

FRESHWATER NEWS »

Big trout parade persists at Morena

BY BRADLEY SCHWEIT
WON Staff Writer

CAMPO — Big trout continued to make for exciting action last week at Lake Morena, as rainbows to 11.2 pounds made their way to the scales.

"Monster trout are still the name of the game here at Lake Morena," said Supervising Park Ranger Beryl Buchanan. "Heavy stringers are still common, with lots of big fish and even more big fish stories."

Jonathan Hardy of San Diego used a Thomas Buoyant to fool the aforementioned 11-pound, 2 ounce. Jane Engleton of Campo nailed a 7.4 pounder while using a Power Grub.

"Folks, bring a real net!" Buchanan pleads. "If your net has

a bungee cord on it, save it for your next Sierra trip. An 11-pound fish WILL NOT fit, and your once-in-a-lifetime opportunity will swim away much faster."

In regards to action for other species, a few bass chasers are

picking away at smaller fish while working drop-shot plastics or jigs. Additionally, a handful of green sunfish were reported, and there are cats to be had, but most anglers are understandably targeting the trout.



JONATHAN HARDY of San Diego used a Thomas Buoyant to fool this 11.2-pound rainbow at Lake Morena.

'Bows over 2 pounds common at Topaz

BY BOB MOORE
WON Staff Writer

GARDNERVILLE — Increasing numbers of anglers have been having plenty of success picking up stringers of Topaz Lake's Eagle Lake-strain rainbows, and while a few in the 4-pound range have been caught, fat 'bows running 2 pounds and over have been providing a fair amount of the action.

Dianne McEwen, manager at the Topaz Lodge general store, tallied some entries in the lodge's on-going fishing derby. The leader for the week was a 3-pound rainbow caught on a nightcrawler from the west shore by Carson City fisherman Steve Damico.

A nice 'bow weighing in at 2 pounds, 10 ounces, was caught by Gardnerville fisherman, George Ness, who was fishing from the west bank on a nightcrawler. Another local angler, David Wages, picked up a 2-pound, 8 ounce that also bit a 'crawler fished from the west shore

Jesse Montero, from Yerington, joined the rainbow roundup with an 18 inch that weighed 2 pounds, 8 ounces. Montero used a Rapala along the east shore. Lake Tahoe fisherman Sal Sunzeri's 'bow, a 17.5 inch, was well back in line at 2 pounds, 1-ounce. He used Power Bait on the south shore.

Big things were brewing at Topaz recently. Linda Fields at Topaz Landing Marina said a group of 55 anglers, the self-proclaimed "Rat Pack," was at the lake for their annual 3-day fishing derby

The "Pack" included anglers from Auburn, Cool, Loomis and other areas in Northern California, as well as points farther south. This was the group's 23rd annual get-together at Topaz and now includes lots of father-and-son teams, Fields said.

Trouting steady at Wohlford, bass movin' on up

BY BRADLEY SCHWEIT
WON Staff Writer

ESCONDIDO — While trout remained on the chew last week at Lake Wohlford, bass began to head for the shallows in anticipation of the upcoming spawn.

"Trout fishing has been good, with some nice-sized rainbows being caught," said Ranger George Scalo. "Willow Cove and Boat Dock Cove have had the best trout action, and nightcrawlers have been the most consistent bait."

Cliff Chambers of Escondido weighed in the largest trout last week; a 5.4 pounder taken on PowerBait fished in Boat Dock Cove. Daniel Anderson, also of Escondido, landed a 5.2-pound fish on a nightcrawler in the same locale. Conner Sechs of Valley Center bagged a 5 pounder using a PowerBait/white Power Trout Worm combo at Senior Shoreline. Other notable catches included Patrick Weber's 4-pound, 12 ounce; a 4.7-pound fish landed by Enrico Punzalan, Victor Sarabia's 4.6 pounder and Tong Nguyen's 4.5-pound rainbow.

"The male bass are moving into the shallows," Scalo added. "When the water temperature at the surface reaches 58 degrees [it was around 56 this past weekend], you can expect the bass action to explode."

