

Our 40th Year

"The Magazine for West Coast Sportsmen!"

West Delta Waters Cooling Down, Fishing Heating Up

After a blistering-hot September, we are finally feeling the cooling effects of shorter fall days. If you have to break out your jacket when leaving your house in the morning, then you should also be breaking out your striper rods! When water temperatures start to drop from the sixties into the fifties, it signals to the striped bass that it's time to load up on food before the oncoming winter. Another welcoming aspect of autumn is that the menacing delta winds start to taper off, leaving us with tranquil waters to explore. However, my first few trips to the west delta this fall did not present such enjoyable conditions. I headed out of Sherman Island on October 7 and 8, and each day featured bouts of both calm and not-so-fun weather conditions. I started out trolling on October 7 with Jim Brittain amidst choppy waters. We could not find any stripers trolling, so we switched over to bait fishing on the incoming tide. Just like magic, the frothy rollers disappeared, leaving us with smooth

WHAT'S HOT by Jack Naves



Jason Carlisle of Elk Grove takes a quick photo before releasing this feisty 32 inch striped bass on October 8. The fish inhaled an 8/0 circle hook baited with chicken livers east of Chain Island in the waters of the West Delta. Photo Courtesy of Jack Naves

fishing conditions. The only problem was that mostly shakers took our baits, with only one small keeper that

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The Shasta Fall Trout Derby 2022

The 21st Annual Shasta Lake Fall Trout derby took place on the weekend of October 15 and 16. The lake was very low, but not as low as it could have been. It was down 120 feet in May, and only dropped about 30 feet all summer, because of short water releases down the Sacramento River. John Brassfield and I arrived at Sugarloaf Cottages in Lakehead Thursday afternoon. The Low water ramp at Sugarloaf was still very usable, and the Sugarloaf docks were right next to the ramp, which made launching the Fish Sniffer Rogue Jet 21 Coastal very convenient. Our group was very short handed this year, as our usual complement of 6 to 8 anglers had been reduced to only 3 because of various un avoidable factors. As the sun set and the night cooled, John and I and Dave Barsi of Oak Run barbequed steaks and had cocktails and cigars overlooking the beautiful Sacramento River arm of Shasta Lake. Friday morning, we were at the dock about 6:45, and it was still not really light enough to see. The water temperature was a warm 72 degrees.

The weather was beautiful with a slight breeze that stayed off and on throughout the day. As usual, we decided to try some spots other than our favorites on this exploration day. We ran over to the mouth of the McCloud and started trolling with Speedy Shiners, Excels and Mag lips. We did see some bait balls at about 45 feet, but every time we went down to them, all we caught was bass. John did land a beautiful 21 inch rainbow, but it wasn't very valuable on a non-derby day! We fished the Eagles Nest on the Pit arm, as well as Big Backbone and several other spots on the lake. John caught 2 other small trout, all I caught all day was bass! The air temperature got up to 95 degrees in the afternoon

GONE FISHING by Paul Kneeland



John Brassfield with the 22 inch king salmon that didn't count in the Shasta Lake Fall Trout Derby! Photo by Paul Kneeland, Fish Sniffer staff

— sure doesn't feel like the middle of October! Friday evening, we had dinner at the Basshole Bar & Grill, along with many

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STAFF TACKLE

What We're Using

Ernie Marlan fished the Farallon Islands with California Dawn II out of Berkeley, California. He used a United Composites rod rated 20-40lb teamed up with a Shimano Tranx 400 spooled up with 50lb braid and a 30lb fluorocarbon leader. He caught a nice limit of lingcod with the largest weighing around 14 pounds and his limit of rockfish. His bait of choice was a 6oz Ahi Jig in sardine color and a 9 inch swimbait on a 6oz lead head.

Paul Kneeland fished the Shasta Lake Trout Derby with John Brassfield of Trucksmart stores and Mark Kalinowski of Concord in the Fish Sniffer 21' Rogue Jet Coastal. They caught rainbow trout to 18 inches using an Daiwa 8 foot DXS composite rod with a Daiwa Lexa 100 linecounter reel loaded with 8 lb test Yozuri Hybrid line.. They trolled Speedy Shiner spoons in cutthroat and watermelon colors off the Canon Downriggers at 15 to 45 feet deep and 2.7 mph.

Dan Bacher fished for rainbow trout at Pardee Lake. 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 Berkley PowerBait, 1/8 oz. gold and black Panther Martins and 2/5 oz. gold/red stripe Little Cleos.

WHAT'S HOT

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we quickly released. The water temperature was sitting at about 68 degrees, which is a great way to go through a ton of bait if you want to feed shakers all day. We headed back to the ramp at 2:00 pm for a passenger switch.

