

# Lake Amador Still Teeming with Chunky Cutbows

by Jack Naves

**I**f you are like me, you just blew all of your Christmas money at one of the recent Northern California sportsman's shows.

The cruelty of these shows is that they are held during the midst of the crummiest winter fishing months. We get hyped up to fish with enough new gear to fill the back of a pickup truck. But then it hits us that the fishing prospects aren't all that exciting during the middle of

winter. So what do we do before all of our new gear starts collecting dust?

Personally, I never turn in my fishing card, even when the night-time temperatures drop and fish seem hard to come by. Die-hards like me seek out well-stocked trout fisheries like Lake Amador to fill our midwinter fishing needs. In late January, I hit Amador armed with a bounty of new gear in hopes of tempting some of their fabled

'Cutbows' into my net.

On January 20, the pre-dawn sun cast a rosy glow onto the eastern horizon while my brother-in-law Lee and I launched the boat. Lee Kubiak lives in Elk Grove, so he had a short trek to Lake Amador located at the base of gold country. We both arrived at the lake earlier than expected, not realizing that Lake Amador is closer to the Sacramento region than we remembered.



Jack Naves shows off a handsome Amador trout that he fooled with an Arctic Fox trolling fly during a January outing.  
Photo by JACK NAVES, Fish Sniffer Staff.



Lee Kubiak caught several trout while fishing Lake Amador this January including this beautiful fish.  
Photo by JACK NAVES, Fish Sniffer Staff.

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Like pretty much every other lake in our region, Lake Amador has been affected by the drought. Although the launching dock is currently out of the water, there is a paved ramp all the way to the water. When you visit Amador during low water conditions, it helps to have a fishing partner that can drive the rig up to the parking lot while you motor the boat off of the trailer.

With the boat safely in the water, it wasn't long before Lee and I had some of my new trolling rods from the sportsman's expo in action. I remarked to Lee that the bank we were trolling along normally holds fish. Not two seconds later, Lee's side planer rod made a hard dip towards the water. Lee had never fished with side planers before, so he wasn't sure if it was a strike or not.

"That's a fish!" I shouted, and Lee raced to the back of the boat. The colorful trout made several runs before Lee was able to guide it into the net. Our first fish was on ice before the sun had a chance to peek over the horizon.

I landed the next fish, which looked more like a typical Amador Cutbow. The silvery square-tailed beauty had a faint pink stripe down its side and measured almost eighteen inches in length. I've always admired the quality of fish at Lake Amador versus other stocked trout lakes. The fish resemble Feather River steelhead instead of the usual stockers you see at other lakes with round tails and stubby fins.

We hit a dry spell during mid-morning, but for a few hours around noon the bite was on fire. Not only do these fish look like steelhead, but they fight like steelies too. They have a great talent for throwing hooks by either going airborne, head shaking, or rolling just out of reach of the net. The final tally for the day was fish: 11, humans: 7. That is, we landed seven and lost eleven

additional fish that figured out a way to throw our hooks. Maybe just a few of the lost fish were due to angler or net-man error, but it's hard to say...

All of the fish we managed to actually net were quality trout ranging between sixteen and nineteen inches in length. Although we didn't land any lunkers during our trip, there are some beasts in excess of ten pounds roaming the lake. If you don't believe me, check out lakeamador.com for some pictures from this year.

We saw quite a few fish landed by other boats, as well as some bankers getting in on the action. Many of the boaters on the water avoided the trolling scene. These crafty fisherpersons pulled up to points and into coves to fish areas of the lake which are inaccessible by foot. These folks seemed to be catching fish as well as the trollers.

If you do decide to troll Lake Amador, many of the classic trout lures such as Kastmasters, Rapalas, and grubs seem to produce fish. During my recent trip, I discovered that the trout couldn't resist black Arctic Fox trolling flies tipped with 3/4 inch pieces of night crawlers. We worked our offering at 1.4 miles-per-hour with side planers along the tree-lined shores for most of our fish.

Trolling with planer boards can create quite a spread. If you do decide to troll with side planer boards, be courteous of other anglers and reel them closer when passing other boats. We only sent ours out about 15 to 20 feet on each side, with short 50 foot setbacks behind the planer boards. On our two topline rods out the back of the boat we used 80 and 100 foot setbacks with only one or two split shots to weigh the lines down. With all of my new toys from the sportsman's show, it felt more like an offshore trawling rig than a trout boat.

If you have a cache of new gear burning a hole in your tackle box, by all means don't wait until summer to try it out. Head up the hill to Amador County for some of the hardest-fighting trout east of the Rockies. Get up there before that new gear starts collecting spider webs! And don't forget the NTAC tournament at Lake Amador on March 15th. That fifteen pounder is still out there somewhere. We left him behind.



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A black Arctic Fox fly tipped with a piece of night crawler is a top offering for Amador trout.

Photo by JACK NAVES, Fish Sniffer Staff.

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