Anglers should also keep in mind the lake is now offering a total of four rental bass boats, featuring 40-pound thrust trolling motors, dual swivel seats and a livewell. They rent for \$50 for a full day.



FLOATIN' THE FLATS — Ryan Higuchi of Lakewood float tubed Laguna Niguel Lake and was rewarded with this 27-inch, 10-pound rainbow while fly fishing the flats in his float tube. The fish hit an Olive Matuka.

Chopper Derby a big success on Smith, Chetco

SMITH RIVER — The Chopper/Raider Derby held last week found fishing conditions near perfect on the both the Smith and the Chetco rivers, and 19 teams ended up catching 65 steelhead.

"It started raining on Saturday evening and it's pounding outside like crazy," said guide Phil Desautel of Phil's Smiling Salmon Guide Service in Smith River on Sunday, but prior to that, the rivers were in good shape for the derby.

"The derby was really, really successful," Desautel said, "We raised over \$34,000 for the Rowdy Creek Hatchery, and a total of 65 fish were caught by the 19 teams."

He said it was won by anglers Bob Schiebl and partner Darrel Odlan, and Craig Mcrae and Jack Biondini who fished with guide Willy Plunkett and Ken Armstrong. They ended up with 7 fish for a total of 203 inches.

"The Chetco produced 36 fish and the Smith had 29 — Not bad at all, and big fish was caught by General Chuck Yeager, who fished with Al Kutsky. The mint-bright fish was 37 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and probably weighed 18 to 20 pounds."

He said that the derbies are all 100-percent catch-and-release, and "there hasn't been a fish killed in all three derbies in 10 years," said Desautel.



SCHWEITWATER By Bradley Schweit

Finally someone nailed it

For years I've been listening to bass and striper anglers piss and moan about the tackle industry's lack of a proper shad net. And don't assume that statement to be negative or accusatory in nature, either. I, too, was amongst the multitude griping and groaning about not only the difficulty in finding an effective dip net, but also the astronomical cost of actually purchasing one.

When dip nets initially hit the SoCal scene, (I believe it was the early '90s, as I vividly recall fellow bass and striper chasers attempting to procure one via the select few who happened to custom make the nets), they were understandably expensive due to their custom-designed nature, and leaving much room for improvement. The initial models, as per my recollection, were all made from brushed metal, and were awkward to handle even without the business end brimming with threadfin. Once full of the "candy bait," it took damn near two people to get the bounty into the livewell; all the while the pole bowing something fierce.

Despite the nets' myriad flaws, however, they were generally effective at capturing at least a few threadfin; and, if the baitfish were exceptionally thick, perhaps even a livewell's worth. And, as any seasoned bass or striper chaser is well aware, it is highly plausible that 100 threadfin can easily equate to a 100-fish day. Thus, for those who could afford it, shelling out \$300 to \$400 for a dip net was a small price to pay for innumerable days of wide-open action.

Another drawback, in addition to the cost, was the silver piping used to create the body and frame of each net. Threadfin are notoriously leery, especially to shiny, bright objects (and don't mention lures used to catch their larger American River-dwelling cousins — I'm speaking specifically in terms of baitfish). All-too-commonly, the threadfin would spook before an angler even had the opportunity to deftly scoop a few. The short-term solution? A number of dippers would paint the handles and net rings black, however, the paint would oftentimes overspray onto the netting. Not a huge problem, but a predicament nonetheless.

Now, regardless of the excessive price tag and inadequate composition of the first batch of nets, the manufacturers did succeed in at least one critical area of shad net production — the net material was monofilament; not nylon or another more visible synthetic. If game fish have difficulty detecting the presence

of fishing line underwater, it would stand to reason the same would hold true for the baitfish upon which they prey. Monofilament not only proved to cut through the water better than most other materials, but it also seemed less likely to spook the wary threadfin. Since the nets were custom-made, however, and the technology to machine-weave the mesh had yet to be created, the "scooping" portion of each shad net had to be handcrafted — hence the expensive price tag.

