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Camanche Lake Map Feature



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Bait Shop Therapy

When was the last time you visited a bait shop? Not a sporting goods store with a bait refrigerator, an actual bait shop? Sometimes the little things about fishing quietly make up part of the therapeutic nature of the sport. Until recently, I had kind of forgotten about how the early-morning bait shop visit is one of the rituals that adds to the full adventure of a fishing trip.



WHAT'S HOT
by
Jack Naves



The author hoists a 46 inch, 30 pound sturgeon on the brackish waters of Suisun Bay. This fish sucked up strips of lamprey and pile worms pinned to an 8/0 Gamakatsu octopus circle hook. The fresh fillets were portioned out and quickly claimed by friends and family.

Photo Courtesy of Jack Naves

On Sunday February 27, I got an early start on a last-minute trip that I set up with Rj Sanchez of Oakland. Along with my trusty Frabill 'Kool Keeper' insulated bait bucket, I hit the road just before four o'clock am with Rio Vista Bait & Tackle as my first destination.

It was still dark as I pulled off Highway 12 into the parking lot. With my bait bucket in hand, I stepped into a familiar scene that hasn't changed much since I was a kid. There is typically a bell on the front door. Next, the soothing sound of humming freezers, bubbling bait tanks, and chirping crickets greet you as you walk in. It's not quite a fish market type of aroma, but it definitely has an

odor that sticks in your memory. It's the scent of optimism – what are we going to catch with all this bait today?

Back in Rio Vista, I eagerly watched as the guy scooped a couple-dozen live ghost shrimp into my bucket. "Prime stuff" I thought to myself, wondering what types of fish were out there waiting to gobble them up. With shrimp and a few inches of cold salt water in my bucket, I turned

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FEATURES

Where...When...How...

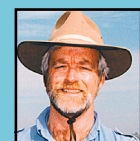
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STAFF TACKLE

What We're Using



Ernie Marlan - fished the Central Coast beaches for surf perch and halibut. He caught and released several quality sized surf perch on a 9ft Phenix Trifecta 6-12lb teamed up with a Van Stall reel spooled up with 20lb FINS Windtamer Braid. The lure of choice was a Calissa Jerkbait in sardine color.



Paul Kneeland - fished Rollins Lake with John Brassfield in John's 18 foot Duckworth. They caught German Brown trout to 15 inches using a 7" 9" light action Rogue triggerstick with a Daiwa Lexa 100 line counter reel loaded with 8 lb test P Line CXX line. They trolled 2 inch Lyman plugs in black shad color and Speedy Shiners in brass/red off the Canon Downriggers 40 feet deep at 2.2 mph.



Dan Bacher - fished for rainbow trout at Lake Camanche. He used a Berkley Ugly Stik 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.

A Bucket List Trip Targeting Redfish – Day Two

Day one fishing the Lavaca River with Captain Jason and Amy Wellenkamp provided us a lot of great information to be prepared to fish on day two. One of the most important things we learned is where the fish weren't. In my opinion, this is just as important as learning where the fish are.



GONE FISHING
by
Ernie Marlan

We learned that the fish were not in the shallows and had moved into a little deeper water. The key was to find the deeper channels just off of the shallow water. We also learned that it was key to go slow with our artificial baits because the redfish wanted a slower presentation.

The weather conditions on day two were very favorable and similar to the day before. It was mid to high 30's in the morning with the high expected to be somewhere in the mid to high 50's by the end of the day. The one bonus we had on the second day was scattered clouds throughout the region.

Captain Jason, Amy and I hoped that the area we fished on the first day would be as productive on day two. Our concern was that we found fish in the afternoon on the outgoing tide. Today, we were going to fish the same area in the morning on the incoming tide. The big question, was the time of day and the incoming tide going to affect the bite?

The fishing started out tough on the second day.

The redfish were nowhere to be found but the speckled trout bite and the flounder gave us enough action to keep us happy and confident.

Captain Jason moved from spot to spot looking for fish. We tried a 100 yard stretch that was on the opposite side of the river from where we caught fish the day before. Finally, we picked up a redfish and started to found a few more fish here and there. We worked this area pretty hard and



Ernie Marlan always wanted to catch a redfish. In fact, it was on his bucket list. He proudly holds up one of several that he caught on the Lavaca River.

Photo Courtesy of Amy Wellenkamp

once the two big air boats decided to blast through the area we decided that this spot didn't have any more hope.

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SUTTER MARINE in Yuba City is celebrating 50 years in business with a Big Retirement Sale!

Sutter Marine is a family owned business that has been serving boaters in Northern California since 1972. They have specialized in providing excellent sales and knowledgeable service for boats and motors at reasonable prices. Owner Brian Tahara has been the face of the business, but he proudly praises his employees as the real soul of the enterprise. After 50 years, Brian has decided to hang up his wrenches and replace them with his golf clubs. Sutter Marine will officially close on April 15th. They are putting on a huge Retirement Sale from now through April 15th.