That afternoon I dropped Jim off at the dock, and picked up Jason Carlisle who drove down I-5 from his home in Elk Grove. We headed out immediately, but only picked up one small keeper before darkness fell upon us. We planned to switch over and fish for sturgeon all night, and anchored up northeast of Pittsburg on the outgoing tide. Within a twenty minute span, we boated and released two nice sturgeon that hammered small pieces of cut lamprey.

We thought we were in for an epic evening, but Mother Nature had other ideas. By 11:30 pm, whitecaps were crashing against the aluminum hull of the boat in the dark. This not-so-fun experience was our cue to

pull anchor and spend the night in the protected waters of Broad Slough. Our planned sturgeon fishing was blown-out by weather, but we still had the next day to venture for stripers.

The following morning featured blasting winds and slow fishing. Once again, the turn to the incoming tide and diminishing winds flipped the switch from miserable weather to enjoyable conditions. We finally got onto a nice group of stripers, boating five keepers between 20 and 32 inches soaking chicken livers. We hit the road around 1:00 pm, feeling weary from the two-day adventure. My next trip wasn't quite as lengthy, but the weather conditions were much more enjoyable.

Several weeks later on October 24, I headed out with Patti Parker to test out her beautiful new Tracker boat. The water temperature was a much more respectable 62 degrees. After quite a bit of tweaking and adjust-

ments with the sonar/GPS unit, we were finally dialed in for hunting sturgeon. We set pick on some nice marks, and then deployed rods baited with lamprey.

As the outgoing tide tapered off, the boat began to swing to the left. Gentle waves lapped against the hull, and the rods loaded up and slowly dragged their sinkers across the river bottom in unison with the drift. Each rod tip would arch towards the water and then pop back into position as its sinker was pulled along with the meandering boat.

The rod to my right skipped a beat, and seemed somewhat out of synch with the other rods. I jumped into position by the reel, but it was so rhythmic that I thought it was just my sinker being dragged along by the drifting boat. WHAM-WHAM. The rod tip surged, and I could hear my braided line whizzing through the guides on my rod!

"It's on!" I shouted, as I franti-

cally reeled and lifted my rod out of the holder. Now standing on the carpeted platform on the back of Patti's boat, I could see my line angling up towards the surface. Before I could think, a massive white sturgeon rocketed straight to the sky like Apollo 11 launching for the moon. The massive fish touched down with a huge splash, and then shot horizontally out of the white-water like a sprinter launching out of the starting blocks.

"Big one", I commented, thinking that it was either a big keeper or an oversized sturgeon. Next, the fish dove straight under the boat. I was nervous about the way that the sturgeon had landed its jump, thinking that it might have damaged my line in the process. I had my thumb on the star drag and was just about to lessen the pressure when I felt a dreaded pop. It was a break-off, most likely due to the sturgeon's scutes rubbing against my 65 pound test braided line.

With the heartbreaking loss behind us, we bounced to a new spot for a fresh start on the incoming tide. With no bites and only massive splashes from jumping sturgeon to taunt us, we switched over to striped bass fishing for the rest of the afternoon. Although the conditions were beautiful, we stumbled onto a massive zone of undersized stripers, with only one keeper to take home for fish tacos.

As of press time, the water temperature in the west delta is sitting at 62 degrees. With overnight lows getting cooler each evening, we are now venturing into the prime temperature zone for striped bass. My favorite water temperature is 58 degrees, so we are just around the corner from wide-open striped bass fishing. Get out there when you can, and don't forget that fall is also a prime time for sturgeon fishing as well. Nature's gifts await those who venture.



The author poses with a taco-worthy striped bass on the West Delta on October 8. These mid-sized linesides make for excellent table fare when eaten in moderation.

Photo Courtesy of Jack Naves



This energetic striped bass was released by the author on October 7 near Sherman Island when the water temperature was 68 degrees. Jack's favorite striped bass bait, chicken livers, was used to entice the fish to take the hook.

Photo Courtesy of Jack Naves

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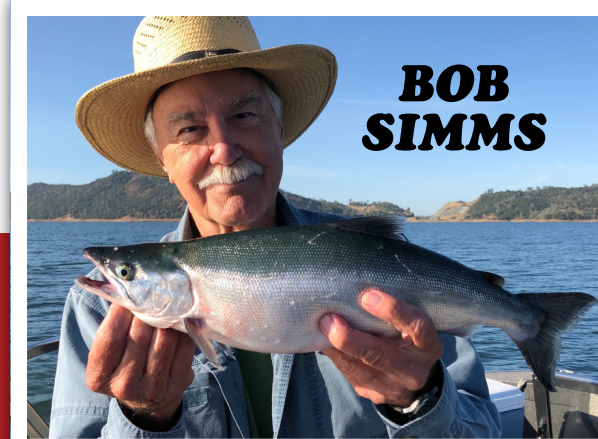
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