Yet just when the search for the perfect shad net seemed hopeless, Promar has introduced a dip net that, in my opinion, is the best shad-procuring product the state of California has ever seen. I only specify "California" since we aren't afforded the opportunity to utilize throw nets, or this column would cease to exist.

The Deluxe Pro Shad Net — as Promar has so appropriately dubbed their most recent achievement — features a stealthy black telescoping handle at its core, if you will. Not only is this a significant improvement over the original silver metal designs, but Promar opted to take a good idea and enhance it even further by making the handle collapsible. Now, not only do anglers have the advantage of inconspicuousness when dipping shad, but they also have the added benefit of stowability when not in use. In a word, it's ingenious.

This innovation has also imparted the handle with a sturdiness unseen in the realm of shad nets. And I'm not merely speaking based upon press releases or images related to this product. I currently own one of these nets, and it is rock solid, even at full extension; which, by the way is an impressive 10 feet. Not to mention it compacts to a very manageable 5 feet when retracted.

At the business end is an oversized matching black anodized frame with extra-deep handcrafted (just like the old-school models) monofilament bag. Comparatively speaking, at least in regards to this net's predecessors, this frame and bag are astronomically larger. I mean, really, why make a half-dozen dips when one would essentially suffice? Seems like a no-brainer to me. As a bit of added insurance, the company's ProtecNet design safely guards the monofilament bag, and should the net ever rip or tear, it also allows for easy replacement in the event of such a misfortunate occurrence.

And as if they needed to make this product any better, or even could for that matter, Promar designed the frame and

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THE DELUXE PRO SHAD NET from Promar features a stealthy black anodized oversized frame, extra deep hand-crafted monofilament bag and a 10-foot aluminum black anodized telescoping handle.



NIXON LIKES NITRO — John Nixon of Carson scored this 21-pound rainbow trout while soaking Nitro Dough near Levitz Corner at the Santa Ana River Lakes.

Catfish and trout make for happy anglers at the Santa Ana River Lakes

BY BRADLEY SCHWEIT
WON Staff Writer

ANAHEIM — Last week's stocking of catfish marked the first kitty plant of the upcoming season at the Santa Ana River Lakes, and added to the already bountiful trout inventory swimming about the waters.

"It was great fishing this past week at the Santa Ana River Lakes," said lakes' staffer Holly Jelderda. "Lots of nice Tailwalkers and catfish were brought in."

"Hot baits have been chartreuse or orange Nitro Dough or nightcrawlers. Levitz Corner was the hot spot."

Casey Hernandez of Reseda capped a 5-fish limit with an 8½-pound rainbow caught using

green Nitro Dough in Chris' Pond. Daniel Fernandez of Carson managed an 8-pound fish on a Lip Ripperz trout worm at Levitz Corner. Edgar Badvan of Montebello nabbed a 7 pounder on green Nitro Dough at Levitz Corner, and Cody Jones of Stanton landed a matching fish using orange Nitro Dough in Chris' Pond. Santiago Palacaio of

West Covina scored a 6½ pounder on chartreuse Nitro Dough fished at Levitz Corner.

In terms of catfish, Sharon Green of Yorba Linda caught a 6½-pound kitty using shrimp in Cat Lake.

"Please note," Jelderda added, "we will be stocking big fish [this week] March 19, 20, 21 and 22. Don't miss it!"

Eighty-pound, rod-busting sturgeon tops catches at Corona Lake

BY BRADLEY SCHWEIT
WON Staff Writer

CORONA — It was a few days of big-fish action at Corona Lake this past week, as a stocky stur-

geon and considerable carp were landed, in addition to numbers of rainbow trout.

"The biggest fish was caught and released by Travis Foster of Placentia," remarked Lake Manager Glen Looney. "It was an 80-pound sturgeon, and it not only broke his rod, but he also lost his cell phone in the lake as he was calling the bait store. He was using J.D.'s catfish bait."

Yet another impressive catch was the 24½-pound carp landed by David Tirado of Rancho Cucamonga. He used a nightcrawler from shore to entice the bottom feeder.

Of course, as is to be expected this time of year, trout was also hovering in the good to great range, and anglers creel ample limits of 'bows, with big fish topping the 8-pound mark.

