

The Fish Sniffer

Jackson Meadows Map Feature



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"The No. 1 Newspaper Dedicated Entirely To Northern California Sportsmen!"

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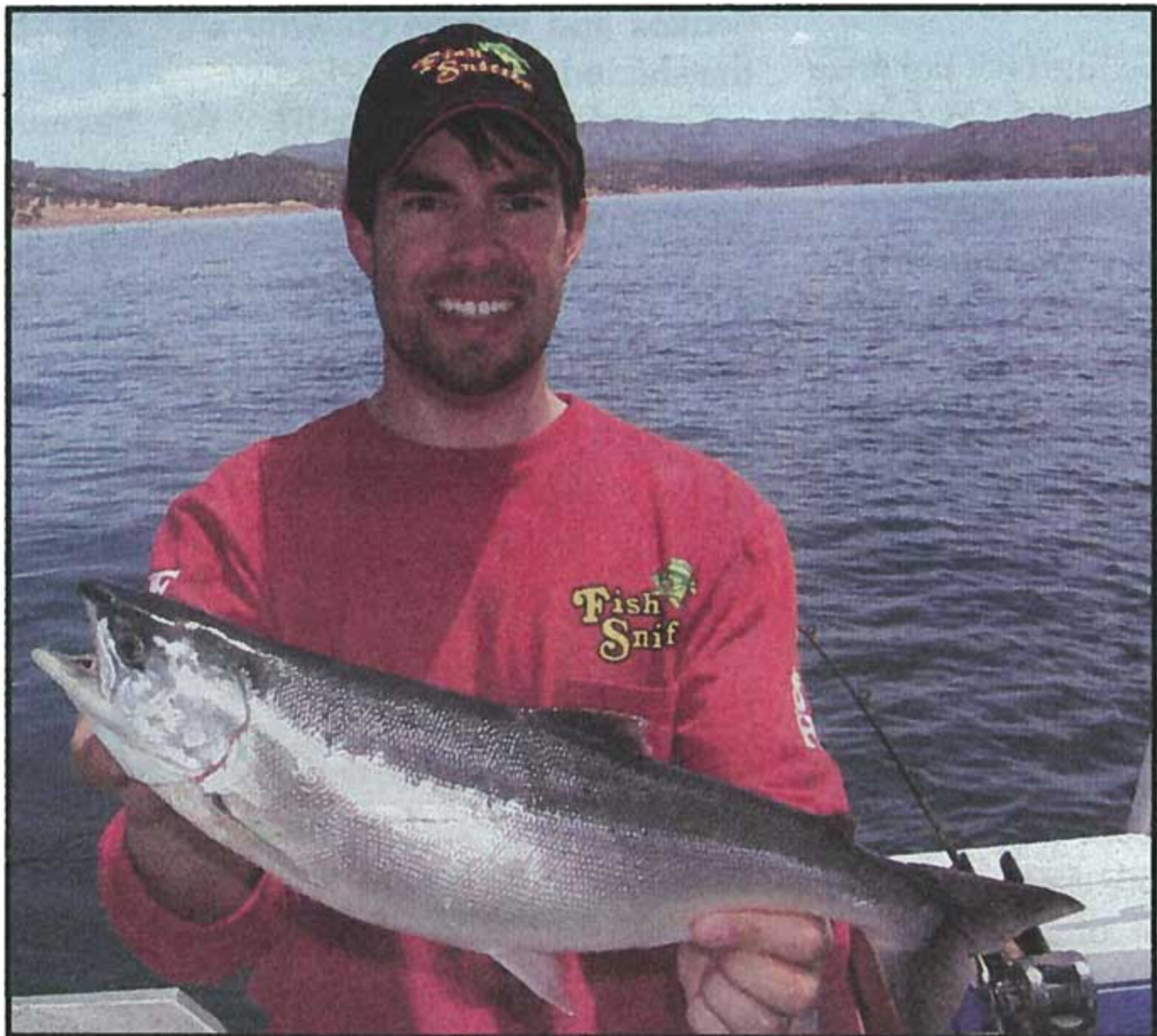
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A Lake Berryessa Father's Day

In early June, my wife Gina asked me what I wanted to do for my first Father's Day as a new dad. I sarcastically answered that maybe we should go see the new 'Sex and the City Movie' or go furniture shopping. Then



Fish Sniffer Field Correspondent Jack Naves bagged this impressive 2.25 lb. kokanee during a late June trolling adventure at Lake Berryessa.

Photo by JACK NAVES, Fish Sniffer Staff.

she said, "You want to go fishing, right?" and my answer, of course, was "Yes."

We decided to go to Lake Berryessa, located in Napa County near the city of Winters, with our new baby daughter Grace. We launched out of Markley Cove at 6:15 am and traveled our way up the river arm to the main lake. I let out my line and started trolling in a location the locals refer to as Skier's Cove.

