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# FISHING THE SIERRA

## Sierra National Forest

Sierra National Forest contains a variety of warm and cold-water angling opportunities. There are over 190 miles of rivers and streams and nearly 350 lakes, ponds, and reservoirs.

The commonly found cold water game fish are rainbow trout, brown trout, golden trout, and kokanee salmon. Lower elevation ponds and reservoirs have warm water species such as largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, catfish and a variety of sunfish. Lakes on the High Sierra Ranger District are open to fishing all year with streams opening on the last Saturday in April and closing on November 15th. The limit is 5 trout or salmon per day. District anglers should be aware of the special bonus brook trout limit that allows 10 additional brook trout under eight inches long to be kept per day. California sport fishing regulations require a fishing license to be displayed by all anglers 16 years and older. All anglers should read the current California sport fishing regulations before fishing.

### FISHING TACKLE

Trout residing in the waters of the central Sierras average 6 to 12 inches. The angler will find maximum enjoyment by fishing with light tackle properly matched to the fish one is catching.

Spinning tackle is the most popular and versatile choice for Sierra anglers. Lines of four- or six-pound strength on a light reel matched to a 5 1/2-to-6-foot rod are ideal. Lures from 1/16 to 1/4-ounce, bait hooks size 10 and smaller, some spin bubbles and flies along with a selection of small sinkers will allow the angler to catch trout in any of the District's waters.

Fly tackle should be on the light side, 8 1/2 to 9-foot rods in 5 weight will handle all the lake fishing. Smaller rods of less than 8 feet and 2 to 4 weight are ideal for fishing the streams. 9-foot leaders tapered to a 5X tippet should handle still waters and leaders of 7 1/2 feet or less will be easier to use on streams. Fly selection depends on the time of year and water you choose. Favorite dry flies are Adams, Mosquitoes, Elk Hair Caddis, and Black Ants in size 14 or smaller. Popular wet flies include Black Woolly Worms in size 10, Hares Ears and Pheasant Tail Nymphs in size 12.

Trolling gear for lead core line is heavy but is the cheapest and easiest way to fish deep. A high-capacity reel is necessary to hold three hundred feet (10 "colors") of lead core line. Rods need to be stiff enough to handle the heavy line. Downrigger fishermen use level wind reels filled with 6- or 8-pound line. Rods should be on the soft side to keep proper tension on the line without causing a premature release. Downrigger releases should be set light; even so a kokanee or small trout may not release the line. There are many kinds of flashers and dodgers available, and it pays to experiment to find the best set up for the day. Night crawlers are popular bait and small rolling spoons will prove effective.

### FISHING THE RESERVOIRS

One of the most popular reservoirs on the District is Huntington Lake. Huntington Lake produces consistent limits for novice and skilled anglers alike. The most productive technique is to troll with either lead core line or downriggers and flashers with either a night crawler or a minnow type lure. Mid-summer fish are often found at depths up to forty feet. Early and late in the year fish are often in the shallows and can be reached without lead core or downriggers. Shore fishing is often productive near the mouths of creeks. Fishing from Dam 3 is available for those using wheelchairs, but some assistance may be needed. Floating baits fished two or three feet off the bottom with a sliding sinker will often fill a stringer. Easy access shore fishing can be found at Bear Cove Picnic area and often off the dam. Many local anglers wait for the opening of Kaiser Pass to access the excellent fishing at Edison and Florence Lakes. Trolling is popular at these lakes and the anglers skilled in fly-fishing can catch many fish when conditions are right.

Surrounded by forestland, Shaver Lake offers fine fishing. Kokanee salmon are the most popular species here with rainbow trout a close second. Smallmouth bass, bullhead and bluegill making up the rest of the catch. Trolling with lead core line or downriggers with a flasher and night crawler will work well for kokanee and trout. Live bait, light night crawlers, or crickets work well for the other species.

## **FISHING THE STREAMS**

Larger creeks and rivers on the High Sierra Ranger District such as Big Creek, Tamarack Creek, Kaiser Creek, Mono Creek and the South Fork of the San Joaquin River offer excellent fishing for pan-size trout. The above streams receive regular plants of rainbow trout to supplement fine populations of naturally spawned fish. Natural baits drifted into deep pools will take trout for the spin fisherman as well as smaller lures. Larger creeks are ideal for fly-fishing. A skilled fly fisherman may catch 30 or more fish in a single afternoon. Small wet flies or nymphs in popular patterns will work most of the time. But the best fishing will occur in the late mornings and afternoons as the fish rise eagerly to dry flies.

## **OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE ACCESSIBLE LAKES**

OHV routes in the Red Mountain area provide access to Mirror, West, Strawberry, Coyote, and Red Lakes. These lakes provide good fishing for rainbow and brook trout. Access by four-wheel drive vehicles allows anglers to get small boats or float tubes to these mountain lakes. Gasoline and electric boat motors are not allowed on Coyote Lake because it is in the Dinkey Lakes Wilderness. For the beginner OHV driver, the Brewer OHV route provides easy access to Brewer Lake. Beryl and Tocher Lakes, only a short walk from Brewer Lake, offers rainbow and brook trout and fewer people. Mallard, Lakecamp, Ershim, Summit, Thompson, and East Lakes are right along the Dusy-Ershim OHV route. Further information on OHV routes can be found at the High Sierra Ranger District Office.

## **WILDERNESS LAKES AND STREAMS**

Designated Wilderness areas contain most of the lakes on the High Sierra Ranger District. Fishing with spinning tackle and lures can be productive at times but the most effective method in the lakes is fishing with a spin bubble and fly. Fly-fishing with traditional tackle is also effective. Most wilderness lakes are located at high altitudes with a short growing season. Insects are smaller at this elevation (except mosquitoes, or so it seems) so using flies in size 6 or less is a wise choice. Don't forget terrestrial insect patterns like ants and beetles, as they will take fish all day long when the wind is blowing. Wilderness streams such as Bear Creek and Piute Creek and the South Fork of the San Joaquin River above Florence Lake support good populations of golden trout.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

**Bass Lake Ranger District**  
559-877-2218

**High Sierra Ranger District**  
559-855-5355

**High Sierra Visitor Center**  
Located on Kaiser Pass Rd.  
559-841-8323 summer only