That 8 pounder went to Ariana Martinez of Moreno Valley who used J.D.'s catfish bait from shore for the catch. Pat Shea of Riverside bagged a 4½-pound fish while soaking orange Nitro Dough from a boat.

"Green, chartreuse or orange Nitro Dough with Nitro Gravy or nightcrawlers have been the best baits," Looney noted. "A few catfish were also showing after our plants on Thursday and Friday."



SAND TRAP TROUT — Steve Greenberg of Thousand Oaks and Chris Gailey of Moorpark hit the sand traps around Lone Pine and were rewarded with this fine stringer of trout. The fish weighed about 1½ pounds apiece and were all caught on Thomas Buoyants or RoosterTails.

Schweitwater...

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handle to detach from one another, increasing both portability and efficiency. Oh, and did I mention the Deluxe Pro Shad Net also comes with canvas carrying bags for each separate section (i.e. the handle and frame)?

Yeah, they nailed it... For more information, or to get your hands on the revolutionary new Deluxe Pro Shad Net, give Promar a call at (866) 264-1562.

Freshwater columnist Bradley Schweit, who would give anything, including at least half of whatever bait booty he could dip, for the baitfish to be running somewhere nearby at the moment, can be reached by e-mail at brad@wonews.com.

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Cachuma Lake Nature Center Trout Derby and boat raffle coming April 18 and 19

The 14th Annual Cachuma Lake Nature Center Trout Derby is coming, April 18 and 19, and a raffle of a 16-foot Triton boat, motor and trailer to benefit the Nature Center is now underway. Raffle tickets are \$30 each and a maximum of 1,500 tickets will be sold.

Don't be an April fool! Register for the Trout Derby before April 1 for \$30. After April 1 the entry fee is \$35. Children 10 years and under register for \$10. Call (805) 693-8381 for information on both the boat raffle and Trout Derby.

Anglers may register at derby headquarters located in the Recreation Hall at the park from noon to 10 p.m. Friday, April 17, and Saturday, April 18, beginning at 6 a.m. Registration will be at the marina weigh-in station after 10 a.m. Saturday.

Approximately 300 tagged trout will be planted during the week preceding the derby. Anglers will compete for \$5,000 in guaranteed cash prizes in many categories: the longest, second and third longest trout, the trout with the highest, second highest and third highest tag numbers and the oldest angler to catch a trout. Prizes will be given to the boy and girl between the ages of 11 and 16 who catch the longest trout.

Children 10 years and younger win \$25 each for the ten longest trout. Even the person who catches the shortest trout wins \$25! Prizes will be awarded at the Fireside Theater on Sunday afternoon.

All privately-owned boats will be inspected for quagga and zebra mussels. Boats must have a dry bilge, dry bait and wet well and clean exterior. Live bait brought in is limited to nightcrawlers. Anglers should not avoid shore fishing; it can be as productive as fishing from a boat.

Boats rented from Cachuma Boat Rentals do not require inspection. Every effort will be made to speed inspection time. Frequent boaters will be given an abbreviated interview. All anglers 16 years and older must have a California fishing license which are available at the marina tackle shop.

Enter now to win a 2008 16-foot Triton boat, with a Mercury 50 hp four-stroke motor and Marine Master trailer. This great fishing boat — perfect for use at Cachuma Lake — has a 45-pound thrust trolling motor and an X-50D Lowrance fish finder, pedestal seats, aerated live well and a cover. The boat, with equipment, is valued at \$21,000 retail. Ticket order forms are available at the Cachuma Lake Store, tackle shop, and office. Tickets may also be purchased at the Nature Center or from Nature Center volunteers.

In conjunction with the Trout Derby, arts and crafts activities for children and a used book sale will be held at the Nature Center on Saturday, April 18. A raffle of selected items will be conducted throughout the weekend. Naturalist-led lake cruises are scheduled for Saturday and Sunday. Call (805) 686-5050 for reservations. A small general store with groceries and some camping items, a grill and tackle shop are located at the Lake.

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