All boats, motors, electronics, trailers and accessories in stock will be offered at 15% OFF EVERYTHING! They have featured Lowe and G-3 Boats, along with outboard motors from Yamaha, Honda and Mercury. This is your chance to purchase some unique boating items that never go on sale. The boating industry in Northern California will miss Brian and Charlene and the crew at Sutter Marine. For more information, you can call them at 530-673-6250, stop by the shop at 380 Garden Highway in Yuba City, or go to www.suttermarine.com

WHAT'S HOT

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on the air stone which I weighted down with a lead sinker.

Back outside, I put the bucket inside of my big ice chest to make sure that the bait would stay cool throughout the trip. I was back on Highway 12 in a flash, crossing the iconic Rio Vista Bridge as I headed southwest to the familiar Sherman Island launching facility. Rj was right behind me, and we quickly loaded his gear and launched to the fishing grounds.

Trying to catch the end of the outgoing tide, we quickly threw anchor in the looming presence of the Pittsburg power plant. With four rods deployed, we patiently waited for the first bite as the sun crested the eastern horizon. Tap-tap, Rj's rod showed the first signs of life, but after a few more taps he missed the bite and tied on a fresh ghost shrimp.

A few minutes later, the same rod got hammered, and Rj had something on the end of his line. Knowing that he wasn't onto anything huge, I left the net in place and a striped bass soon came flying over the rail. That fish turned out to be the last bite at our first spot. The tidal flows ceased, and we shotgunned west in search of some new waters.

With live ghost shrimp in the hold, I figured that at some point we were going to run into some big fish that wouldn't be able to pass them up. The Benicia Bridge area had been producing some nice striped bass, so I started looking for marks on the sonar just west of Seal Islands. We marked some fish just off the shipping channel, and quickly threw anchor in 32 feet of water. The incoming tide was starting to rip, but our baits were securely weighted to the bottom with heavy pyramid sinkers.

Our attention was drawn to a boat downstream from us. It was far off, but we could faintly see one person standing with a rod, while another person had pulled out the net. As we squinted into the hazy glare, I suddenly saw movement out of the corner of my eye. With laser-like precision, my gaze shot to the starboard corner of our own boat, where my rod tip was jabbing downwards in staccato pulses.

I jumped to the back and started reeling. "It's on!" I relayed to Rj, as I felt my drag slipping on a decent fish. The fish put up a nice fight against my



Rj Sanchez of Oakland lifts a feisty striper that hit a live ghost shrimp on the Sacramento River near Pittsburg, CA on February 27. Even when sturgeon pass up your baits, you can usually count on striped bass to keep your rods busy when prospecting the waters of the delta or Suisun Bay.

Photo Courtesy of Jack Neves



This quality striped bass attacked a live ghost shrimp soaked by Jack Neves east of the Benicia Bridge on February 27. While ghost shrimp are typically associated as sturgeon bait, striped bass rarely pass up the opportunity to make a quick meal of the pink and orange crustaceans.

Photo Courtesy of Jack Neves

sturgeon rod in the surging current. I was expecting to see an undersized sturgeon, but instead was delighted to see the flash of stripes through the turbid waters.

"It's a nice striper", I said, as Rj scooped the net under the fish. With a couple of striped bass under our belts, it was time to move on, as our second spot produced no more action. With the rods and anchor secured, we moved into central Suisun Bay to a trough known as "The Creek". After seeing numerous marks on the sonar, we set pick and deployed our live bait once again, hoping for an uptick in the action.

While dozens of fish passed under the boat, our rods sat quiet. It was just one of those days where the fishing is slow, and you're hoping for that one big takedown. As the incoming tide started to wane, I pulled out the gas grill and prepared to cook some steaks that Rj had marinating in his cooler. At this point, the boat had begun to swing in the diminishing current, and

the lines were angled sideways instead of being straight back.

From our current vantage point, the Pittsburg power plant was now a spec on the eastern horizon. Calm waves lapped against the sides of the boat, and I was in the middle of putting away one of my leaders when commotion suddenly broke out at the rear of the boat. Rj was shouting something, and at the same time I could hear my braided line whizzing through the guides of my rod. My first thought was that my sinker was just stuck in the mud, and the boat had drifted away from it on the slack tide. I stumbled over my tackle bag and gathered myself behind the rod holder.

My sinker definitely wasn't 'just stuck in the mud'. Line peeled off of my level-wind reel at a frantic pace. I grabbed the rod, but it suddenly went slack. "It's off!" I said in disgust, but as I hysterically reeled it went tight again. The fish had run straight towards the boat! This thing was hot,

and after several drag-ripping runs, I was thinking it might be an oversized sturgeon. After about ten minutes of back and forth, I was finally able to winch the fish to the surface. The telltale bubbles indicated that it was indeed a sturgeon.

While it wasn't oversized, the 49 inch sturgeon was a heavy load to bring over the side of the boat. The weighty dino tapped out at 39 pounds on my digital scale. With the excitement behind us, we enjoyed the rest of the balmy afternoon with only a few nibble bites to show for it. Our adventure was coming to an end, but the early-morning bait shop visit capped by the setting sun closed out yet another therapeutic day of fishing.

The next time you hear the bell ring when you enter a bait shop, take a moment to draw in the sights and sounds of the experience. Just remember that a new day awaits, and you never know what kind of quest will soon unfold from the end of your rod tip.