I was just starting to set Gina's rod into the downrigger when I looked over at my rod. It was violently shaking, so I immediately checked to see if I was dragging the bottom. The sonar unit said we were in deep water - a fish within the first five minutes! I told Gina that I had one on and she asked, "A fish, already?"

The fish made several strong runs that pulled out the drag on my bait-casting reel. I was excited and thought that maybe I'd hooked into one of the lake's feisty spotted bass. I saw a silver flash through the green tinted water and knew that I had a sizeable kokanee on the end of the line. Gina grabbed the net and pulled in what turned out to be a chunky 17" kokanee salmon.

I've caught kokanee in lots of other lakes, but the fish at Berryessa are the fattest ones I've ever seen. They resemble blue-green footballs when you reel them up to the boat.

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WHAT'S HOT? FRESHWATER by Jack Naves

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What's Hot?...FRESHWATER

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Although kokanee salmon are the target of most anglers, Berryessa also has a nice population of chinook salmon, rainbow trout, crappie, and bass.

The first fish of the day within five minutes, and it was the heaviest kokanee that I'd ever caught. We stayed in the same area, but proceeded to lose the next three fish that we hooked. The bite slowed down, so we started running second rods down deep where the chinook salmon like to hang out.

When trolling, I normally use downriggers when the fish go deep. I only have two downriggers, so I employ 'stacker clips' so I can use two rods per downrigger. These metal clips allow me to fasten a second line onto my downrigger cable above my first line.

We ran our chinook setups down at 65' with some downrigger ball flashers. For this setup, we used threaded anchovies behind Sling Blade dodgers trolled at about 1.4 mph. Twenty feet up on the stacker clips, we ran our kokanee setups at 45' deep using 70' setbacks. On these lines we used pink hoochies and Assassin spinners tipped with corn behind Sling Blade dodgers.

Getting four lines down using two downriggers can be tricky, so we took our time to avoid tangles. Once the lines were set, Gina immediately picked up a nice chinook salmon on the deep setup. We hooked a few more fish and then the bite totally shut down at 7:30 am.

We slowly trolled over to the big island on the main body of the lake. I located a small underwater island on my map that was about 50' deep. I trolled around the structure, and sure enough, we started catching more chinook salmon.

At 1:00 pm we had seven fish in the ice chest. We decided that the baby was probably tired and we should start packing up for home. Just as I was starting to put away the tackle boxes, I looked up and my kokanee rod was pumping up and down.

I yelled, "The kokanee rod!" and ran to the back of the boat. The fish had popped the line out of the downrigger clip and was making a hard run to the bottom. It was peeling line off my reel and I commented, "This is a big one." I looked over, and Gina's chinook rod was shaking up and down. It was a double hookup! When I got my fish into the net I couldn't believe my eyes.

It was the biggest kokanee I had ever seen. It wasn't the length, but he girth that made the fish look so big. I quickly flipped it into the bucket and netted Gina's fish which was now right at the back of the boat. Her fish was a nice 19" chinook that had grabbed a deep trolled anchovy.

My fish measured 18" in length and weighed



Gina Naves, Jack's lovely wife, nailed this handsome Lake Berryessa king while trolling a rigged anchovy on June 20.

Photo by JACK NAVES, Fish Sniffer Staff.

in at 2.25 lbs on the scale. Within a span of five minutes, we had managed to catch my biggest ever kokanee and Gina's biggest ever chinook salmon. All in the presence of our new baby girl who was peacefully relaxing under the shade of the canvas top.

After all of the excitement and some photos, I started to pack up the gear. Just as Gina was about to reel in her last rod, it got slammed! She reeled in a nice chinook salmon which filled out her five fish limit and made it limits for both of us.

There are people who consistently catch limits of kokanee at Berryessa, and then there are people who really seem to struggle. I fall into the second category, and I usually have to scratch out a limit using chinook salmon or trout to fill in the gaps.

On that day, we caught four kokanee salmon, six chinook salmon, and one small rainbow trout which we quickly released. The thing I like about Berryessa, besides the great scenery of the rolling hills that surround the lake, is that you have the chance to hook the kokanee of a lifetime anytime you lower your line into the water.

The fishing, backdrop and company made for a Father's Day to remember. I got to spend the day on a scenic lake with my wife and baby girl all while catching the two biggest kokanee I've ever landed.

I ended up making fish burgers out of the chinook fillets and they turned out great. The kokanee ended up on the barbeque after being marinated in teriyaki sauce. All in all, it was an experience that I'll never forget.

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Staff Says:
CAPLES TROUT
S.F. BAY SHARKS
WHISKEYTOWN KOKANE

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