

Our 39th Year

"The Magazine for West Coast Sportsmen!"

Making Time for Winter Delta Postcards

I can't think of many things more majestic than sitting on anchor and bait fishing during a calm winter's afternoon on the California Delta. Winds that peak during the early afternoon will usually lay down to give us a few tranquil hours just before sunset. If we are lucky enough to have a few high clouds, the delta will provide a sunset that rivals any postcard scene.

On Tuesday the sixteenth of November, I made some time and headed to the west delta with Kirby Desha of Lincoln. It was one of those days where the fish just weren't cooperating. After setting pick in five different spots, we only had one keeper striper on ice. We were mostly targeting stripers, but I ran a sturgeon rod in a few spots that yielded only nibble bites.

The bites on the sturgeon rod were most likely courtesy of Sacramento Pikeminnows, scavenger fish that love salmon roe. After spending over an hour fishing at an area referred to as 'The Power Lines', we pulled anchor around 1:00 pm and headed west looking for stripers.

As I navigated downstream, we were approaching a fish symbol on my GPS screen. The text read, 'STU I', indicating that I had caught



GONE FISHING
by
Jack Naves



The author hoists a lively white sturgeon that was released immediately after the photo. The fish inhaled a quarter-sized ball of salmon roe inside of a cheesecloth netting sack on November 16. You'll have a shot at this fish if you are willing to make the time to visit the west delta this winter.

Photo Courtesy of Jack Naves

a sturgeon at the location on the incoming tide. Further ahead, there were two more marks reading 'STR O', indicating stripers caught on the outgoing tide. I use my GPS screen to mark spots whenever I catch fish. I note the species and tide it was caught during using abbreviations

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10-Pound Rainbow Tops Collins Lake Trout Catches

OREGON HOUSE – Collins Lake lived up to its reputation as a big trout destination when the reservoir produced a 10-pound rainbow on Friday, November 12 during a guided trip by Cal Kellogg and Wes Ward of www.fishhuntshoot.com. Sinclair Graham caught the



Cal Kellogg of fishhuntshoot.com shows off two rainbows that he landed while trolling on Collins Lake this November.

Photo Courtesy of Cal Kellogg

10-pounder on a Red Flake grub trolled behind a Mini Willow Leaf dodger at 10 feet deep over the creek channel in the main body.

"It was a long fight using a light drag, but Graham stayed with it," said Kellogg. "The fish jumped a minute into the fight. After he got the big fish by the boat, we netted it."

That day Graham and the other angler, Ed, landed a total of 7 rainbows. The other fish ranged from 2 to 3-1/2 pounds. The anglers also trolled Mini Willow Leaf dodgers and worms and olive and hot pink trolling flies on lead core line. "They were nice fish with bright red meat," said Kellogg.

The water temperature was 57 to 58 degrees, perfect for trout fishing.

On Saturday, the 3 anglers aboard the patio boat landed 6 fish to 3-1/2 pounds, all caught on pink flies and worms at 10 feet.

Then on Monday Kellogg and his wife, Gena, went out fishing for a few hours and landed 2 trout to 3 pounds. After trolling without getting any bites, they switched over to bait fishing with Power Bait near the



WHAT'S HOT
by
Dan Bacher

bank. "We only bait fished for 15 minutes, but caught two trout in that time," Kellogg stated.

Collins features California's largest private trout stocking program north of Sacramento. The lake is planted regularly from October through May from private hatcheries and the CDFW. 8,000 pounds of trout are scheduled for fall 2021, while over 31,000 pounds of trout were already

planted in spring 2021.

Trout plants already made this fall include a private plant of 4,000 pounds of Mt. Lassen rainbows on November 5 and another plant of 1,000 pounds during the week of November 8 to November 12. Both plants included trophy trout.

In addition to rainbow trout, Collins also hosts healthy populations of spotted and largemouth bass, redear sunfish, bluegill, crappie and channel catfish.

Kellogg and Ward will be booking rainbow trout trips on Collins Lake

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What We're Using



Ernie Marlan - fished the California Delta for striped bass. He used a Quantum Smoke HD teamed up with a Quantum Inshore casting rod. He threw a variety of lures that included topwater baits, glide baits, swimbaits, and spoons. He caught a few schoolie sized stripers and the most productive lure was a Livingston FlatSide 50 in Spring Craw color.



Paul Kneeland - fished Pyramid Lake with Al Fiske and Bruce Wicks of Foresthill in the Fish Sniffer 21' Rogue Jet Coastal. They caught Lahontan cutthroat trout to 16 1/2 pounds, using a Lamiglas Ti 2000 8 1/2 foot titanium steelhead rod with a Okuma Coldwater line counter reel loaded with 12 lb test P Line. They trolled 4 1/2 inch Apex spoons in black/white and Silver Horde 4 inch spoons in watermelon, trolling off the Cannon Downriggers 20 to 40 feet deep at 2.5 mph.



