keep 'em wet. Cj (18-9)