Dan Bacher - fished for rainbow trout at Lake Camanche. He used a Berkley Ugly Stick GX2 6' 6" medium action spinning rod, teamed up with a Shakespeare GX235 spinning reel filled with 6 lb. test P-Line CX Premium Fluorocarbon Coated Line. He fished with rainbow glitter Berkley PowerBait and nightcrawlers on sliding sinker rigs with Size #4 and #6 Gamakatsu baitholder hooks.

GONE FISHING

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like 'STU' for sturgeon. As I've racked up years of experience on the delta, I now have dozens of proven spots I can run to on any given tide.

As we zigzagged along looking for elusive stripers, I finally saw some nice marks on the sonar screen. "Looks like some fish here", I related to Kirby. The marks were on the bottom, so thinking they were feeding stripers I ran to the bow and immediately set the anchor.

The boat swung around with the incoming tide, and we were fishing once again. Kirby got his two rods out quickly, but after I had my first striper rod deployed, I took a glance at the sonar screen. 28 feet deep, and we were only about 100 feet away from the sturgeon waypoint. I decided to cast some salmon roe out on my sturgeon rod.

Only a few minutes had passed, and none of the striper rods soaking chicken livers had been touched.

I glanced at the sturgeon rod at the starboard corner of the boat. I thought I saw movement at the rod tip, and did a double-take.

PUMP. PUMP-PUMP. PUMP. After the first pump I was thinking it was another pikeminnow. After about the fourth pump I lunged to the rod and cranked as fast as I could. "Fish on" I grunted, as the rod loaded up and the drag started slipping. I pulled the rod out of the holder, but I couldn't quite tell if I had anything on. There wasn't much pressure.

I felt a slight shake. "It's a fish" I related to Kirby, but it didn't feel substantial. Earlier in the day, I had shared a story with Kirby. I told him of a day when I had landed numerous six to eight-pound pikeminnows while fishing nearby for sturgeon. "It might be another pikeminnow" I told Kirby, as I reeled the fish near the boat. When the fish was about ten feet from the side of the boat, it turned and pulled about twenty feet of line off the reel.

Thinking it was probably a small sturgeon, I had Kirby reel in my striper rod located behind me. As I gained line and my sinker came out of the water, the fish darted away from the boat, once again taking twenty feet of line. As the fish turned away, all I could get a glimpse of was the tip of its as it slashed the surface.

The muddy water kept us from getting a look at whatever was on the end of my line. Just as I mumbled



This sunset greeted Jack Naves and Kirby Desha on the evening of November 16 while leaving Sherman Island Sacramento County Regional Park. In addition to great fishing, the California Delta provides gifts like this that shouldn't be taken for granted.

Photo Courtesy of Jack Naves

"Looks like a little guy...", the fish kicked into high gear. Yellow braided line whizzed through the guides of my rod, and the fish turned and bolted under the boat. I immediately pointed my rod straight down until my hands were almost in the water. I didn't want any chance of the fish rubbing the line against the bottom of the aluminum hull.

Just as I mumbled "Looks like a little guy...", the fish kicked into high gear.

With my line still under the boat, the fish turned and headed upstream under the bow. After ripping off over 100 feet of line in a matter of seconds, the fish slowed. I was able to gain some line, but then there was a rubbing sensation, and the line stopped dead in its tracks.

"I'm on the anchor rope" I related, knowing that I needed to get over to the other side of the boat to free my line. With the rod still pointing deep into the water, I shuffled off the

starboard corner and across the back of the boat. The first obstacle was the outboard motor. I jumped into the splash well and looped the loaded rod around the motor, narrowly avoiding the propeller and trolling plate!

Next, Kirby lifted one of his two striper rods, which were still deployed out the back of the boat. I ducked under his first rod, and then jumped out of the splash well back into the bottom of the boat. I quickly weaved my rod under Kirby's second rod, and then raised it in anticipation of reeling in the sturgeon.

No such luck. The sturgeon had crossed over the anchor line, and was now back on the opposite side of the boat where I had originally

started! My fishing line was up around the anchor line at the bow of the boat, and the fish was heading back downstream on the other side! With the canvas boat top in the way, there was no clear path around bow.

"I have to go up front!" I shouted, and handed the rod to Kirby. I frantically ran up the steps and reached over the canvas top. I grabbed the rod and quickly swung the tip back over to the other side. I reeled a few cranks and felt clean pumping action without the rough rubbing sensation I had felt earlier.

"I'm free, get the net!" I relayed from the bow down to Kirby. He was still standing in the back of the boat, and asked if he should come up to the bow. I said I would just swing the fish over to him from my current location. After one more spirited run, I angled the fish towards Kirby and we finally had it in the net.

Using thick PVC gloves I use to handle sturgeon, I quickly removed the barbless hook and took a measurement. The fish was 44 inches long, well within the 'keeper' slot limit. With fresh striped bass in the cooler, and frozen rockfish fillets back at home, I figured that I had all of the fish I needed. The mighty sturgeon was released after a quick photo.

The stripers never decided to come out to play, but the wind laid down and the delta provided a perfect winter's afternoon. A postcard worthy sunset greeted us as we motored away from the launching facility. A winter's day in the delta had lived up to its promise. "In order to find time, you have to make time."

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